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Academic Librarians' Differences in Perceptions on Organizational Learning Capabilities (OLC)

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a study that examines the differences in perceptions of academic librarians on organizational learning capabilities' (OLC) dimensions. A research survey method using questionnaire was distributed to 240 academic librarians in selected university libraries in Malaysia. A total of 78% (186) of the respondents returned the questionnaire for further analysis. From the findings, the OLC's dimensions on information communication technology (ICT) was ranked as the highest (mean= 5.65) indicating that it was the most preferred response as perceived by the respondents. Using ANOVA test, the results showed that there were significant differences on organizational culture and leadership among respondents with different years of working experience. Besides, results also found that there are positive and moderate relationship that exist between each the OLC dimensions and knowledge performance. The findings are important to the librarians and the academic libraries for improving the skills of acquiring knowledge and organizational learning capabilities toward enhancing the performance of the librarians and organizations.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Leadership, Organizational Learning Capabilities (OLC), Librarians, University Libraries

Introduction

Academic libraries need to enhance their level of organizational learning capabilities in order for them to remain relevant to the universities' communities. Libraries served as repositories of information and librarians play their roles as gatekeepers to the information. Most of the organizational learning studies argued about the impact of technology on the organization especially the library (Geisecke & McNeil, 2004; Su, 2006). Technology has changed the entire library's business (Miller, 2011). Libraries' functions have grown and change from collecting information and making it accessible. According to Geisecke and McNeil (2004); Fowler (1998) there are many library scholars who are concerned about academic libraries and its relevance in embracing organizational learning for future survival. Basically, learning organization is a model and organizational learning is a process, whereby organization can adapt the working-learning relationship in order to innovate and lead. Nevertheless, the idea of an academic library as a learning organization is great and it appears frequently in anything related to organizational learning and academic libraries (Senge, 1990).

Organizational learning has become a main concept that covers variation of topics in the study of such library (Geisecke & McNeil, 2004; Su, 2006; Rowley, 2000; Shoid & Kassim, 2013). According to Aghdasi and Bafruei (2009) measuring organizational learning capability is the most important issue in organizational studies. Reid and Samer (2005) believed that organizational learning and innovation replicate closely to the related processes and influenced by the many elements such as; culture, climate, leadership, management practices, information acquisition, retrieval and sharing and organizational structures, systems and environment. Besides, organizational learning capabilities have been considered as an active process that will result to the openness, experimental capability, knowledge transfer and integration capability (Bahadori et al., 2012).

Meanwhile, this study aims to explore the difference in perceptions on organizational learning capabilities (OLC) of academic librarians. This paper addresses four dimensions of the OLC which are organizational culture, leadership, employees' skills and competencies, and ICT. The objectives are:-

1. To examine the perceptions of librarians on organizational culture, leadership, employees' skills and competencies, and ICT.
2. To examine the differences on OLC dimensions between selected demographic characteristics (position, education level, age group and work experience).
3. To identify the relationships between OLC dimensions and knowledge performance.

From the research objectives, the following research hypotheses were formulated for the study: -

H1: There are significant differences on OLC's dimensions between respondents of different position.

H2: There are significant differences on OLC's dimensions between respondents of different educational level.

H3: There are significant differences on OLC's dimensions among respondents of different age group.

H4: There are significant differences on OLC's dimensions among respondents of different work experiences.

H5: There is significant relationship between OLC dimensions and knowledge performance.

Literature Review

Organizational Learning Capabilities (OLC)

Aradhana and Anuradhan (2006) affirmed that organizational learning capabilities is the situation where individuals and groups are willing to acquire and apply knowledge in their jobs in making decisions and influencing others to accomplish important tasks for the organization. Organizational learning has a positive relation with the organizational performance. Therefore, organizations should take initiative to design themselves as learning laboratories in terms of acquiring, generating, sharing and using knowledge resources continuously for the innovation and performance of the organization and its members.

Meanwhile, studies by Dibella et al (1996) as well as Goh and Richards (1997) stated that organizational learning capability is the organizational and managerial elements that facilitate the organizational learning process or allowing the organization to learn. Full attention has been given to the growth of organizational learning capability by scholars. After a few studies, it shows that organizational learning capabilities play an important role for innovation. Besides, it is shown that organizations have increased to learn and it is a critical factor for organization to grow and innovate (Goh, 1998; Hult et al., 2004). In addition, failure is the key

for the effective organizational learning, for example interaction with the external environment to the relationships with the organizational external environment (Alegre & Chiva, 2008).

Besides that, organizational learning capabilities are learning process for each of the organization that practices it (Fang et al., 2011; Shoid et al., 2012). Therefore, any changes resulted from the learning process may drive to the recovery, or maintenance of organizational function (Alegre & Chiva, 2008). Organizational learning capabilities has become an important element to enhance the growth and innovation of one organization. Moreover, a collection of resources of tangible and intangible skills are necessary to use competitive advantages. Organizational learning capabilities are also known as a formation of capacity and combination of ideas in an efficient way in contact with an assortment of organizational borders and through special managerial methods and innovations (Rashidi et al., 2010).

Yeo (2005) conceptualized organizational learning as an element that deals with the process of change and revolution. It focuses on both short-term solutions and overall adaption of the organization. Systematic approach in learning and development in one organization is vital as it helps in facilitating the organization's members to participate in transformation process (Yeo, 2005; Senge, 1996). Change of an organization involved change in people's values and beliefs. Changes in cooperative order may help the materialization of organizational learning and transformation to a learning organization (Yeo, 2005).

a) Organizational Culture

Hall (1992) believed that organizational culture plays as cognitive capability of one organization. Besides that, it is strongly related with the learning behaviour of employees. A few types of organizational culture might value and promote learning behaviours, while others do not. Organizational culture helps to facilitate the systematic change of organizational learning behaviour and also improve the learning capabilities (Shoid & Kassim, 2012). Furthermore, organizational culture is the essential element in organizational performance. Therefore, performance and productivity are affected by the organizational culture. Organizational culture also helps to motivate and apply employees' talents and improve productivity (Jafarnia, 2004).

Organizational culture is a set of shared value that is responsible in making the organizational community to understand the functionality of the organization itself. Moreover, it helps in guiding the ways of thinking as well as behaviour. There are four types of cultures that are listed by McKenna (2000) that surround the organization which are power, culture, role culture, support culture and achievement culture. The cultures are totally different from one to another country. Thus, organization's vision should acknowledge both organizational structures and communication (Howard & Sommerville, 2008). Based on this perspective, culture in organization provides elements of appreciation and growth of positive action within organizational system (Jenlink & Banathy, 2005).

b) Leadership

Kanter (1983) is responsible in introducing the empowerment or leadership concepts as a successor to the older command-and-control approach in organization. Thus, it directs the

management to promote employees on what to do and how to do it. The power has been decentralized to employees of lower echelons and they are responsible to make their own decisions (Randolph, 2000).

Leadership is important in one organization. The existence of leadership may encourage the organizational culture which also enables the workforce to understand and believe their organization's vision, mission and value (Shah, 2005; Shoid & Kassim, 2013). A constant and powerful leadership will encourage employees to do their job because they want to enhance and develop learning culture. Besides, organization's leadership also encourages learning culture with future and an external orientation. This may foster the free flow of information between customers and staff to improve the quality service and products (Shah, 2005).

c) Employees' Skills and Competencies

Beheshtifar, Mohammad-Rafiei and Nekoie-Moghadam (2012) stated that employees' skills and competencies is a self-management of working and learning experiences in order to achieve desired career growth. According to Azmi, Ahmad and Zainuddin (2009), in order to develop the employees' performance in their present and future tasks, employees' skills and competencies which are based on career development is important to be implemented. Employees' skills and competencies are special abilities which are characterized by representing, at society defined level, the ability to behave adequately and to take responsibility for one's behaviour. Beheshtifar, Mohammad-Rafiei and Nekoie-Moghadam (2012) affirmed that employees' skills and competencies have the potential to go far beyond technical skills and managerial abilities on specific organizations' growth plan.

d) Information Communication and Technology (ICT)

According to Bhatt, Gupta and Kitchens (2005) collaboration support systems are integrated information and communication technologies that facilitated communication and connectivity among individuals in supporting organization's collaboration during performance. Meanwhile, developments of new products of ICT require information specialists to be knowledgeable on how to incorporate the technologies and products in their services. Therefore, they should ensure that they keep abreast with technologies, systems, new forms of information, information media and information sources (Chou, 2003; Shoid et l., 2012).

Research Methods

Quantitative method has been conducted in this study. Selected university libraries in Malaysia were chosen as the study setting. The respective university libraries were Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). They were chosen because the universities have the most number of academic librarians in the university libraries. Questionnaires were personally distributed to a total of two hundred and forty (240) librarians of the selected university libraries. From the feedback, one hundred and eighty-six (78%) of the questionnaires were returned and usable for analysis. The questionnaire consists of four dimensions of OLC namely organizational culture, leadership and employees' skills and competencies and ICT. The questionnaire items were designed on a 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. For data

analysis, descriptive statistics include frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation while the inferential statistics include independent samples *t* –test and ANOVA (One - Way Analysis of Variance).

Findings and Discussion

Reliability Analysis

It can be summarized that Cronbach's alpha value of organizational culture (0.814), leadership (0.884), employees' skills and competencies (0.872), and ICT (0.875) exceed 0.7. The value of this coefficient was considered high and acceptable, thus satisfying the reliability assumption of the items in the respective dimensions.

Table 1
Reliability Test

Variables	No. of items in a component	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items
Organizational Culture	7	0.805	**0.814**
Leadership	7	0.884	**0.884**
Employees' Skills and Competencies	7	0.871	**0.872**
Information Communication and Technology (ICT)	7	0.874	**0.875**

Profile of Respondents

The summary statistics for the profile of the respondents are presented. From the total of 186 respondents, 70.4% (131) of the respondents are female and 29.6% (55) of the respondents are male. Majority (153 or 82.3%) are middle management staff compared to 33 (29.6%) holding senior management post. Slightly more than half (95 or 51.1%) of the respondents have Bachelor's degree while 91 (48.9%) had Master's degree. Majority of the respondents belong to the 31 – 40 years of age group (83 or 44.6%), followed by 20 -30 years of age group (58 or 31.2%), 41 – 50 years of age group (37 or 19.9%) and 51 and above years age group which represents only 8 or 4.3%. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52.2% or 97) have worked less than 10 years, followed by 37.1% or 69 of those who have worked for 11 – 20 years, 9.1% or 17 who have worked for 21- 30 years and a small number (1.6% or 3) have worked for 30 – 40 years. In terms of work department, respondents are quite well spread over the seven different departments. The catalogue and classification department represents the most number of respondents (43 or 23.1 %). This is followed by the acquisition department (35 or 18.8%), reference service department (31 or 16.7 %), and automation and IT department (24 or 12.9 %). There are less than 10% of respondents in each of the circulation department (17 or 9.1 %), administration department (15 or 8.1 %), training and support service department (6 or 3.2%) and other department (15 or 8.1%).

Normality Test

The measure of skewness between -1.0 to 1.0 indicates that data do not depart from normality. Hence, the parametric statistical analysis can be employed. Since all measures for the skewness are closer to 0.0 and within the range between -1.0 to 1.0 as shown in Table 2, the study concludes that the distribution of data is almost symmetry or bell-shaped. The bell-

shaped distribution indicates the data are normally distributed. Hence, the data obtained in the study meets the required assumption for employing the parametric statistical analysis that data come from a normal distribution.

Table 2
The Measure of Skewness of the Data

Variables	min	max	skewness	kurtosis
Organizational Culture	3.43	6.71	**-0.421**	0.154
Leadership	3.14	7.00	**-0.351**	0.464
Employees' Skills and Competencies	3.14	7.00	**-0.166**	0.292
Information Communication and Technology (ICT)	4.00	7.00	**-0.074**	-0.011

Ranking Levels of Perceptions on OLC Dimensions

The frequency analysis was used to measure the respondents' perceptions and understanding of 4 OLC dimensions. All the scores were then arranged according to the ranking with the highest mean which was considered as the most preferred response. Result shows the highest mean score was ICT (5.65), followed by employees' skills and competencies (5.53), leadership (5.39), and organizational culture (5.23) as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3
Ranking of the Level of Perception

No.	Dimension	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	5.65*	0.618
2	Employees' Skills and Competencies	5.53	0.649
3	Leadership	5.39	0.701
4	Organizational Culture	5.23	0.640

* The higher the mean score, the more positive is the perception

Difference of Perceptions on OLC Dimensions between Position

The parametric statistical test used in this analysis was independent samples t-test analysis as it involved two groups (middle management and senior management) of respondents. Table 4 presents the independent samples t-test analysis to compare the perception on position between organizational culture, leadership, employees' skills and competencies and ICT. From the findings, the t value for all the dimensions were not significant at 5% level ($p > 0.05$). It can be concluded that there was no adequate evidence to prove that there were significant differences in the mean scores of dimensions measured between respondents who were in the middle management and senior management.

Table 4
Results of Independent Samples t-Test Analysis by Position

No.	Variable	Mean		t	Df	Sig.
1	Organizational Culture	Middle Mgt.	5.19	1.548	184	0.123
		Senior Mgt.	5.38			
2	Leadership	Middle Mgt.	5.35	1.745	184	0.083
		Senior Mgt.	5.58			
3	Employees' Skills and Competencies	Middle Mgt.	5.51	0.603	184	0.547
		Senior Mgt.	5.59			
4	ICT	Middle Mgt.	5.65	0.391	184	0.696
		Senior Mgt.	5.70			

Difference in Perceptions on OLC Dimensions between Education Level

The same analysis proceeded with the education level of respondents. Table 5 shows the independent samples *t*-test involving four dimensions of OLC namely, organizational culture, leadership, employees' skills and competencies and ICT to determine whether perceptions on these differ between respondents with Bachelor's degree and Master's degree. Based on the results on *t* value, there was no evidence that the four dimensions of OLC scores between Bachelor's degree and Master's degree was different as shown by the sig. value ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the perceptions of respondents on the four dimensions of OLC were the same regardless of their education level.

Table 5
Results of Independent Samples t-Test Analysis by Education Level

No.	Variable	Mean		*t*	Df	Sig.
1	Organizational Level	Bachelor's Degree	5.26	1.092	184	0.276
		Master's Degree	5.17			
2	Leadership	Bachelor's Degree	5.48	1.653	184	0.100
		Master's Degree	5.31			
3	Employees' Skills and Competencies	Bachelor's Degree	5.50	-0.496	184	0.621
		Master's Degree	5.55			
4	ICT	Bachelor's Degree	5.59	-1.537	184	0.126
		Master's Degree	5.73			

Comparison of Perceptions on OLC Dimensions among Age Group

Table 6 shows the results of One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test analysis involving organizational culture, leadership, employees' skills and competencies and ICT to determine whether perceptions on these differ between respondents' age group. From the results, none of the test was significant at 5% level ($p > 0.05$). It was concluded that there was no evidence of age group difference in their perception on these four dimensions.

Table 6
Results of ANOVA Analysis among Age Group

Variables		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Organizational Culture	Between Groups	0.654	3	0.218	0.528	0.664
	Within Groups	75.212	182	0.413		
	Total	75.866	185			
Leadership	Between Groups	0.220	3	0.073	0.147	0.931
	Within Groups	90.619	182	0.498		
	Total	90.839	185			
Employees' Skills and Competencies	Between Groups	0.611	3	0.204	0.480	0.697
	Within Groups	77.224	182	0.424		
	Total	77.835	185			
ICT	Between Groups	1.604	3	0.535	1.409	0.242
	Within Groups	69.075	182	0.380		
	Total	70.679	185			

Comparison of Perceptions on OLC Dimensions among Work Experiences

Table 7 presents the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test analysis to compare the perceptions on work experiences on organizational culture, leadership, employees' skills and competencies and ICT. From the findings, the computed F-statistic for organizational culture (2.952) was significant at 5% level (p =0.034 < 0.05) and F-statistic for leadership (2.984) was significant at 5% level (p =0.033 < 0.05)). However, the F-statistic for employees' skills and competencies (1.530) and ICT (0.895) were not significant (p > 0.05).

Table 7
Results of ANOVA Analysis among Work Experiences

Variables		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Organizational Culture	Between Groups	3.520	3	1.173	2.952	**0.034***
	Within Groups	72.346	182	0.398		
	Total	75.866	185			
Leadership	Between Groups	4.259	3	1.420	2.984	**0.033***
	Within Groups	76.055	182	0.476		
	Total	77.938	185			
Employees' Skills and Competencies	Between Groups	1.915	3	0.638	1.530	0.208
	Within Groups	75.920	182	0.417		
	Total	77.835	185			
ICT	Between Groups	1.027	3	0.342	0.895	0.445
	Within Groups	69.652	182	0.383		
	Total	70.679	185			

Once the null hypothesis was supported for organizational culture and leadership, Post-Hoc comparison test with Tukey HSD would be used to determine which work experiences group showed significant difference in the mean scores as outlined in Table 8. For the organizational culture dimension, the results showed that the mean scores for those who had working experience of 21 – 30 years was significantly higher than those who had working experience in the range of less than 10 years, 10 -20 years and 30 – 40 years. For leadership dimension, the results showed that the mean scores for those who had working experience of 21 – 30 years was significantly higher than those who had working experience of less than 10 years, 10 -20 years and 30 – 40 years.

Table 8
Results of Post-Hoc Tukey HSD Analysis Among Work Experiences

Dependent Variable	(I) Years of working experience	(J) Years of working experience	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Organizational Culture	Less than 10 years	11 - 20 years	-.04090	.976
		21 - 30 years	**-.48506***	.020
		30 - 40 years	-.21895	.934
	11 - 20 years	Less than 10 years	.04090	.976
		21 - 30 years	-.44416*	.049
		30 - 40 years	-.17805	.964
	21 - 30 years	Less than 10 years	**.48506***	.020
		11 - 20 years	.44416*	.049
		30 - 40 years	.26611	.907
	30 - 40 years	Less than 10 years	.21895	.934
		11 - 20 years	.17805	.964
		21 - 30 years	-.26611	.907
Leadership	Less than 10 years	11 - 20 years	.10222	.783
		21 - 30 years	-.44607	.070
		30 - 40 years	-.23319	.939
	11 - 20 years	Less than 10 years	-.10222	.783
		21 - 30 years	**-.54829***	.019
		30 - 40 years	-.33540	.843
	21 - 30 years	Less than 10 years	.44607	.070
		11 - 20 years	**.54829***	.019
		30 - 40 years	.21289	.961
	30 - 40 years	Less than 10 years	.23319	.939
		11 - 20 years	.33540	.843
		21 - 30 years	-.21289	.961

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Relationships between OLC Dimensions and Knowledge Performance

The Pearson's coefficient correlation test was carried out to analyse the relationships between the dimensions. The results showed that all the dimensions are weakly to moderately correlated. The results illustrated in Table 10 indicated that organizational culture was moderately correlated with leadership ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.674$). Employees' skills and competencies was moderately correlated with knowledge performance ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.637$), leadership was moderately correlated with employees' skills and competencies ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.619$), ICT was moderately correlated with employees' skills and competencies ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.594$), organizational culture was moderately correlated with employees' skills and

competencies ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.580$) and ICT was moderately correlated with knowledge performance ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.527$). However, the relationship between organizational culture and ICT ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.427$), leadership and ICT ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.392$), leadership and knowledge performance ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.350$), as well as between organizational culture and knowledge performance ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.329$) were weakly correlated but significant ($p < 0.01$). This implies that on the average, respondents have positive and significant perceptions on selected OLC dimensions and knowledge performance.

Table 10
Results of Pearson's Correlation Analysis

		OC	**LS**	**ESC**	**ICT**	**KP**
Organizational Culture (OC)	Pearson Correlation	1	0.674**	0.580**	0.427**	0.329**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	186	186	186	186	186
Leadership (LS)	Pearson Correlation	0.674**	1	0.619**	0.392**	0.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	186	186	186	186	186
Employees Skills and Competencies (ESC)	Pearson Correlation	0.580**	0.619**	1	0.594**	0.637**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	186	186	186	186	186
Information Communication and Technology (ICT)	Pearson Correlation	0.427**	0.392**	0.594**	1	0.527**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	186	186	186	186	186
Knowledge Performance (KP)	Pearson Correlation	0.329**	0.350**	0.637**	0.527**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	186	186	186	186	186

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusion

It can be concluded that among the OLC dimensions, *information communication and technology (ICT)* was found to be the most preferred dimension perceived by the respondents. This implied that the respondents believed that the organizational learning capabilities on ICT occurred more in the organization. Meanwhile, in terms of work experiences, result showed that there were significant differences on *organizational culture* and *leadership.* Post-hoc test using Tukey HSD was used to determine which work experiences group showed significant difference. On the other hand, the result showed that there were no differences in the perceptions between position and education level on the *organizational culture, leadership, employees' skills and competencies* and *ICT*. In terms of age group, the results also showed that there were no differences on *organizational culture, leadership, employees' skills and competencies* and *ICT*. Future study can focus on systems thinking, shared vision and mission and teamwork cooperation as other dimensions of OLC. Besides,

results also found that positive and significant moderate relationships exist between each OLC dimensions with knowledge performance. This study had its limitation in which it was based on data from selected university libraries in Malaysia. It is expected that the outcome of the study will be useful in identifying appropriate programs to improve the skills of acquiring knowledge and enhance the learning capabilities of librarians. Furthermore, OLC elements can be used as a benchmark to measure knowledge performance and level of learning in the academic libraries.

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