

Exploring Employees' Communication Behaviors in Knowledge Sharing: A Hierarchal Perspective

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Abstract

This paper explores the patterns of communication behaviors of mid-level employees when sharing knowledge with targets from different hierarchical positions of the organization. Conducted as a multiple case study, the researchers interviewed 11 mid-level managers working at 11 small-and medium-sized knowledge-intensive enterprises in Hong Kong. We searched for respondents' descriptions of how they shared or learned knowledge in different scenarios and more importantly identified the explicated reasons for their corresponding decisions. Derived from the interview corpus which consists of 30,000 words, we have demonstrated how and why mid-level employees differ in their communication behaviors in different scenarios of knowledge sharing. By doing so the paper brings both theoretical and practical significances. Theoretically, it advances our understanding of employees' decision of knowledge sharing behaviors and in practice it informs managers about how employees' behaviors would be affected by hierarchal relationships in the workplace.

Introduction

This paper explores how and whether mid-level employees exhibit different or similar communication behaviors under different circumstances of knowledge sharing. According to the typology of Hansen, Nohria and Tierney (1999), people may choose to communicate either directly (personalization) or indirectly (codification) during the knowledge transfer process. Subsequent studies have focused on the characteristics of knowledge (e.g. explicit vis-à-vis tacit) as the major determinant of communication behavior in knowledge transfers (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Murray & Peyrefitte, 2007; Windsperger & Gorovaia, 2011).

However, the extensive focus on knowledge characteristics limits our understanding of employees' decisions as there are other personal and social factors that may significantly affect their behaviors at the workplace (Lam & Lambermont-Ford, 2010; Pfeffer, 1981; Scott, 2001). To enhance our understanding of employees' communication behaviors in knowledge sharing, the current study examines the extent to which the hierarchical positions affect mid-level employees' preferences in sharing knowledge with or acquiring knowledge from others. Specifically, we attempt to explore whether the communication behaviors of mid-level employees would be different when sharing knowledge with different target co-employees in the organizational hierarchy.

Hence, the focal research question of this study is: *How do employees' communication behaviors differ when engaging in knowledge sharing with superiors, peer colleagues, and subordinates, and why?* Answer to the research question is explored via a multiple case study research design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees at the middle management level of 11 knowledge-intensive small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Hong Kong.

This paper is divided into four sections. After introduction, we review literature related to the factors that affect the mode of communication in knowledge sharing among employees. We then present our findings derived from the interviews and propose a theoretical framework on employee's tendency in selecting different communication strategies when communicating with different levels in the firm's hierarchy. Lastly, we discuss the significance and limitations of the study.

Literature Review

Knowledge sharing is regarded as the core of knowledge management (KM) systems for enhancing organizational competitiveness (Grant, 1996). In order to leverage on organizational knowledge resources, it is crucial that organizational members are able to share what they have acquired or created to the rest of the organization (Grant, 1996; Kogut & Zander, 1993). Gupta and Govindarajan, (2000) proposed that the effectiveness of knowledge sharing within organizations greatly depends on the mode of communication being adopted. Hansen et al. (1999) differentiated two types of communication modes for sharing knowledge: personalization and codification. Personalization refers to the use of personal interaction between the knowledge source and the recipient for sharing knowledge whereas codification refers to the use of documentations as the medium for transmitting knowledge. That said, employees adopting the personalization mode exhibit direct communication behaviors while employees adopting the codification mode communicate indirectly with the counterpart.

Past research has largely focused on the characteristics of knowledge as the major determinant of employees' communication behaviors when sharing the knowledge. Studies by Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) and by Murray and Peyrefitte (2007) suggested that employees should adopt direct communications (personalization) when sharing more tacit knowledge as compared to more explicit knowledge for which employees may choose indirect communication (codification). However, such prescriptive findings do not adequately reveal or predict the actual communication behavior of employees because employees are often found to act incongruently to organizational goals (Lam & Lambermont-Ford, 2010; Ouchi, 1980). Research by Harrell and Harrison (1998) has shown that the pursuit of self-interests by employees in organizations is often in conflict with the pursuit of collective interests. Thus, prescribing how employees *should* behave in general does not represent how employees *would* actually behave.

To analyze how employees would actually behave in knowledge sharing, a power-relation perspective represents a promising theoretical tool to understand the different types of communication behaviors exhibited by employees under different circumstances of knowledge sharing. The power-relation perspective is advocated by organization theorists who suggest that the behaviors of employees are greatly affected by a web of power relations rested in the organizational hierarchy (Pfeffer, 1981; Scott, 2001). For example, the case study of Willem and Scarbrough (2006) revealed that power relations and politicking behaviors manifested in the instrumental form of social capital influences the knowledge sharing behaviors of employees to engage in a highly selective form of knowledge sharing. Heizmann (2011) also found that power/knowledge struggles within a dispersed network of HR practice lead to the failure of HR practitioners to share and accept each other's knowledge. In an international setting,

Mudambi and Navarra (2004) found that subsidiaries of MNCs seek intra-firm bargaining power through their control of knowledge outflows to the headquarters and other subsidiaries. Despite these contributive findings, employees' propensity to share knowledge, as well as how they would carry out the sharing, under different contextual considerations (e.g. sharing with targets at different hierarchical levels) is still poorly understood (Lam & Lambermont-Ford, 2010). The current study, therefore, aims to add to the literature a hierarchical perspective in explaining employees' knowledge sharing behaviors. Specifically, we focus on how and why employees' communication behaviors are differed when engaging in knowledge sharing with different recipients in the organizational hierarchy, namely, superiors, peer colleagues and subordinates.

Our research focus is motivated by various theoretical propositions and research findings in the extant literature. Empirically, Kuo and Young (2008) found significant relationships between employees' attitudes and controllability in knowledge sharing and their intention and subsequent actual behavior of knowledge sharing. In addition to the different circumstances of knowledge sharing, employees' communication behaviors might also differ when they are sharing knowledge with superiors, fellow colleagues, and subordinates respectively (see, for example, Garciano & Wu, 2012). Such prediction stems from the organizational communication literature that different organizational relationships embed different power relationships and the different power relationships affect the communication behaviors adopted by employees (Myers, Knox, Pawlowski & Ropog, 1999). Specifically, Fritz and Dillard's (1994) research found that communicating and sharing the information or knowledge with employees at different organizational levels (e.g. superiors, fellow colleagues and subordinates) may impinge on different degrees of honesty, self-disclosure, irreplaceability, and mutual dependence. Consequently, it is also important to explore how and why employees' communication behaviors differ when they are sharing knowledge with superiors, fellow colleagues, and subordinates respectively.

Research Method

A grounded theory approach is employed in the present study as there are no prior findings for setting hypotheses, and the concerned research question involves complex interactions of human and social phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The empirical basis is founded on a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants from 11 knowledge-intensive small-and medium- sized enterprises (SMEs) in Hong Kong. Convenient sampling, rather than strict theoretical or representative sampling techniques, was used given the exploratory nature of the study. Nevertheless, convenient sampling is not an uncommon research method for studying organizational phenomena in hypercompetitive places, such as Hong Kong as "the high pressure environment does not typically permit the sort of access sought through random sampling, especially where the research involves interviewing" (Kamoche, 2006, p. 32). Despite the convenient sampling in nature, we have set criteria in selecting and inviting target respondents and their organizations. The first criterion is the knowledge-intensive nature of the company. We adopt the general definition of knowledge-intensive firms – the major production function of the firm being relied on human expertise and information (Alvesson, 1993). Given the relative small market size of the Hong Kong economy and the dominance of SMEs accounts for over 90% of the number of the firms in Hong Kong, we targeted and approached SMEs in a variety of industries, such as accounting and auditing, banking and financing, marketing and public relations, with an attempt to increase the number of studied companies as practically as possible. Invitation emails and follow-up calls were sent to over 30 identified companies. The research objective and the target of interviewing employees at the middle level were explained in the invitation email. Eleven companies eventually accepted our invitations.

Eleven mid-level employees, one from each of the 11 companies, were interviewed during the period of March 2014 to December 2015. These companies are engaged in five different business fields; namely, non-governmental organizations (NGO), banking and finance, real estate, public relations and information technology. The mid-level employees, who in our cases often worked as supervisors overseeing three to five frontline subordinates and reporting to the figurehead of the SMEs, were targeted for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, the mid-level employee in organizations occupies an important position to facilitate knowledge sharing. In Yang's (2007) research, mid-level employees are shown to have three significant roles: innovator, mentor and facilitator in the hospitality industry. The role of mid-level employees as facilitators was also explored by MacNeil (2003, 2004), especially in cases where tacit knowledge is involved in knowledge sharing. Practically, since the research question involves scenarios of knowledge sharing with individuals from different hierarchical positions, mid-level employees can fulfil such a requirement. Table 1 lists the fields and job titles of our interviewees.

Table 1

Fields and Job Titles of 11 Interviewees

Field	Job Title
Public Relations	Senior Officer
	Consultant
Non-Governmental Organization	Project Officer
	Executive Secretary
	Project Coordinator
Banking and Finance	Human Resources Manager
	Insurance Agency Manager
	Actuarial Officer
	Relationship Manager
Information Technology	Assistant supervisor, Sales
Real Estate	Leasing Manager

The interviewees were asked a series of open-ended questions surrounding the type of communication behavior they adopt in different circumstances of knowledge sharing as well as the underlying rationale. Ample time was given allowing interviewees to give full accounts of their own perceptions and views on the questions asked. The process was guided by a written interview protocol (see Appendix A for a sample version), which might be revised after each interview once the emerging themes of the research have taken much clearer shape. Riley (1996) states that when eliciting socially constructed knowledge, formally structured questions should be minimized. Thus, the protocol was applied flexibly so that the flow of most interviews should respond to the interviewee's train of thought. Furthermore, any subsequent interventions should take the form of prompts and probes, based on the words of the informant. Overall, the interview questions were designed to encourage the interviewee to 'volunteer' information. The interviews lasted between 40 to 80 minutes and were conducted in the mother language of the participants (Cantonese) in order to avoid possible language barriers in expressing their views in English. All interviews were tape-recorded and supplemented by field notes. They were subsequently transcribed and translated for content analysis, with a total of more than 400 minutes of recordings and over 30,000 English words in the transcribed corpus.

The content analysis process followed the logic of abduction and was characterized by open coding (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). We searched for respondents' descriptions of how they shared or learnt knowledge in different scenarios and more importantly identified the explicated reasons for their corresponding decisions. In sum, we are concerned about (1) the interviewee's communication behaviors in different scenarios of knowledge sharing (a more objective description of behaviors) and (2) the underlying reasons for their choice of communication behaviors (a more subjective and contextual explanation).

Findings and Interpretations

The following three excerpts are illustrative in a nutshell towards the differences in terms of attitude and behavior when mid-level employees communicate with their superiors, peers and subordinates:

"Of course I will be a bit more nervous when I am talking with my superiors. It's a must. I might think more clearly and further before going in and present to him. If I am talking with my peers or subordinates I might think not as clearly or as well prepared."

- Senior Officer, Communication firm

"When I deal with my peers, it's pretty normal and we talk rationally about things. When you talk with superiors, especially with whom I directly report to, I will talk to them in a more respectful way."

- Agency manager, Insurance firm

"Teaching the new [subordinates] is easier since there is less hard feelings... it's more difficult teaching the senior staff [superior]."

- Executive secretary, NGO

Table 2 is a summary as to how and why mid-level employees communicate with their colleagues in different levels of the hierarchy. Based on our analysis, the results reveal that while relationship and respect are important features when communicating with their superiors, self-interest is preferred communication strategy by the mid-level employees when communicating with their peers. It is interesting to note that efficiency is considered a crucial element when mid-level employees are dealing with their subordinates. To substantiate, we will explain the rationales for the differences of communication behaviors. These rationales are extracted from and grounded on the interviews conducted.

Table 2

Choice of Mid-Level Employees on Communication Strategies in Knowledge Sharing and the Underlying Rationales

Knowledge Sharing with	Type of Communication	Rationale
Superiors	Indirect	Asymmetrical Relationship to Show Respect
Peers	Indirect/Codification	Self-interest; Withhold Critical Information and Leave Paper Trail for Evidence
Subordinates	Direct/Personification	Efficiency/Respect

Knowledge Sharing with Superiors: Asymmetrical Relationship to Show Respect

Consider the following illustrative quotes:

"Some managers might be more open, and then some of the junior staff will be more willing to talk. But for some really senior people holding the meeting we know it's more about listening [to what senior managers have to say] and we won't say much."

- Senior officer, PR Firm

"It's my fourth year working here as well and since I know them [the superiors] quite well, I often send them a text message..."

- Executive secretary, NGO

The relationship or trust between the knowledge sender and the receiver has been proven to be a critical success factor for knowledge sharing (McNichols, 2010). However, there has been relatively few studies examining the influence of the relationship between the sender and the receiver on the choice of communication/sharing behavior. Findings of the current study suggest the existence of such an influence. All respondents agreed that they would choose to communicate face-to-face with the superiors only if they know the superiors well and know that the superiors prefer personal interaction. The reason for choosing an indirect way of communication, or a codified message is that the mid-level employees often consider indirect communication or codified messages are more polite and show a respectful manner to the superiors and that the personal conversation or mobile texting are not preferred as they are informal and casual. Consequently, in order to protect themselves not to be judged as impolite or disrespectful, the mid-level employees prefer indirect written communication with the superiors in most cases, disregarding the characteristic of knowledge.

Knowledge Sharing with Peers: Withhold Information but Leave Paper Trail for Evidence While Maintaining Deference

The extant literature is replete with arguments and empirical evidences that employees may choose to hide or hoard their knowledge for the sake of self-interests (He, 2013). The present study also observes the similar behavior which was shared by a real estate leasing manager.

"We have a fixed income so the conflict is less minimal. My area is on luxury homes [leasing] but as I know those colleagues in shopping centers [leasing] have fierce fights with each other. Even the seniors won't give information to their juniors because they might be fighting for the same client."

- Leasing manager, Real Estate

Although the mid-level managers may hide or withhold their knowledge to the peers, our interviews also reveal that mid-level managers often need to juggle the balance between what information to withhold and what information needs to be shared so as to ensure the smooth running of the business. To prove that you play your share in sharing the knowledge you possess, the mid-level employees prefer indirect communication mode by sending written messages. The reason for such preference is to leave the paper trail in case that something goes wrong in the future and someone may take the blame of lacking the knowledge sharing or sharing the wrong information. The following two quotes are the examples that illustrate the preference of indirect communication mode by the mid-level employees.

"To prevent misunderstandings we will send out emails, just as a record. When some situations arises, you know, we can see who is responsible for the incident or how did it go."

- Senior officer, PR Firm

"It's email really, because it's just to protect ourselves ... for example when someone talked things with you and they claimed they didn't say it afterwards..."

- Project coordinator, University

In addition to the mere protection of oneself, some employees prefer to be recognized or rewarded through their contribution of knowledge. By choosing a codified way of sharing, the identity of the contributor can be recorded:

"Some might want to demonstrate their expertise and some might just want to show to their boss that they have done so [sharing]... for these naming is important."

- Project officer, NGO

Although mid-level employees prefer indirect way of communication mode, there also exist problems with the use of codified ways of sharing – not that of the difficulty in codifying tacit knowledge as widely postulated in the extant literature (Ancori, Bureth & Cohendet, 2000):

"Black-and-white must be the most formal because everything will be put into record. But there is a problem with black-and-white as well. If you put everything into writing, it becomes formal and defensive in the same time, and therefore, relationship doesn't matter."

- Leasing manager, Real Estate

The above quote came from a leasing manager of a real estate company. The interviewee feels that the use of codified way of communication sends a signal to the other party that their relationship is very superficial, implying that they have to be cautious and formal in their interactions. In addition, when there are chances or needs to share knowledge with peers, the interviewees expressed that they tend to be mindful about their way of sharing the knowledge so that the peers would not think that you are arrogant and showing off your knowledge. As reflected by the interviewee, "colleagues may think that I am not respecting them if I stand out and 'teach/ preach' as if I am more superior to them." In other words, the mid-level employees expect that the sharing of knowledge among peers should be conducted in a symmetrical manner, or often it is considered an appropriate way that the knowledge sharing should be led by a superior in order to show respect to both your peers and your superior:

"I think a main reason is since we all are in the same grade [hierarchical level] and are peers, it would [can] be difficult to teach/preach my colleagues and at the same time ask others [for opinions at work]. I think someone taking on the role of a professional leader should stand out ... colleagues [mid-level employees] feel that they don't have the authority to do so [share or teach] if their supervisor doesn't say anything."

- Project officer, NGO

Knowledge Sharing with Subordinates: Personalization to Maintain Efficiency Yet Show Respect

It is interesting to note that most mid-level employees in our interviews prefer direct and personalization communication mode. According to the interviewees, they encourage the subordinates to talk to them directly because these mid-level employees think that direct and personalization communication is the fastest and the most effective way in sharing knowledge with the subordinates. In other words, the mid-level managers value the importance of sharing knowledge by means of informal communication channel in that the hierarchical rank will not deter the communication climate between the mid-level employees and the subordinates. The mid-level employees who favor personalization also feel that the complex information can be explained better in a face-to-face communication. The following quotes illustrate the preference of using direct, personalization communication while expecting the subordinating to maintain the respect to the mid-level employees.

"I think when communicating with subordinates, it's important to put myself into their shoes... if you think you're high up there all the time, it's no good to the development of the team. I actually prefer blending in with them."

- Senior officer, PR firm

Despite the encouragement of an open and direct communication in knowledge sharing, a number of interviewees complained the lack of respect expected by a superior from their subordinates, especially among the millennial employees:

"They [the subordinates] are post-90s and I am not labeling them, but they are really informal in their [style of] communication. It may be because of my younger looking ... my juniors seem to communicate with me in the same way [as they are communicating with their peers]. [For example,] They would directly ask their boss [the interviewee] what to do. This is a problem... I feel that these post-90s do not particularly show their respect to me as their superior..."

- Leasing manager, Real Estate

"Those who are interns are really young and don't know much about the working culture."

- Executive secretary, NGO

Summary: Hierarchy Matters in Mid-Level Employees' Choice of Communication Strategy in Knowledge Sharing

In the company hierarchy, mid-level employees often act as a bridge between senior and junior staff because of the ubiquitous position. As any rational employees would do, self-interest is always at stake when communicating with employees in different levels of the hierarchy. Yet, what they are concerned might be fundamentally different when they are communicating with their superiors, peers and subordinates respectively. Figure 1 summarizes the major concerns explaining the differences in communication behaviors when sharing knowledge with targets at different hierarchical levels of the company.

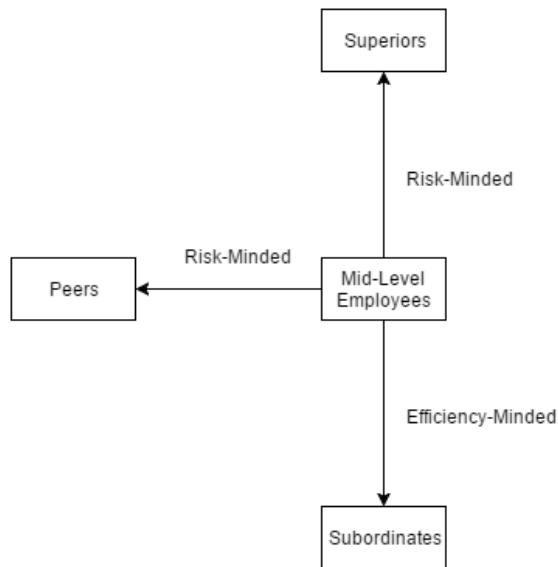


Figure 1. Communication framework and rationale of mid-level employees.

The current study echoes the observation by Mon, Van Den Bosh, and Volberda (2007) that employees behaved differently when sharing knowledge vertically (i.e., with superiors) or horizontally (i.e., with peers) within an organization. The analyses of the interview corpus reveal that when the interviewees are sharing knowledge with their superiors, they are likely to be risk-averse if they do not know the preference and personality of their superior well. As shared by the interviewees, it is important to respect their superiors in the hierarchical structure of the company and this may consciously affect their choice of mode of communication in communicating with superiors. Consequently, the mid-level employees tend to be more formal when communicating with their superiors in terms of manners, attitude and modes of communication. They are often reluctant to speak freely and tend to be more conscious in their choice of topics and diction. Even though face-to-face personalization communication mode is preferred, they might inform their superiors before such talks to show their respect. Casual or informal chats have not been reported between mid-level employees and their superiors in the cases we have studied. The fear of leaving a bad impression to their senior superiors, which might lead to potential career damages or even demotion and termination, seems to be a major factor taken into account by mid-level employees when they select their communication strategy with their superiors.

Although we also term the consideration of mid-level employees as ‘risk-minded’ when sharing knowledge with peers, the rationale is somewhat different from the case of knowledge sharing with the superiors. The risk aversion mentality can be manifested in two ways. First, the interviewees mentioned that they would always choose to use codified means of knowledge sharing in order to leave evidences of sharing so as to (1) prove that they have completed the sharing task and (2) show what they have shared in case performance goes wrong on the receiver’s side. Second, the interviewees expressed that they are highly avoidant in actively sharing knowledge or ideas with peers as they are afraid of being considered as “showing off”. One of the reasons might be the ambiguous relationship of peers in knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is often considered as a “top-down” act, in which those higher up in the hierarchy not only should but must nurture and develop their subordinates with the skills and knowledge they need to become competent in their job. This is not seen merely as a responsibility but also a privilege. As a result, the lack of hierarchical norms in peer knowledge sharing leads to the scene where formal communication inside the organization becomes difficult to conduct.

Lastly, the mid-level employees are usually efficiency-minded when they are communicating with their subordinates. Two major reasons can be deduced from our interviews. Firstly, these mid-level employees are delegated with the power and responsibility to share knowledge with their subordinates. In this connection, they need not fear possible social repercussion even when they actively share the knowledge with their subordinates. Failure in completing the tasks may not be the prime concern of mid-level employees as their job or career is less likely to be at risk. More importantly, these mid-level employees are not only responsible for their own jobs but for the work performance of their subordinates as well. If knowledge is shared effectively to their subordinates, it would be beneficial to their own work performance as well. As a result, the respondents often encourage an open attitude towards knowledge sharing with their subordinates and prefer more efficient ways of knowledge sharing.

Discussion and Conclusion

While the characteristics of knowledge is still one of the major considerations affecting the respondents' choice of communication behavior in knowledge sharing, there are some personal and social considerations appear to supersede the consideration of the characteristics of knowledge as evidenced in the current study. Self-interest has been seen as a major determinant in selecting appropriate communication strategies between colleagues from different hierarchy within the organization. While mid-level employees tend to be risk-averse and are more cautious in dealing with their superiors, their attitudes tend to be somewhat conservative when sharing knowledge with their peers, too. Yet, such conservativeness stems not from a career but a social concern as to prevent from being ostracized by their peers. On the other hand, since subordinate's efficiency is often considered a key performance indicator for mid-level employees, our interviewees often adopt an efficiency-oriented approach when communicating with those under their lead.

The current study brings both theoretical and practical significances. Theoretically, the study advances the understanding of employees' decision of knowledge sharing behaviors. Prior studies did not investigate the different types of knowledge sharing and different target recipients as the major determinants of knowledge sharing behavior. The theorization of the relationships among communication behaviors, types of knowledge sharing, and target recipients will be able to provide an alternative perspective to study employees' knowledge sharing behaviors. Through exploring the different patterns of communication behaviors of employees in different circumstances of knowledge sharing involving different targets, the research result is able to provide a more comprehensive explanation of employees' knowledge sharing behaviors. Such a finding helps respond to Foss, Husted and Michailova's (2010) criticism that both researchers and managers are not well equipped by the extant literature on how to govern knowledge sharing within organizations. There are still plenty of rooms to understand knowledge sharing behaviors of employees for devising efficient and effective governance mechanisms for promoting organizational knowledge sharing.

In practice, the study informs managers about the preferences of communication behaviors of mid-level employees under different circumstances of knowledge sharing. Such information is important to understand the thoughts and concerns of the employees and thus help establish more appropriate organizational policies and leadership for facilitating knowledge sharing among employees. Managers should find it beneficial to proactively manage the communication behaviors of employees based on our research findings to ensure that employees' knowledge sharing behaviors are aligned with organizational goals.

As in all social experiments, the current study has its own limitations. As the current research is conducted in Hong Kong, we might expect influences of Chinese culture taking place in workplaces. As investigated in multiple studies like Ardichvili, Maurer, Li, Wentling & Stuedemann (2006) and Michailova & Hutchings (2006), “saving face”, modesty and differences in power are all things considered by employees affected by the Chinese culture when engaged in knowledge sharing behavior which are often less concerned in the Western world. As a result, our research might not be able to apply universally but instead being location- and culture-specific in its applicability. Yet, this limitation might at the same time point to a caveat less noticed in the present scholarship, as knowledge management in the Asia-Pacific region, especially how the factors of culture and hierarchy interplays with each other, is still lacking in many aspects.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Date:

Time & Duration:

Location:

Interviewer(s):

Interviewee(s):

Background

1. Nature of business, examples of business productions
2. Organizational size & structure
3. Position, no. of superiors, peers & subordinates
4. Major duties and expertise involved

The Use of Knowledge

5. Describe the nature or type of knowledge involved in daily tasks (probe for: are they easy to be articulated/documented? Are there standardized routines?)
6. Where is the host of knowledge? How is it stored? Who does it belong to?
7. How did you learn those knowledge at the beginning?
8. Is there a strong culture of knowledge management in the organization?

Knowledge Sharing with Peers

9. What is the extent/frequency of sharing knowledge with your peers? (probe for reasons if not too much)
10. Is the sharing mainly one-way transfer or two-way communication?
11. Is such kind of sharing important to the completion of tasks?
12. How do you usually carry out the sharing? (probe for the means/methods/mechanisms)
13. Why is the preferred way of sharing better than other alternatives? (probe for the determining factors)

Knowledge Sharing with Subordinates

14. What is the extent/frequency of sharing knowledge with your subordinates? (probe for reasons if not too much)
15. Is the sharing mainly one-way transfer or two-way communication?
16. Is such kind of sharing important to the completion of tasks?
17. How do you usually carry out the sharing? (probe for the means/methods/mechanisms)
18. Why is the preferred way of sharing better than other alternatives? (probe for the determining factors)

Knowledge Sharing with Superiors

19. What is the extent/frequency of sharing knowledge with your superiors? (probe for reasons if not too much)
20. Is the sharing mainly one-way transfer or two-way communication?
21. Is such kind of sharing important to the completion of tasks?
22. How do you usually carry out the sharing? (probe for the means/methods/mechanisms)
23. Why is the preferred way of sharing better than other alternatives? (probe for the determining factors)

Power Relations

24. Do you recognize any differences in the means or attitudes of knowledge sharing with people in different hierarchical positions? (probe for examples)
25. Do you recognize any differences in the means or attitudes of knowledge sharing between intra-unit and inter-unit knowledge sharing? (probe for examples)
26. Do you think power relations are affecting people's work or information sharing in your organization? (probe for examples)
27. What is the major basis of power in your organization? From one's position? From one's expertise? From one's social relationships?