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Awareness of Knowledge Management among Librarians: A Study

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ABSTRACT

The emerging field of knowledge management has become the key concern for librarians and libraries due to huge volume of digitised data. Knowledge management offers the opportunity to improve effectiveness in both libraries and institutions. The aim of this study is to identify the awareness of knowledge management among librarians with respect to their personal factors. Questionnaires were collected from individuals in libraries of colleges and institutions related to knowledge management perspectives. The analysis of the questionnaire it is found that librarians are aware of knowledge management, but variations were found based on the personal factors.

Keywords: Knowledge Management; Awareness; Librarians; Academic libraries

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management (KM) originated in the early 1990s, and is relatively new in library and information science discipline. Knowledge management is about building organisational intelligence by enabling people to improve the way they work in capturing, sharing, and re-using knowledge. It involves using the ideas and experience of people and process to improve the organisation performance. Many organisations today acknowledge the role of knowledge as a key source for competitive advantage. In order to gain this advantage, it is important that knowledge when shared can be managed effectively in organisations.

Knowledge management is defined as a “processes or practices of creating, acquiring, capturing, sharing

and re-using organizational knowledge to improve performance and achieve goals of an organization”.⁹

Knowledge management is also defined as a method of management that governs the creation and utilization of both tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge in an organization.¹

The awareness of knowledge management among librarians provides an added value to the library and its parental institution. Knowledge management helps to determine the direction of the library to improve the quality of its service, with the support of knowledge management process. This paper analyse the awareness of knowledge management based on questionnaires collected from academic librarians.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of the study is to know/study the awareness of knowledge management among librarians with respect to “find out the views of knowledge management basics”.

A hypothesis is stated as “there is no significant difference in the realizing of knowledge management basics” with respect to the awareness of knowledge management among librarians, is framed for the study. The hypothesis is divided into three sub hypotheses with four facets related to personal factors age, gender, professional qualification and professional experience.

Knowledge management basics among respondents is analysed for the categories like; modes of knowing about knowledge management, characteristics of knowledge and knowledge management process.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

To study the awareness of knowledge management for the hypothesis stated 130 questionnaires are sent to academic librarians and received a reply with a response rate of 83.8 percent.

Chi-square and Average rank analysis is used to test the significant influence of personal factors over each variable of the four facets at 0.05 level of significance for the hypothesis stated.

4. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT BASICS

This paper analyses and discusses the awareness of knowledge management basics among the respondents with respect to the categories mentioned in section 2 using percentage analysis. The results are presented with tables and relevant interpretations.

4.1 Mode of Knowing Knowledge Management

The various modes used for knowing knowledge management based on the respondents input is presented. It is found that, out of 109 respondents, 69 (63.3%) respondents are aware about KM basics through personal reading of books and journals. 34 (31.2%) respondents are aware through their participation in conference / seminar / workshop; remaining 3.7% of them are aware through practical field work and 1.8% of them are aware through job positions outside the library. The Chi-Square analysis is presented based on the personal factors of the respondents in Table 1.

Table 1. Chi-Square Analysis – Personal factors for Awareness of Knowledge Management Basics

Personal factors	Chi-Square value	p Value	S / NS
Gender	190.911	0.000	S
Age	112.510	0.000	S
Professional qualification	113.090	0.000	S
Professional experience	115.620	0.000	S

S-Significant (p value = 0.05) and NS-Not Significant (p value > 0.05)

It is evident from the above table that the hypotheses is rejected (Significant) based on all the factors. Hence, it is concluded that the personal factors have significant

influence on the modes used for knowing knowledge management among respondents.

4.2 Characteristics of Knowledge

The respondents perception related to distinctive characteristics of tacit and explicit knowledge is analysed using average rank analysis. 67.9% of the respondents strongly agreed the factor 'knowledge is expandable'. The factor 'knowledge is sharable' is strongly agreed by 52.3% of the respondents. The factor 'knowledge is movable' and the factor 'knowledge is compressible' are agreed by 47.7 and 46.8 percentage respondents respectively. The average rank analysis related to characteristics of knowledge management is given in Table 2.

The analysis of the respondents data it is clear from the Table II, most of the respondents stated that the factor 'knowledge is expandable'. Few respondents stated that the factor 'knowledge is compressible' and found to have least percentage.

Table 2. Average Rank analysis - Personal Factors for Understanding Characteristics of Knowledge

S.No	Characteristics of Knowledge	N	Mean	SD	Min. Score	Max. Score	Percentiles			Rank	
							25 th	50 th	75 th	Mean Rank	Average Rank
1.	Expandable	109	4.66	0.51	3	5	4.0	5.0	5.0	3.31	1
2.	Compressible	109	3.53	0.90	1	5	3.0	4.0	4.0	1.79	4
3.	Moveable	109	3.72	0.85	1	5	3.0	4.0	4.0	2.05	3
4.	Shareable	109	4.36	0.78	2	5	4.0	5.0	5.0	2.85	2

N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
109	146.722	3	.000

The hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance and it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the weighted average ranks for the factors related to the awareness of characteristics of knowledge.

4.3 Knowledge Management Objective

Knowledge management process is typically tied to organizational objectives and is intended to lead to the achievement of specific outcomes. Related to the awareness of knowledge objectives, 65.1% of the respondents have strongly agreed that knowledge

management is identifying, collecting, storing and sharing of knowledge. The majority of librarians agreed knowledge management as interaction of people and ideas (55.0%) and few stated it as new marketing strategy (49.5%) which is found to have the least priority.

Table 3 Average Rank Analysis - Personal Factors for Awareness of Knowledge Management Objectives

S.No	Knowledge management objectives	N	Mean	SD	Min. Score	Max. Score	Percentiles			Rank	
							25 th	50 th	75 th	Mean Rank	Average Rank
1.	Identifying, collecting, storing and sharing of knowledge	109	4.61	0.593	2	5	4.0	5.0	5.0	4.38	1
2.	Managing intellectual assets	109	4.07	0.899	1	5	4.0	4.0	5.0	3.25	5
3.	Focus on library objectives	109	4.15	0.837	2	5	4.0	4.0	5.0	3.42	3
4.	An interaction of people and ideas	109	4.26	0.699	1	5	4.0	4.0	5.0	3.61	2
5.	Already implemented, but under a different name	109	3.97	0.907	1	5	4.0	4.0	5.0	3.09	6
6.	New marketing strategy	109	4.08	0.862	1	5	4.0	4.0	5.0	3.26	4

N	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
109	52.844	5	.000

The average rank analysis of knowledge management objectives given in Table 3 it is found that 'identifying, collecting, storing and sharing of knowledge' is the important factor of the knowledge management objectives. The 'interaction of people and ideas' which is 'already implemented, but under a different name' is found to have the least factor. The hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance and it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the weighted average ranks of personal factors for knowing knowledge management objectives.

5. FINDINGS

The ways of knowing and degrees of understanding of knowledge management among the librarians are varied. Most of the librarians have focused on a deep perception of knowledge management. This study also finds some of the reasons for responding to knowledge management, e.g. increasing value of knowledge in the knowledge economy, role of information technologies, opportunities for improved library practices.

The finding presented from the research in this study is originated from both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The descriptive part reflects the qualitative element, while the statistical part reflects the quantitative one. The presentation of findings was guided by themes from the research questions that were

specified as:

- What do librarians understand about knowledge management?
- What do the perception about knowledge management?

From questionnaire responses and interviews, it is found that librarians at the managerial levels clearly understood knowledge management and it is also found some librarians were not sure about the differences that exist in understanding knowledge management.

CONCLUSION

To determine the awareness of knowledge management among librarians, one has to know about knowledge management process. It is clearly understood that the ways of knowing and degrees of understanding of knowledge management among the librarians are varied. Understanding and perception of knowledge management were found to vary based on their personal factors. This study also highlighted the fact the librarians are well aware of knowledge management, but they need to gain additional skills to work in knowledge management environment.

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