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EFFECT OF TRAINING ON THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRMS WITHIN LAGOS METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization are knowledge management processes that are vital as they complement training considering the levels of individual capabilities and the dynamic business environment. The issue of whether knowledge gained through training will be eventually shared or utilized among consulting staff; and the willingness to even share or utilize gives cause for concern. Hence it is not clear whether a relationship exists between training and KM processes of sharing and utilization. Therefore, this paper focuses on the effect of training on knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization amongst management consultancy firms within the Lagos metropolis. Three research questions and hypotheses respectively were asked and tested on the subject matter. Self administered questionnaire was retrieved from one hundred and fifty (150) business consulting firms selected using purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Simple regression analysis and Hayes process tool was used to analyze the data. The findings show that training accounts for 11.7% variance in knowledge sharing, and 12.7% in knowledge utilization respectively; in addition, knowledge sharing does not moderate the relationship between training and knowledge utilization. The implication is that the ability and willingness of staff to share knowledge is sparsely influenced by neither training nor the need to utilize gained knowledge.

Keywords: Training, Knowledge sharing, Knowledge utilization, Knowledge Management

1. INTRODUCTION

The core work of consultancy firms is the process of managing knowledge which involves the creation, sharing and application of knowledge for its clients and the ability of such process to suit or meet customers' needs (Obeidat, Al-Suradi, Masa'deh & Tarhini, 2016). One of the greatest challenges organizations face is how to integrate the incongruent skills, knowhow and knowledge of employees of the organization into their merchandise, development, amenities and finished goods or services (Idris & Kolawole, 2016). This is because all new employees regardless of their status, education and experience need to be introduced to the new employer's work environment and to be shown how to perform specific tasks, and occasions for retraining arise when jobs change and new

skills must be taught (Raymond, Bawa & Dabari, 2016). Achieving continuous growth in business requires knowledge sharing and utilization practices becoming an integral part of the day to day conversation (Riege, 2005). Some firms create negative attitude toward knowledge sharing as their body language seem to encourage staff to forget what they think they know and key in to the practice they find existing. Asra-ul-Haq and Anwar, (2016) opine that managers should develop sensitivity to diversity, enhance open communication and understand the strengths and benefits of multigenerational workforce.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory underpinning this study is the knowledge based view which considers knowledge as the most strategically significant resource of firm, and builds on the work of Barney (1991). Knowledge being the most crucial asset of a company is built in the minds of individuals through trainings, field experimental learning and other mechanisms so as to achieve better work place learning outcomes (McQueen, 2016). Similarly, commercial success and competitive advantage of companies seem to lay increasingly in the application of knowledge and location of those parts of the organization where knowledge sharing practices can assist in optimizing business goals (Riege, 2005). Hence, managing knowledge is seen to make significant impact on customer satisfaction, competitive advantage, organizational performance and organizational innovation (Meihami & Meihami, 2013); through building of the necessary technological and organizational mechanisms required to fully facilitate the input of human response, decision-making, and experience sharing (Daghfous, 2003 in Alaneme, Kuye & Oghojafor, 2016). This study aligns with the thought since knowledge can be shared and transferred through employees experience gathered through on-the job and off-the job training and wealth of knowledge.

2.1 Training, Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Utilization

Training is a systematic development of knowledge, attitudes, skills and other prerequisites necessary for an individual to perform adequately a given task or job (Armstrong, 2001) and a desire to meet organizations objectives of higher productivity. Training can be seen as the process of teaching and informing people so that they can become well qualified to do their work and perform well in the position of greater difficulty and responsibility (Raymond, Bawa, & Dabari, 2016). Lewis, Wright and Geroy, (2004) opines that knowledge, skills and expertise are embedded in individuals that are trained and this makes them to be responsible for the creation, sharing and utilization of the acquired knowledge. In essence, the trained employee becomes more relevant and marketable in the industry and may choose to leave the firm whenever a better offer comes their way. This is simply because knowledge has been gained which adds to the importance or power of that person hence, the saying that ‘knowledge is power’ (Goman, 2002; Omotayo, 2015). As succinctly put by Susanty and Wood (2011, p.159), “sharing knowledge needs a lot of time, energy, and thought to prepare subject to be presented, and because knowledge sharing activities engage employees high efforts, employees tend to reduce their willingness to share”. The implication of this is that first, you cannot give what you don’t have and second, an employee may or may not be willing to share knowledge even though they have been trained and or have what it takes, the knowledge power.

Knowledge sharing is the exchange or transfer of knowledge (information, skills, or expertise) among people within an organization and is considered one of the most important components of knowledge management which has been reported to play significant roles in the successful implementation of KM practices in corporate business organizations (Almeida & Soares,

2014). In the recent time, there has been upward interest in knowledge sharing or transfer as emerging key research area (Islam, Ahmed, Hasan, & Ahmed, 2016). Attaining a thriving knowledge sharing activity in any organization require identifying factors that could stall and easily increase knowledge sharing behaviour due to the complexity in incorporating individual's knowledge into broad organization knowledge. Individual's often times hoard knowledge because it is considered personal valuable assets which sustain ones relevance in an organization (Hashim & Tan, 2015). In such circumstance, the individual cannot be forced to share such information but rather persuaded and motivated. Even when motivated or encouraged, sometimes the behaviour and attitude of such persons becomes a constraint to knowledge sharing (Koriat & Gelbard (2014).

Knowledge utilization is the ability to apply or use acquired knowledge into productive purposes or improvement of services. Meihami and Meihami (2013) opine that once knowledge is shared with or transferred to others, it may be utilized through elaboration, infusion and thoroughness. Most firms find it hard to utilize their knowledge due to organizational culture and the employee's fear of unknown. A firm or team that wants to utilize knowledge needs to strategize appropriately to avoid bottle necks and carry everyone along if possible. Teams that solve knowledge utilization and coordination related problems perform better than those that do not because they shift away from planning to feedback based learning (Reagans, Miron – Spektor, and Argote- Tepper, (2016). There must be specialized knowledge and proper coordination for effective knowledge utilization.

However, most of organizational knowledge may be lost if employee(s) resign(s), employment is terminated, or the inevitable hand of death strike; an indication that a proper knowledge transfer may not have been done. Similarly, even when knowledge is shared, the challenge of apathy or plausibly inability to utilize knowledge sets in. So the question is, can acquiring training whether formally or informally be a determinant of willingness to share such knowledge with relevant others or even utilize the knowledge for greater achievement of the firm's aim and objectives? In line with these, there is need to ascertain from business management consulting firms within Lagos Metropolis if training will cause staff to share and utilize knowledge acquired. Hence, we make some assumptions that:

H₀₁: Training does not significantly affect knowledge sharing in the Nigerian business management consulting firms.

H₀₂: Training does not significantly influence knowledge utilization in the Nigerian business management consulting firms.

H₀₃: Knowledge sharing does not significantly moderate the relationship between training and knowledge utilization.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a cross sectional survey research design. The area of study is Lagos state. Lagos was chosen due to its cosmopolitan nature, the nation's former federal capital and a hub for commercial activity. The target population for the study comprises the management and staff of the business management consulting firms. Using purposive and convenience sampling techniques, 162 self administered questionnaire were distributed to twenty (20) business management consulting firms spread across Lagos metropolis, and a total of 150 copies were returned and usable.

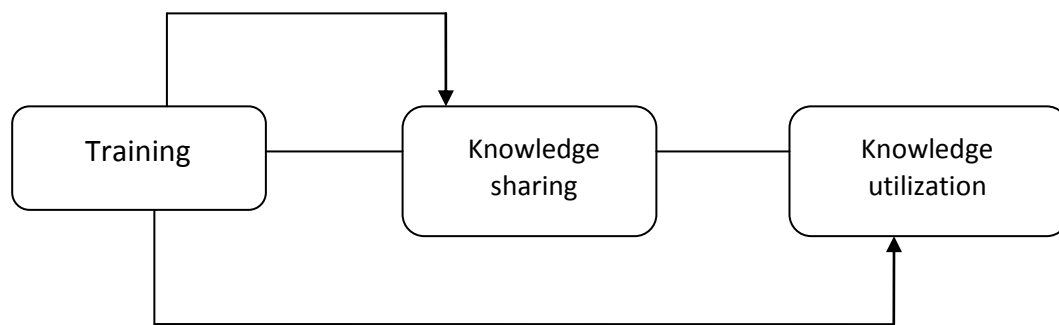


Fig. 1.1 Conceptual framework of the relationship between Training and knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.1: Socio demographic profile of respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	50	33.3
	Female	100	66.7
Age	20-30 years	38	25.0
	31-40 years	62	41.7
	Above 40 years	50	33.3
Marital Status	Single	50	33.3
	Married	92	61.3
	Divorced	2	1.3
	Widow(er)	6	4.0
Educational qualification	PhD/MBA/MSc	53	35.6
	B.Sc/BA	82	54.8
	Diploma/WAEC/NCE	15	9.6
Professional Qualification	ACIIN/ACCA/ICAN/ACIPM	18	11.8
	NIM	22	14.7
	Others	24	16.2
	None	86	57.4
Level at the Firm	Entry Level	28	18.5
	Middle Level Management	78	52.3
	Senior Management	28	18.5
	Executive	16	10.8
Experience	5 years and less than	62	41.5
	6 – 10 years	39	26.2
	11 – 20 years	33	21.6
	20 years and above	16	10.8

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 4.1 shows that the female gender dominated the response rate with 66.7%; while the age bracket of majority of the respondents' lie between ages 31 to 40 and above as depicted by 75.0%. Most of the respondents have degrees ranging from B.Sc to PhD as shown by 90.4% of representation; while less of the respondents have professional qualifications represented by 42.7%; majority of the respondents were middle level managers with 52.3%; even as 67.7% of the respondents have experience between less than 5 years and 10 years.

4.2 Testing of Hypotheses

H₀₁: Training does not significantly affect knowledge sharing

Table 4.2: Simple Regression of Training on Knowledge Sharing

MODEL	VARIABLES	B	t-value	P	R	R ²	F-value	F-sig.
1	Training	0.343	4.439	.000	.343 ^a	.117	19.702	.000 ^a

Source: Field survey, 2017

Table 4.2 which is the summary of simple regression of training on knowledge sharing signifies that training as a predictor variable accounts for 11.7% variance in knowledge sharing which is the criterion variable. The model generated from this result is: $Y=0.343(X) + U$, where, Y is knowledge sharing, X is training and U is error. Also, the ANOVA table shows the model is significant given that F-value is 19.702 with p-value less than 0.001. This outcome supports the fact that training affects knowledge sharing. So we reject the null hypothesis which says that training does not significantly affect knowledge sharing.

H₀₂: Training does not significantly affect knowledge utilization in the Nigerian business management consulting firms.

Table 4.3: Simple Regression of Training on Knowledge Utilization

MODEL	VARIABLES	B	t-value	P	R	R ²	F-value	F-sig.
1	Training	0.343	4.639	.000	.356 ^a	.127	21.523	.000 ^a

Source: Field survey, 2017

Table 4.3 is the summary of a simple linear regression analysis used to test hypothesis two. As shown in the results tables, an R² of 0.127 implies that training which is used as predictor variable accounts for 12.7% variance in knowledge utilization which is the predicted variable. The model generated from this result is: $Y=0.356(X) + U$, where, Y is knowledge utilization, X is training and U is error. Also, as shown in the ANOVA table, this model is equally significant with F-value of 19.702 and p-value less than 0.001. The implication of this is that organizations member readiness to utilize knowledge is affected by 12.7% of training received. Hence we reject the null hypotheses.

H₀₃: Knowledge sharing does not significantly influence the relationship between training and knowledge utilization.

Table 4.4: Knowledge Sharing as a moderator of Training and Knowledge Utilization.

Model = 1

Y = KU

X = TN

M = KS

Sample size

150

Outcome: KU

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	pm
.5120	.2622	.1229	11.6995	3.0000	146.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	4.4581	.0302	147.6875	.0000	4.3984	4.5178
KS	.3490	.0847	4.1203	.0001	.1816	.5163
TN	.3039	.0922	3.2953	.0012	.1216	.4862
int_1	-.3413	.2985	-1.1435	.2547	-.9312	.2486

Interactions:

int_1 TN X KS

Table 4.5: Conditional effect of X on Y at values of the moderator

KS	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-.4364	.4529	.1521	2.9770	.0034	.1522	.7535
.0000	.3039	.0922	3.2953	.0012	.1216	.4862
.4364	.1550	.1667	.9295	.3542	-.1745	.4845

In hypothesis three, knowledge sharing is used to moderate the relationship between training and knowledge utilization. This moderation analysis is done with the aid of Hayes (2012) Process Tool. The results are shown in tables 4.4 and 4.5. The result in table 4.4 shows that the interaction between the predictor variable (training) and the moderator (knowledge sharing) is insignificant ($b = -0.3413$, $P > 0.05$). This insignificant moderation effect suggests that knowledge sharing does not moderate the relationship between training and knowledge utilization. This lack of moderation effect is further buttressed in the simple slope analysis (table 4.5). Here, the regressions for training as a predictor of knowledge utilization moderated by knowledge sharing are shown at three levels - low, mean and high. At low and mean levels (i.e. -0.4364 and 0.0000), the moderation effects are significant (in both cases, $P < 0.005$). However, at high level of moderation (0.4364), the effect becomes insignificant ($P > 0.05$). Thus, confirming that knowledge sharing does not moderate the relationship between training and knowledge utilization.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The result from the test of hypothesis one and two show that training significantly and positively affects knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization. This implies that the ability of staff members to share knowledge and or utilize knowledge is influenced among other things by the training received, and or if they perceive that they have what it takes – the knowledge power which aids knowledge sharing. This result is in line with the position of Lewis *et al* (2004); Goman (2002); Omotayo (2015); and Alaneme *et al* (2016).

Hypothesis three indicates that there is a positive but insignificant effect of knowledge sharing as a moderator of training and knowledge utilization. The implication is that the willingness to share or transfer knowledge does not primarily translate to staff training or staff eagerness to utilize knowledge. This result is contrary to popular belief that firms organize training for the reason of sharing or distributing knowledge; and the position of Meihami and Meihami (2013) which suggests that once acquired knowledge is shared or transferred; it may be utilized for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. Secondly, training as a predictor of knowledge utilization when moderated by knowledge sharing at three levels of low, mean and high, indicate that at low and mean levels, the moderation effects are significant but, at high level of moderation, the effect becomes insignificant.

This implies that the ability of staff members to share knowledge or willingness on the part of the organization to distribute knowledge may or may not impress the need for training or the willingness to utilize gained knowledge. This is inferred from the insignificance nature of the regression at the high level of moderation; whereas at a low or average level, knowledge sharing can actually moderate training needs and knowledge utilization. The result is partly in line with the thought of Idris & Kolawole (2016) that one of the challenges of an organization is the transfer of knowledge of the employee and organization into its goods and services; this need of course necessitate trainings whether formal or informal; and at the end lead to utilization of the knowledge for improved production or services.

The R^2 of 0.117 and 0.127 in hypotheses one and two respectively is an indication that training is not the sole influencer of knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization as there may be other contributing factors not examined in this study. In addition, knowledge sharing does not necessarily moderate training and knowledge utilization. Organizations should therefore endeavour to unravel some other factors that can affect knowledge sharing and utilization, as well as note that the need to organize training should look beyond the mere thought of knowledge sharing or a means to encourage utilization of knowledge to other intricate factors.

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