

**BUILDING A KNOWLEDGE SHARING CULTURE
IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES
THROUGH LEARNING ORGANIZATION**

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Abstract

This research aims to observe how Knowledge Sharing level correlates with the implementation of Learning Organization in both People and Structure Levels. Furthermore, such Learning Organization will be implemented by fostering Organizational Commitment to the lecturers of Private Universities affiliated under the Area III of the Coordination of Private Universities (Kopertis). This topic is relevant to the researcher's interest inasmuch as the findings of such study may help those Private Universities to improve their learning capacities and transform into organizations which are able to facilitate their members to develop learning culture so they will have adequate capacities to perform some innovations, foster the development of their organizations, and share valuable knowledge.

The findings of this research evidences that the implementation of Learning Organization in People level bring significant and positive influence towards the implementation of Learning organization in Structure level.

Learning Organization in People level also gives meaningful and positive contribution towards the level of knowledge sharing, which has been either directly or indirectly integrated through organization commitment. On the contrary, Learning Organization in Structure level does not contribute any meaningful impact towards the level of knowledge but such component can still affect knowledge sharing when it is integrated through the organization commitment

Keywords : *Learning Organization, Knowledge Sharing, Organization Commitment*

Introduction

In Indonesia, higher education institutions are one of the components of national education which are allowed to conduct and develop higher education programs as well as knowledge.

Dealing with such role, higher education institutions have to face some constraining challenges. These institutions are required to prepare well-qualified graduates, create positive image, and transform into well-developed education institutions which are adaptive to any forms of changes and developments. This remark is in accordance with what have been stated by Seymour (1992) and Freed, et.al (1997) – a good university shall be concerned about capacity building.

Other problem that may constrain Indonesia's higher education deals with competition. In this age of globalization, private universities must compete not only with their public competitors but also with their regional as well as international counterparts.

The position of Indonesian Universities in the eyes of international world can be seen in the table of world university rankings compiled by Times Higher Education Supplement (THES). Once in 2008, no Indonesian University was listed in top 100 world university rankings of THES. Similar condition lasted until 2012, when the listing of top universities was based on the quality of teaching/learning process and quality of research, including the volume of research activities conducted and scientific publications issued by those respective universities during a year (times higher education, 2012). In 2013, based on the ranking system constructed by *webometrics*, 32 Indonesian higher education institutions (public and private institutions) are included in top 100 higher education institutions in South-East Asia, 6 of which are higher education institutions that operate under the coordination of Kopertis III. All higher education institutions listed in such 100 top institutions in South East Asia are universities, and the amount of which is far fewer than the total number of universities which operate under the coordination of Kopertis III.

To be considered as a well-qualified institution which is able to produce best graduates, research activities, community service and scientific publications, a higher education institution shall be able to continuously adapt, develop, and learn. (Kogut, et.al, 1992; Henderson and Cockburn, 1994). According to Marquandt (1996), an organization must develop its capacity building through learning activities in order to achieve and maintain the level of its competitiveness in an ever-changing world.

Higher education institutions can improve its learning capacities by transforming into an organization which facilitates learning for all of its members, and the members of which must have personal motivation to learn and develop their potentials. By doing so, such organization will continuously transform (Peddler, 1998; Dale, 2003), so it has certain capacities to perform some innovations and grow the level of its development (Watkins and Marsick, 1993, 1994, 2003). Furthermore, a higher education institution can only transform into a Learning Organization in the event that such organization has the ability to build each individual's *personal mastery, mental model, team learning, shared vision, and integrated system thinking*. Those components, according to Senge (1990), are the requirements of a learning organization. Another expert added that a dialog between the members and the managerial board must be conducted in such organization. Thus, we can add some components like *organization, pople, knowledge, learning and technology* as the components of learning organization. (Marquandt, 1996).

Slightly different with the above-mentioned statements, Veisi, et.al (2012) stated that the individuals or members of higher education institutions will determine whether such institution will develop into a learning organization or not. Thus, we need to distinguish between the learning organization for individuals and for management board, eventhough those individuals, teams, and organization shall jointly establish an '*embedded*' system. (Kumar, 2005).

This statement is in line with the argument conveyed by Yang, Watkins and Marsick (1993, 1994, 2003, 2004), in order to establish such learning organization we have to observe two levels of perspective, *People dan Structure*. From *people level* perspective (individuals and *team*), *Continuous Learning, Inquiry and dialogue, team learning, and individuals' empowerment* are needed to build such organization, whereas from *Structure Level*, each organization is required to have information and knowledge that can be accessed by all members of such organization (*embedded system*), have a connection with related community, and all members of the organization must fully understand about the benefits of such learning for its surroundings (*system connection*), and such organization shall be led by

a leader who has the ability to apply strategical thinking when utilizing the learning to achieve organizational goals and the ability to share joint-vision (*strategic leadership*).

By establishing a learning organization, said Absah (2009) a private higher education institution (PTS) will be able to develop and create core and strategical competences to achieve successful educational, research, and community service's goals.

Based on the above-mentioned conditions, this paper aims to observe the following:

1. The benefit of the implementation of Learning Organization in People Level towards Learning Organization in Structure Level
2. The benefit of the implementation of Learning Organization in People Level towards Knowledge Sharing and Organization Commitment
3. The benefit of the implementation of Learning Organization in Structure Level towards Knowledge Sharing and Organization Commitment
4. The benefit of the level of Organization commitment towards Knowledge Sharing

Literature Review

Learning Organization

Learning Organization has been developed into some perspectives, such premise has been summarized from Watkins and Marsick (2004:32-35), Ji et.al (2009:42045), and Weldy et.al (2010:456). There are 4 perspectives of *Learning Organization*, namely:

1. *System Thinking*, Senge (1990) defined learning organization as an organization which has not only the ability to adapt with its surroundings but also the ability to develop, i.e. the ability to create some future alternatives. Senge developed five principles, i.e. team learning, which involves group learning activities; shared vision, the ability to develop further visions; Mental models, the ability to closely observe how an industry works; Personal mastery, the ability to continuously perform self-development, increase the energy, and be objective towards the organization; and system thinking, the ability to see the correlation between certain function with another. Those five major principles are needed for the establishment of a learning organization.
2. *Learning Perspective*. Pedler, burgonye and Biydell (1991), defines LO as an organization which continuously facilitates learning to all of its members in order to achieve organizational goals. There are 7 dimensions of learning perspective, namely: *A learning approach to strategy, internal exchange, reward flexibility, enabling structures, boundary worker as environmental scanner, intercompany learning, learning climate and self-development for everyone*. The components of Learning Perspective as defined by Pedler et.al will bring comprehensive aspect to all levels of organization. But similar with the dimension formulated by Senge, those seven instruments are merely used to implement LO, instead of to observe the same.
3. *Strategic Perspective*. Garvin (1993) defines LO as the ability of an organization to create, transfer and modify knowledge in accordance with its new insight. Perceived from strategic perspective, Goh (1998) added that LO has five dimensions: *Clarity and support for mission and vision, shared leadership and involvement, a culture that encourages experimentation, the ability to transfer knowledge accross organizational boundaries and teamwork and cooperations*. Based on strategic perspective, managerial ability is needed by an organization which intends to transform into a LO. Nevertheless, dealing with such strategic perspective, there are some elements left un-included, i.e. individuals and continuous learning process. Researcher assumes that those five dimensions of LO are not parallel because some components of which merely reflect organization culture

(*experimentation, teamwork and cooperation*) whereas others only reflect organizational ability (*transfer of knowledge*).

4. *Integrative Perspective*. Marsick dan Watkins (199) defines LO as a principle which has three key components, namely: (1) *system level, continuous learning* (2) *create and manage knowledge outcomes* (3) *lead to improvements in the organization's performance*. Prinsis Marsick and Watkins integrated two important components, *people and structure*, which shall be deemed as interactive components of organizational change and development. Furthermore, Marsick and Watkins develop seven dimensions of LO, namely: *Continuous Learning* which represents the effort taken by an organization to establish continuous learning and similar opportunity for all members to learn. Second dimension deals with *inquiry dan dialogue*, which reflects the effort taken by an organization to build inquiry, feedback, and experiment cultures. The third dimension is *team learning* which reflects the spirit and ability to co-operate and build an effective team work. The fourth dimension is *empowerment* which displays certain organizational process to build some joint-visions and get the feedback from all members of the organization to bridge old visions with the new ones. The fifth dimension, *embedded system*, indicates the effort to develop a system which covers all kinds and processes of learning. The sixth dimension, *system connection*, reflects global thinking and an action which connects internal environment of the organization with its external environment. Last but not least, the seventh dimension deals with *strategic leadership*, which reflects the leaders who can think strategically and use learning to facilitate changes and transform into a new organization with new goals.

Combining those four perspectives, Ortenbald (2002) formulates some concepts about LO. First, *Learning perspective*, which focuses on the knowledge adopted by all levels of organization. Second, *learning at work perspective* perceives LO as an organization where each individual conducts learning at his/her work place. Third, *learning climate perspective* perceives an organization as a place that facilitates its members to continuously learn. Fourth, *learning structure perspective* perceives *learning* as a united system with flexible nature.

Organization Commitment

Robbins (2001), in Bui and Baruch (2010), states that organization commitment should reach the level where employees stand for organizational behalf and retain their memberships in such organization. In other words, high organization commitment shall be defined as very close alignment to certain organization.

In accordance with Basic Concepts of Organization Commitment which are formulated by Greenberg and baron (1993) and a theory from Mowday, Porter and Dubin (1974) as cited by Yen (2011) the following attitudes reflect the position of individuals in an establishment: assume that he/ she is identical with and involved in such organization and does not have any intention to leave such organization.

Organization commitment shall be directed into the level where employees are psychologically linked to their work place, whereas the object of such commitment is organization, individuals and ideas, or practices and employment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993) in Lie, et al (2011), or can be defined as the work attitude of which level display how big commitment that can be contributed by an employee towards his/her organization. (Steer in Lie, 2011) such attitude or alignment between employees and their organization may be developed by adding some components like strong belief towards organizational goals and values, use all means and efforts to achieve organizational goals and has strong faith to be engaged with the organization. (Mowday, proter and Steers in Lie 2011). Three more components are added to organization commitment, namely: affective

component which refers to employees' emotional condition, sustainability component which refers to the funds earned during employees' affiliation with the organization and normative component which refers to employees' obligation to the organization.

Some previous studies show that organization commitment has been the focus of studies and observation conducted in these recent years because organization commitment may trigger higher level of team loyalty and boost the performance of an organization. By knowing employees' organization commitment, an organization will be able to find a way to retain its employees and boost their performance, which become determining factors in organizational development.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge Sharing is a part of *Knowledge Management* (KM) which was popularized by Drucker (1988). According to Howell (2010:11), it shall be defined as interpreting organizational goals into some actions. By doing this, an organization must transform some information into a series of actions and every member of such organization shall be aware whether they can share such information or not, which party will depend on their information, and what kind of information is needed by the party. Those issues are the basis of the integration of *Knowledge Sharing* as a part of *Knowledge Management*.

Wah (2010) defines Knowledge Sharing as "Voluntary Interaction" between the members of the organization, including information sharing about applicable norms, laws and regulations, and knowledge.

Hoof and Ridder (2004) in Govindaraju (2008) defines *knowledge sharing* as a process where individuals perform an exchange to the knowledge they have (*tacit knowledge* and *Explicit knowledge*). This definition implies that each *Knowledge Sharing* attitude consists of *Bringing* (*donating knowledge*) and *Getting* (*collecting knowledge*) activities. Donating is an action conducted by communicating one's intellectuality to another whereas collecting shall be defined as an action conducted by consulting one's intellectuality with others'.

Frequently employees adopt certain assumption that *Knowledge Sharing* can be a threat which may reduce their status, skills and profit. Such assumption makes knowledge sharing become very low as stated by Morris and Willian (2001) in Yen (2011). In addition to that, according to Yen (2011) one factor that may raise the level of *knowledge sharing* in an organization deals with organizational culture. Previous research also stated that some factors like information system facilities, well-organized organizational structure and remuneration system will determine and raise the level of *sharing knowledge*.

Christensen, based on Howell (2008) mentions in his paper that *knowledge sharing* is a process conducted to explore, identify one's available knowledge, simplify the access to knowledge in order to transfer and apply such knowledge to complete certain job in better, faster, and more efficient manners. In addition to that, there are some types of *knowledge sharing*, namely *proffesional knowledge*, *coordinating knowledge*, and *object-based knowledge*.

Knowledge sharing is inevitably needed by some higher education institutions to increase the amount of researches, community service, and publications where lecturers or any well-experienced education staffs can perform knowledge sharing by transferring any knowledge related to research and community service.

Correlation between Learning Organization and Organization Commitment

For any individuals who are affiliated as the members of some higher education institutions, reciprocal relationship between individuals and organization and vice versa can only work when those parties have commitment towards each other. Organization

commitment, therefore, can be defined as the involvement of each members of a higher education institution, as stated by Mowday et al, 1997 quoted from Schultz (2010) that “*affective commitment is defined as the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement that an employee has with its organization and goals*”, which means individual’s – both physical and emotional - involvement in the organization which is needed to run the organization. Sheldon (1971) adds that, “*commitment as being positive evaluation of the organization and the organization goals*”. Conceptually it has been said that organization commitment will be affected by *Learning Organization* as stated by Hong (2007), quoting Cohen (2004), *organizational commitment is considered as being influenced by learning organization as they can be the precure sources to innovation and creation*. Other research conducted by Harel (1999), Antharaman (2004) and Bathnagar (2007) towards manufacturing industry in America shows that there is positive correlation between a learning organization with the increase of organization commitment. Another study also reveals the same; a learning organization will have positive impact towards organization commitment. (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Nyhan, 2000).

Correlation between Learning Organization and Knowledge Sharing

Bui and Baruch (2010) in their research cite that one of the *outcomes* from *Learning Organization* is *Knowledge Sharing*. In addition to that, *Team Learning* and *Mental Model* are closely retaliated with *Learning Organization* in higher education institutions and the *Leadership* will affect the *Knowledge sharing* resulted from such *Learning Organization*.

Correlation between Knowledge sharing and Organization Commitment

Hoff and Ridder in Govindarajan (2008) states that there is a correlation between organization commitment and Knowledge Sharing. Bock. Et.al (2005) also adds that after doing a study towards a company in Korea, he is able to prove that the higher the level of organization commitment, the higher the intention to share knowledge between the members of such organization.

Rocha and Cardoso (2008 : 219-220) say that the correlation between *Organization Commitment* and *Knowledge Sharing* has theoretically been explained in various literatures, among others in Hislop (2003), Lin (2006), McKenzie (2001), Takeuchi (2001) and Nonaka, et.al (2001) and has empirically been proven by Hoff and Ridder (2004) as well as Cabrera (2006). Those experts state that there is a correlation between the level of employees’ Organization Commitment and the *Knowledge Sharing* attitude between them, such study elicits whether or not they tend to be reluctant to share knowledge with others. Further study is conducted by Scarborough and Carter (2010). They mention that *Organization Commitment* has big influence towards the intention of each member of the organization to continuously share his/her knowledge. Even, Petokorpi (2006) and Bock, et.al (2005) state that “*Organization Commitment can motivate employees to share their knowldege.*”

Research Method

This research uses explanatory-causality approach and has been conducted by the analysis unit of Area III Kopertis towards some private universities’ lecturers who have received lecturer certification, teach at some universities within West Jakarta area, and have adequate understanding as well as capability to state their perceptions, opinions, and stances towards knowledge management in respected field. The data used in this research are primary data. Data collection method has been performed by distributing some surveys to the lecturers of private universities within Area III of Kopertis. The output of the data collection will be in form of some subjective data which state respondents’ opinions, stances, justifications,

experiences. The characteristics of the subjects of this research is all of those subjects work as lecturers.

The size of the sample, according to Hair *et al* (1998) must be 5–10 times higher than the amount of all indicators or according to Ferdinand (2002) it must have *maximum likelihood estimation* (MLE) between 100-200. There are approximately 150–300 samples are required for this research. The samples should have the minimum limit of 150 and maximum limit of maximum 300. The lecturers who become the samples for this research must be included within MLE interval. All samples are drawn randomly by using *simple random sampling* technique, in which each individual investor will have similar chance to be selected as a sample.

Research Findings

From the response of questionnaires distributed to 150 lecturers of some higher education institutions in West Jakarta who have already received lecturer certificates, the following facts are revealed:

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis

| Variable and Dimension | Definition | Score | Description |
|--|--|-------------|-------------|
| Learning Organization: People Level | | 924 | Fair |
| Continous Learning | Chances to continue his/her education to higher level and to develop his/her skills are facilitated by the board of management/founders which manages the private higher education institution (PTS) where he/she teaches. | 938 | Fair |
| Inquiry and Dialog | The culture of PTS and Foundation support all inquiries, feedbacks and trials given by the Lecturer towards the board of executives and the board of management of the PTS | 1050 | High |
| Team Learning | Tasks are designed to be performed by some team works which are able to accommodate the thought given by each of its members. Cooperation shall be deemed as a good value which shall be reinforced | 873 | Fair |
| Empowerment | Each lecturer is involved in designing and implementing all organizational visions. Ty shall be delegated to each lecturer so each lecturer will be motivated to perform each task under his/her responsibility. | 834 | Fair |
| Learning Organization Structure Level | | 926 | Fair |
| Embedded System | A system where all kinds of learning are created, maintained, and integrated Into some tasks. Each lecturer has certain access to this kind of technology. | 815 | Fair |
| System Connection | The PTS shall be connected to the society, so each lecturer has the understanding about his/her surrounding environment and the ability to use any form of information to do his/her task as well as to perceive the impact of his/her task towards his/her environment. | 931 | Fair |
| Leadership | Leaders use learning strategy to achieve their business goals. Leaders shall be able to be role models who can support learning activities. | 932 | Fair |
| Knowledge Sharing | | 1080 | High |
| Donating Knowledge | Each lecturer can share his/her knowledge with other lecturers, especially dealing with research activities and community service. | 1083 | High |
| Collecting | Each lecturer can do a consultation to share his/her knowledge, especially dealing | 1078 | High |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|------------|-------------|
| Knowledge | with research activities and community service. | | |
| Organization Commitment | | 851 | Fair |
| Willingness to exert effort | To measure how far a lecturer can share and contribute his/her knowledge and time, compared to other lecturers who teach in his/her work place. | 863 | Fair |
| Degree of Goal and Value | Lecturer thinks that he/she has similar goals and values with the PTS where he/she teaches. | 797 | Fair |
| Maintain Membership | Observe how far a lecturer thinks that he/she works for the best PTS and be thankful of having the opportunity to work in such PTS. | 892 | Fair |

Source : processed questionnaires

Descriptively, respondents' perception and justification towards the implementation of Learning Organization in people level shows that in people level, which consists of individual and team level, the PTS has performed adequate amount of learning process, i.e. continuous learning, team learning, group learning, and the empowerment conducted by the leaders and founders of the PTS. High level of implementation is found in inquiry and dialog component, where open discussions between lecturers, between lecturer and leaders/founders, or between leaders/founders have been frequently performed in order to establish a conducive teaching-learning atmosphere.

Lecturers also have fairly positive perceptions towards Learning Organization in Structure level. Nonetheless, the lowest score is found in embedded system component, where lecturers have accessibility to information, data, and knowledge provided by the universities.

The score given to Organization Commitment is similar to Learning Organization component. Lecturers think that they have adequate level of commitment towards the university and foundation. They, however, does not share similar goals and values with the ones adopted by the universities where they work.

Knowledge sharing levels between those lecturers is relatively high since the lecturers frequently discuss and share knowledge, data, and information with their colleagues.

Dealing with the benefit of the implementation of Learning Organization towards the level of Knowledge Sharing integrated through Organization Commitment, Path Analysis displays the following result:

This research shall be grouped into three sub-structures based on some similarities. The first similarity is found in the influence of the Learning Organization in People Level towards the Learning Organization in structure Level. The result of the similarity found in the first sub-structure, the Learning Organization in People Level has significant influence towards the Learning Organization in Structure Level, It has been evidenced by the value of those variables which reaches the figure of 0.483. In other words, we may say that 48.3% of the implementation of learning organization in Structure Level has been affected by the implementation of Learning Organization in People Level, and 51.7% has been affected by other variables.

Second similarity sub-structure shows the influence of Learning organization in both people and structure levels towards Organization Commitment. Based on the result of data processing, both variables have significant influences, where Learning Organization in people level both directly and indirectly affects the level of the Organization Commitment integrated through the Learning Organization in Structure Level, This fact has been evidenced by R squared value which is amounted to the level of 0.696 which reveals the fact that 69.6% of the level of lecturers' commitment to their universities is determined by the Learning

Organization in both People and structure levels, whereas 30.4% of which is affected by other factors.

Last sub-structure displays the correlation between the Learning Organization in both People and Structure Levels as well as Organization Commitment towards the level of Knowledge Sharing in the university. The result of data processing infers that the learning Organization in people level affects the level of Knowledge sharing which is both directly or indirectly integrated through Learning Organization in structure level and Organization Commitment. Learning Organization in structure level does not have any significant influence towards the level of knowledge sharing, but has something to do with organization commitment. Furthermore, Organization commitment has significant influence towards the level of knowledge sharing. The value of such influence reaches the amount of 0.459 or about 45.9% of the knowledge sharing level has been influenced by the implementation of learning organization and the level of organization commitment, whereas the rest 56.1% of which is affected by other factors.

When we combine the result of those three similarity substructures, we may infer that the total amount of direct and indirect influences as well as the total effect of those sub-structures towards the level of knowledge sharing can be displayed in the following table:

Table 2 : Total Effect value towards Knowledge Sharing

| Variable | Direct | Indirect | Total Effect | Influence Value |
|---|--------|----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Learning Organization in People Level integrated through LO structure and Organization Commitment | 0.493 | $0.695 \times 0.44 \times 0.659$ | 0.69 | 0.478 |
| Learning Org in Structure Level | - | 0.44×0.659 | 0.289 | 0.084 |
| Organization Commitment | 0.659 | - | 0.659 | 0.434 |
| Total Effect | | | | 0.996 |

Source: processed Path Analysis' result

From the above-mentioned findings we may observe that the influence of those three variables: Learning organization in People level, Learning Organization in structure level and Organization Commitment towards the level of Knowledge Sharing, displays very significant result, i.e. 99.6%. The most significant influence is contributed by the implementation of Learning Organization in People Level which is amounted to 47.8%.

Then, Sobel Test shall be conducted in order to observe whether moderator variable has significant contribution or not. The first Sobel test has been conducted to observe whether Learning Organization in structure level contributes as the mediator of Learning Organization in people level towards Organization Commitment or not. The result of T-test displays t value of $4.23 > 1.96$, thus we may conclude that the LO in Structure level has a role as the mediator. Organization commitment does not mediate between Learning Organization in people level and the level of Knowledge sharing since its T value only shows the amount of $1.3 < 1.96$. In addition to that, Organization Commitment mediates Learning Organization in structure level with the level of knowledge sharing.

Conclusion and Remarks

The findings of this research reveal the perceptions of the lecturers who teach at some higher education institutions. According to those lecturers, the Learning Organization

in people level will greatly affect the level of knowledge sharing between the members of certain organization. Learning Organization in People level consists of continuous learning, the will to learn from time to time; inquiry and dialog, an open discussion between academic staffs, employers, and leaders as well as the availability of feedback from the university's leaders; team learning, the learning process conducted in teams, it has been reflected from some research activities and community services which are conducted by some groups of lecturers; and empowerment, the condition where lecturers have been engaged in any activity and decision making process related to academic activities like teaching and learning process, research activities, community services, and scientific publications.

Learning organization in structure level does not have direct impact towards the level of knowledge sharing. This variable only has certain impact to knowledge sharing in the event that it is integrated through organization commitment which assures the availability of an embedded system or informations that can be accessed by all lecturers; system connection, the number of networks between the respected universities with other parties; and leadership, the availability of leaders who can share organizational goals and visions and increase the level of organization commitment, an emotional and psychological attachment of those lecturers towards their home-base universities. The availability of those components will greatly boost the level of knowledge sharing between those fellow lecturers.

Knowledge sharing is an inescapably important value that must be adopted by each higher education institution because the improvement of the level of such knowledge sharing, will boost lecturers' performance, especially the ones dealing with research activities, community service, and scientific publications.

This study will contribute towards the literature of learning behavior and knowledge sharing willingness of the faculty members (Lecturers) of the private higher education institutions in Indonesia, in terms of what determines the faculty member's level of knowledge sharing towards the organizations.

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