

Developing Civil Servants' Commitment to Share Knowledge and Implement Cost Reduction Policy: The Perspective of Malaysian Public Sector

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Abstract

The present study is designed to propose values for developing civil servants' commitment to share ideas on how to reduce public organization cost and in turn commitment to implement cost reduction policy in the workplace. If civil servants feel that they have a moral obligation in paying back the country through remain with the employing public agencies they become receptive towards cost reduction policy. To instil this moral obligation this study proposes the elements of means, attitude towards leaders and attitude towards government. The researchers have applied cross-sectional survey research to validate the framework. It is found that

attitude towards government influenced the development of civil servants' commitment to share knowledge in the workplace significantly. On the other hand, means and attitude towards government influenced the development of civil servants' commitment to implement cost reduction policy in the workplace significantly. The practical implications are the discovery of theoretical, personal, and workplace practical best practices for the establishment of strategies to establish knowledge sharing commitment and cost reduction commitment amongst civil servants in the public organizations.

Keywords: Means, Attitude towards leaders, Attitude towards government, Knowledge sharing commitment, Cost reduction commitment, Public organization

1. Introduction

Low deficit rate is one of the determinants of stronger fiscal position of a country (Blanchard, 2011; Othman, Ismail, Syed Ismail, Saidin, Rahim, Md Saleh, Samsudin & Mohd Lazim, 2007). In order to reduce deficit the government has to increase revenue and reduce expenditure (Blanchard, 2011; Othman et al., 2007). However, due to time constraint and difficulty in getting access to public sector financial data, this study focuses on identifying strategies for reducing expenditure. This is because most of government tax revenue including Malaysia is contributed by corporate tax, which is quite complicated to be studied as global business environment is always fluctuating (Lehar, Anas & Tey, 2014). On the other hand, reducing expenditure is usually an internal matter of government agencies or departments, which can be monitored and controlled by the top management. Thus studying the implementation of cost reduction policy in the public sector is much more feasible and practical.

However, reducing expenditure is not a favoured option for a populace government. This is because people expect high quality of service and good living environment (high income and low cost of living) from the government. If the people are not happy with the current government, the ruling party might lose the election and in turn power to rule the country. Keep spending money for pleasing people, however, might worsen national fiscal deficit and in turn prospect for economic growth. The best example of country that faces this dilemma is Greece, which is still struggling to settle their debts and facing risk to be expelled from the Euro Zone. To reduce fiscal deficit and in the meantime maintain political stability in the country Selamat, Mat Saat, Murad and Foo (2017) argued that the government can implement low-cost yet high-impact public services. However, civil servants must firstly have commitment to determine strategies to implement low-cost yet high-impact public services (Selamat et al., 2017).

This study argues that to increase civil servants' commitment to share ideas on strategies to implement low-cost yet high-impact public services and in turn commitment to implement cost reduction policy in the workplace, they must have a moral obligation in paying back the organization through remain with the employing organization. This is coined as normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In short, the objective of this study is to examine values that can develop positive social experiences amongst civil servants so that they become more willing to remain with the employing public agencies and in turn share knowledge or ideas on

what is the best strategy to reduce public organization operational cost. To assist in developing positive social experiences this study argues that civil servants must be equipped with positive understanding on means, attitude towards leaders and attitude towards government. Thus all these values are embedded in this research conceptual framework.

The paper is organized as follows. Next section presents a theoretical justification for every element in the conceptual framework. Section 3 discusses research approach adopted to validate the proposed factors. Finally, a conclusion is presented in the concluding section.

2. Theoretical Overview

For the theoretical understanding of public organization cost reduction we posit that public organization cost reduction is based on the concepts of individual commitment and knowledge sharing. In the following sections a discussion of individual commitment and knowledge sharing is offered.

2.1 Public Sector Financial Management

The most important activity in public sector financial management is budgeting. There are three types of government budget, namely, deficit budget, surplus budget and balanced budget. Amongst the three types of government budget, deficit budget is the one that is usually creating negative perception amongst credit rating agencies, business community and people (Alessi, 2012; Blanchard, 2011). This is because it shows government incapability in controlling expenditures and increasing revenues. The failure to increase revenues is also related to the failure to create business activities through public projects such as infrastructure, highway, hospital, school and others. Thus managing deficit rate for the sake of economic growth is critical to every country including Malaysia.

Due to negative impact of high deficit rate on the financial system and fiscal strength, a country that has high deficit rate is usually given low rating by the credit rating agencies such as Standard & Poor, Moody's, and Fitch Group (Alessi, 2012). The country that get poor rating will be imposed higher interest rate by the international financial institutions including companies incorporated in that country. This will affect badly domestic direct investment in the country (Lehar et al., 2014; Blanchard, 2011). Foreign direct investment will be also badly affected because foreign investors are reluctant to invest in a country that is not financially and politically stable (Lehar et al., 2014; Blanchard, 2011). Low investment will reduce economic growth and in turn increase unemployment rate in the country (Lehar et al., 2014; Blanchard, 2011). This is the scenario that every government in the world, including Malaysia, is trying to avoid. Thus obtaining good ratings through balanced budget or lower deficit rate is a must for every country.

There are two ways of reducing budget deficit which are increasing revenue and reducing expenditure (Blanchard, 2011; Othman et al., 2007). However, the focus of this research is on reducing expenditure. As 80% of Malaysian tax revenues contributed by corporate tax, the area of increasing revenue is quite complicated as it is depending on global economy, which is always fluctuating (Lehar et al., 2014). Cost reduction is normally an internal matter of ministries, departments and agencies, which can be monitored and controlled by the

government (Othman et al., 2007). Thus the study on this phenomenon is much more feasible and practical and in tandem with the aspiration of many governments in the world.

2.2 Public Organization Cost Reduction and Tacit Knowledge

Usually, the reduction of government expenditure is looked at the organizational perspective. In this case, the ministries, departments and agencies have to cut several non-critical expenses and postpone non-critical projects. This study, however, will look at the individual perspective because it is quite difficult to get access data on public expenditure from the organizational perspective. The individual perspective that this study intends to investigate is civil servants' commitment to share ideas on what is the best strategy to implement low-cost yet high-impact public services and in turn commitment to implement cost reduction policy in the workplace.

The need for civil servants' commitment in identifying strategies to reduce public organization operational cost is critical due to the ideas for those strategies exist in tacit forms (tacit knowledge). The ideas are developed from civil servants' learning process (formal and informal) and this learning occurs in an individual's mindset (Beveren, 2002; Churchman, 1971). As the ideas reside in civil servants' brain, they inherit the characteristics of tacit knowledge which are highly personal, difficult to externalize and difficult to share (Henttonen, Kianto & Ritala, 2016; Amayah, 2013; Selamat & Choudrie, 2007; Tsoukas, 2002; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Selamat, Selladurai and Abdul Halim (2015), Selamat and Choudrie (2007), Selamat (2005) and Haldin-Herrgard (2000) stated that there are four factors that lead to the difficulty in expressing and sharing tacit knowledge, namely, perception, language, time, value and distance. In the case of perception, the characteristics of unconsciousness result in the people become unaware of the full range of their knowledge and potential (Polanyi, 1967). The difficulty with language is related to the characteristic of tacit knowledge, which exists in a non-verbal form (Haldin-Herrgard, 2000). Time also becomes a hurdle in the process of externalizing and sharing of tacit knowledge. This is because, during the formation of knowledge in the mindset, tacit knowledge internalization needs a longer period of time. The difficulty in value results from the nature of tacit knowledge whereby not all knowledge that resides in an individual's mindset have value that give them merit to be externalized and shared (Haldin-Herrgard, 2000). Distance factor also contributes towards the difficulty in tacit knowledge externalization and sharing. This is because tacit knowledge can be externalized and shared actively if the involved individuals meet each other and then having face-to-face interaction (Selamat & Choudrie, 2007; Selamat, 2005; Holtshouse, 1998; Leonard-Barton & Sensiper, 1998).

Other inhibitors that could stop civil servants from sharing ideas on what is the best strategy to reduce expenditure are such as fear, low confidence level, reluctance to do it, and confusion due to negative sentiments (Henttonen et al., 2016; Amayah, 2013). This phenomenon occurs in an organization due to the difference in superiority and seniority. Another factor that separate civil servants in the workplace is different nature of social background (Amayah, 2013). This is due to the nature of human beings being attracted to a

group that has similar backgrounds such as academic qualification, age, race, gender and others (Henttonen et al., 2016; Amayah, 2013; Ali, 1998).

Another possible factor that could discourage communication between civil servants is the acceptance of others towards their ideas (Amayah, 2013; Selamat & Choudrie, 2007; Bennett, 1998). Some civil servants feel that their opinions will not be accepted due to their positions within the organization or that they do not have enough of an influence to provide a significant contribution to the organization (Amayah, 2013; Selamat & Choudrie, 2007; Bennett, 1998). This apprehension forces them to keep their knowledge or skills in their own mindset and results in the individuals becoming passive in formal meetings and undertaking sole tasks.

To recapitulate it could be argued that the success of public organization cost reduction depends on civil servants' commitment to implement it. They must participate in the process of analyzing others' ideas and examining the feasibility of their ideas in the practical setting during the meeting actively. This involves the process of externalizing and sharing of tacit knowledge in the workplace. Eventually, they will make a consensus on what is the most applicable strategy to reduce operational costs in their organization. Ignoring the critical role of civil servants commitment in the workplace could lead to the creation of passive civil servants and in turn the inefficiencies in determining strategies for reducing public organization operational cost (Selamat et al., 2017; Saint-Onge, 1996). Thus understanding values that can develop civil servants' commitment to share ideas on strategies to reduce expenditure and in turn commitment to implement cost reduction policy is paramount. To face such phenomenon, this research argues that civil servants need to be equipped with positive values of means, attitude towards leaders and attitude towards government. Being equipped with these values enables civil servants to have a moral obligation in paying back the organization through remain with the employing organization and in turn participate in knowledge sharing actively in the workplace. Civil servants who are not embedded with these values tend to be passive in terms of commitment to share knowledge or ideas on what is the best strategy to reduce expenditure and commitment to implement cost reduction policy.

2.3 Developing Civil Servants' Commitment

As stated above, this study intends to propose values that can increase civil servants' commitment to share ideas on strategies to reduce expenditure and in turn commitment to implement cost reduction policy. The focus of this research is on what values that can develop civil servants' self-commitment (individual commitment) and not what public organization should do to increase civil servants' commitment in public organization cost reduction (organizational commitment). This research proposes three values that could develop civil servants' commitment to share knowledge or ideas on what is the best strategy to reduce expenditure and in turn participate in cost reduction policy implementation, which are means, attitude towards leaders and attitude towards government.

2.3.1 Means

In the organizations, means refers to standard operating procedure or organizational best

practice (Selamat et al., 2017; Selamat et al., 2015; Selamat & Choudrie, 2007). Standard operating procedure or organizational best practice can be described as “meta-competencies” which allows staff members to create and adapt specific competencies for specific situations (Burgoyne, 1988). By adopting standard operating procedure, staff members can undertake tasks based upon “the right approach for the right situation.” This enables organizations implementing economical approach when undertaking daily operation without compromising on product or service quality.

Undertaking tasks in accordance with the standard operating procedure enables cost, time and energy savings (Selamat et al., 2015; Abdul Wahab, Selamat, & Saad, 2013; Selamat & Choudrie, 2007). Thus, to reduce public organization operational costs, civil servants must know the correct way of handling tasks in the workplace. This highlights the importance of staff training programs in the public organization (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008; Kooij, de Lange, Jansen & Dijkers, 2008; McEvoy & Blahna, 2001; Maurer & Rafuse, 2001). Training on public sector financial management could also be offered to ensure that civil servants understand the rationale of cost reduction policy. In short, means in this research refers to understanding on working procedure and public sector financial management. Good understanding on working procedure enables civil servants to suggest which tasks that can be simplified, reduced, automated and/or eliminated. Additionally, an in-depth understanding on public sector financial management increases civil servants’ awareness on the importance of achieving balanced budget and in turn motivates them to share ideas during the process of identifying strategies to reduce public organization operational costs.

Armstrong-Stassen (2008), Kooij et al. (2008), McEvoy and Blahna (2001) and Maurer and Rafuse (2001) stated that the opportunity to develop skills and competencies may facilitate workers’ commitment because the availability of training is a strong signal that the organization is willing to ‘invest’ in its workforce. Thus it could be said that extensive training on public sector financial management can improve civil servants’ skill and mentality on fiscal strength and its impact on economic growth and in turn develop commitment to share ideas on how to reduce public organization operational costs. Furthermore, cost reduction as a strategy to strengthen fiscal position requires a different skill set that goes beyond budget preparation, and is accompanied by a different mental model (Othman et al., 2007).

From the above discussion it could be argued that every civil servant must know working procedure and public sector financial management in depth before cost reduction policy could be practiced extensively in the organization. This is to ensure right action is taken at the right time. Thus the element of means needs to be emphasized when establishing commitment to share ideas on strategies to reduce public organization operational costs and in turn commitment to implement cost reduction policy. In short, it could be said that there is a potential relationship between means, commitment to share ideas on strategies to reduce public organization operational costs and commitment to implement cost reduction policy. Thus the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: There is a relationship between means and cost reduction commitment amongst civil servants

H1b: There is a relationship between means and knowledge sharing commitment amongst civil servants

H1c: The relationship between means and cost reduction commitment is mediated by knowledge sharing commitment amongst civil servants

2.3.2 Attitude towards Leaders

Fishbein and Ajben (1975) state that attitudes are learned disposition to respond to an object or behaviour. It is representing a hierarchy of effect from feeling or judgments toward person, object or issue and linked to user behaviour (McMillan, Hwang & Lee, 2003). There are three components of attitudes, namely, cognitive, affective or behavioural responses (Min & Lee, 2009; Simon & Peppas, 2004). Attitude is the most important concept that is used to explain user behaviour. This is evident from many studies that used it as one of the determinants in explaining user behaviour (Jahng, Jain & Ramamurthy, 2007; Simon & Peppas, 2004; McMillan et al., 2003; Fishbein & Ajben, 1975). For example, in the area of marketing, the concept of attitude has been used to understand the effectiveness of advertisement (Simon & Peppas, 2004; McMillan et al., 2003). In the online world, the concept of attitude has been linked with website acceptance whereby online user predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to a website, especially with the enormous growth of e-commerce, has been measured (Chen, Clifford, & Wells, 2002).

Hwang, Yoon and Park (2011) stated that it is important to understand users' attitudes because it can generally predict their purchasing intention and behaviour. For example, the users have stronger intention to purchase online product when they react favourably to an advertisement about that product. This logic has been proven with respect to attitude towards a website (Bruner & Kumar, 2005).

Jain and Jeppesen (2013) found significant relationship between management cognitive styles and knowledge management practices in public organizations. Yao, Kam and Chan (2007) supported this by saying that senior management in the public administration sector should be made more aware of what knowledge management can do to help improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Rhodes, Biondi, Gomes, Melo, Ohemeng, Perez-Lopez, Rossi and Sutyono (2013), when comparing the performance of public sector in Brazil, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Ghana, Indonesia and Ireland, found that administrative culture and the attitudes of elites are critical determinants of public sector performance.

From the above findings it is argued that civil servants' actions can be strongly influenced by their attitude towards leaders in the workplace. Positive attitude towards leaders make them more receptive to public organization cost reduction and vice versa. This axiom leads to the pre-supposition that attitude towards leader influences civil servants' commitment to share ideas on strategies to reduce public organization operational costs and commitment to implement cost reduction policy. All these scenarios lead to the following hypotheses:

H2a: There is a relationship between attitude towards leaders and cost reduction commitment amongst civil servants

H2b: There is a relationship between attitude towards leaders and knowledge sharing

commitment amongst civil servants

H2c: The relationship between attitude towards leaders and cost reduction commitment is mediated by knowledge sharing commitment amongst civil servants

2.3.3 Attitude towards Government

Another attitude that is studied in this research is attitude towards government. Recent political turmoil in Thailand shows a potential role of attitude towards government on knowledge sharing commitment and public organization cost reduction commitment. Many civil servants in Thailand joined the protestors in a rally to oust the then Thailand Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. They dare to leave the office and postpone all the works. The most critical impact of the turmoil is that Thailand's economic growth slowed significantly in the final quarter of 2013 and the state planning agency cut its forecast for this year because of political unrest that could prevent the formation of a fully functioning government for months (Reuters, February 17, 2014). Southeast Asia's second-biggest economy after Indonesia grew a seasonally adjusted 0.6 percent in October-December from the previous three months. That was well down on July-September's freshly-revised 1.4 percent pace. For full-year 2013, the growth was 2.9 percent, far below the 6.5 percent in 2012 when Thailand was rebounding from devastating floods the preceding year.

As a democratic country like Thailand, the above scenario could also happen in Malaysia. Under the democratic system, the government is elected by the people and civil servants also involve in the election process. As a result, they incline to favour one political party rather than the others. If the ruling party is not the one that they vote, civil servants incline to spend most of the time in the office condemning ruling government and having debate with those who favour the ruling government. This phenomenon is not healthy and if not controlled could lead to lower productivity (Rhodes et al., 2013).

The above scenario highlights that attitude towards government could influence civil servants willingness to collaborate and cooperate at the workplace. This leads the involved public organizations to operate ineffectively and inefficiently. In short, it could be said that negative attitude towards government will discourage civil servants from sharing ideas on strategies to reduce public organization operational costs and implementing cost reduction policy in the workplace. Thus the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H3a: There is a relationship between attitude towards government and cost reduction commitment amongst civil servants

H3b: There is a relationship between attitude towards government and knowledge sharing commitment amongst civil servants

H3c: The relationship between attitude towards leaders and cost reduction commitment is mediated by knowledge sharing commitment amongst civil servants

To complement the above hypotheses and in tandem with this research conceptual framework, the following hypothesis is proposed as the final hypothesis:

H4: There is a relationship between knowledge sharing commitment and cost reduction commitment amongst civil servants

3. Research Methodology

Data of this study were gathered through a survey approach. Survey is considered to be the favoured tool for data collection amongst quantitative researchers (Fowler, 2009). In addition, it is one of the most common data collection methods for examining the participation in cost reduction commitment and knowledge sharing commitment (Selamat et al., 2015; Jain & Jeppesen, 2013; Amayah, 2013). Survey research suits the unit of analysis of this study, which are civil servants in the Malaysian public organizations. Dwivedi (2005) suggested that when the unit of analysis is individual rather than organization, survey approach is more preferable than other approaches such as case study. This study utilized stratified random sampling as a sampling technique. Stratified random sampling, as its name implies, involves a process of stratification or segregation, followed by random selection of subjects from each stratum (ministries) (Sekaran, 2003; Fowler, 2009; Babin & Griffin, 2010). A total of 400 civil servants in federal government ministries across Malaysia were randomly selected. The questionnaires were distributed by liaison officers (most of them are auditors of the Auditor's General Department). They were selected because they have the authority to communicate with the respondents. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable.

4. Research Findings

Out of 400 distributed questionnaires, 130 were returned. This resulted in a response rate of 32.5%. As suggested by Sekaran (2003), a response rate of 30% is considered adequate for mail survey research. Based on this suggestion, the response rate of this study (32.5%) was above the recommended rate. In turn, the findings of this research can be generalized to the population.

4.1 Profile of Respondents

The frequency and percentage of each demographic profile are illustrated in Table 1. The reported demographic profiles include gender, age and number of years working in the current public agency.

Table 1. Background of the respondents (N=130)

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	56	43.1
Female	74	56.9
Age (years)		
21-30	5	3.8
31-40	59	45.4
41-50	40	30.8
51-60	26	20.0
>60	-	-
Length of Service		
<5	30	23.1
<10	40	30.8
<15	16	12.3
<20	20	15.4
>21	24	18.5

In this research, gender distribution was slightly higher for female. Out of 130 respondents, 56 (43.1%) respondents are male and 74 (56.9%) respondents are female. The largest group of respondents (N=59, 45.4%) reported that they were in the “31-40” age group. The second largest group consisted of respondents with age “41-50” (N=40, 30.8%), third largest group consisted of respondents with age “51-60” (N=26, 20.0%) and fourth largest group consisted of respondents with age “21-30” (N=5, 3.8%). There was no respondent in “Over 60” age group.

The largest group of respondents (N=40, 30.8%) indicated that they have worked at the current public agency “10 years or less”. The second largest group of respondents (N=30, 23.1%) reported that they have worked at the current public agency “5 years or less”. This is followed by “over 21 years” category (N=24, 18.5%).

4.2 Reliability Analysis

To test the reliability of the research instrument, as suggested by Sekaran (2003), this study utilized internal consistency method which is measured by Cronbach’s alpha. The coefficient for the Cronbach’s alpha is expressed between 0 and 1.00. The results of the Cronbach’s alpha values of the variables are as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability coefficients for variables (N=130)

Variable	N of Item	Cronbach’s Alpha
Means	5	0.934
Attitude towards Leaders	6	0.838
Attitude towards Government	6	0.812
Knowledge Sharing Commitment	6	0.775
Cost Reduction Commitment	6	0.895

As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach’s alpha values for variables varied between 0.775 (knowledge sharing commitment) and 0.934 (means). One variable possessed Cronbach’s alpha values above 0.90 (means), three between 0.80 and 0.90 (attitude towards leaders, attitude towards government and cost reduction commitment), and one between 0.70 and 0.80 (knowledge sharing commitment). In other words, none of the study variables demonstrated below the minimum reliability level of 0.60 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). Thus the internal consistency of the measures used in this study was considered acceptable (Churchill, 1979; Sekaran, 2003).

4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Data refinement was undertaken prior to multiple regression analysis. It was divided into data screening and data testing, which aim to fulfill the multivariate assumptions (Hair et al., 2006). Data screening consists of three tests which are missing data, response bias and outliers identification. On the other hand, data testing consists of linearity, normality, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity tests. The criteria for all these tests were met in this study.

4.3.1 Effect of Independent Variables on Cost Reduction Commitment

To test the effect of independent variables on cost reduction commitment multiple regression analysis was utilized and its findings are illustrated in Table 3. As illustrated in Table 3, the value of adjusted R square is 0.304. This shows that all independent variables (means, attitude towards leaders and attitude towards government) explain 30.4% variance in civil servants' commitment to participate in cost reduction policy implementation.

Table 3. Effect of independent variables on cost reduction commitment

	B	t	Sig.
Means	.288	3.422	.001
Attitude towards Leaders	-.138	-1.456	.148
Attitude towards Government	.547	4.968	.000
R ²	0.304		
F	18.334		
Sig.	0.000		

Table 3 also illustrates that only two variables were found to have significant effect on commitment to participate in cost reduction policy implementation amongst civil servants. They were means (B=0.288, t=3.422, p<0.01) and attitude towards government (B=0.547, t=4.968, p<0.05). Thus H1a and H3a were accepted and H2a was rejected.

4.3.2 Effect of Independent Variables on Knowledge Sharing Commitment

The results of multiple regression analysis in relation to the effect of independent variables on knowledge sharing commitment are illustrated in Table 4. As illustrated in Table 4, the value of adjusted R square is 0.661. This shows that all independent variables (means, attitude towards leaders and attitude towards government) explain 66.1% variance in civil servants' commitment to share ideas on what is the strategy to reduce operational cost of public agencies.

Table 4. Effect of independent variables on knowledge sharing commitment

	B	t	Sig.
Means	.030	.385	.701
Attitude towards Leaders	-.089	-1.312	.192
Attitude towards Government	.407	5.085	.000
R ²	0.661		
F	23.199		
Sig.	0.000		

It can also be seen that only attitude towards government (B=0.407, t=5.085, p<0.05) has significant effect on civil servants' commitment to share ideas on strategies to reduce public organization operational costs. Thus H3b was accepted and H1b and H2b were rejected.

4.3.3 Mediating Effect of Knowledge Sharing Commitment on the Relationship between Independent Variables and Cost Reduction Commitment

Two steps hierarchical regression was carried out to examine the effect of knowledge sharing commitment on the relationship between independent variables and cost reduction commitment (refer Table 5). Model 1 examined relationship between independent variables (means, attitude towards leaders, and attitude towards government) and cost reduction commitment. Model 2 examined the effect of independent variables on cost reduction commitment with the present of knowledge sharing commitment as the mediating variable. Model 1 explained 65.6 percent of variance ($R^2=0.656$, $F=22.706$, $p<0.01$). Only means ($B=0.184$, $t=2.244$, $p<0.05$) has significant effect on cost reduction commitment.

Table 5. Mediating Effect of Knowledge Sharing Commitment on the Relationship between Independent Variables and Cost Reduction Commitment

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	t	B	t
Means	.184	2.244**	.093	2.368**
Attitude towards Leaders	-.083	-.978	-.076	-1.077
Attitude towards Government	.056	.953	.097	.539
Knowledge Sharing Commitment			.162	1.835*
R^2	0.656		0.666	
F	22.706		21.358	
Sig.	0.000		0.000	

Notes: *** $p<0.01$; ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Next, Model 2 indicates that the present of knowledge sharing commitment only increase the R^2 to 66.6 percent ($R^2=0.666$, $F=21.358$, $p<0.01$). The findings also revealed that there were also significant relationship between knowledge sharing commitment and cost reduction commitment ($B=0.162$, $t=-1.835$, $p<0.01$). Additionally, the present of knowledge sharing commitment only decreases the coefficient of means ($B=0.093$, $t=2.368$, $p<0.05$). In other words it can be said that knowledge sharing commitment only mediated the relationship between means and cost reduction commitment (supported H1c but rejected H2c and H3c). Thus the proposed mediating role of knowledge sharing commitment on the relationship between independent variables and cost reduction commitment was partially substantiated in the practical setting.

4.4 Discussion

This study found that means was positively and significantly influenced civil servants' commitment to participate in cost reduction policy implementation but not commitment to share knowledge or ideas on what is the best strategy to reduce office expenditure. This finding is consistent with the previous studies whereby the understanding on organizational best practices develops civil servants' internal strength to bring success to their organizations (Selamat et al., 2015; Abdul Wahab et al., 2013; Jain & Jeppesen, 2013; Amayah, 2013).

From this result it could be said that civil servants that do not know how to provide low-cost yet high-impact public services will not participate in cost reduction policy implementation. The probable reason behind this scenario is that cost reduction policy implementation requires a different skill set that goes beyond daily tasks of civil servants and is accompanied by a different mental model. Thus adequate training on public sector financial management must be provided to civil servants so that they could participate actively in cost reduction policy implementation.

This study also found that attitude towards government was positively and significantly influenced civil servants' commitment to share knowledge or ideas on what is the best strategy to reduce office expenditure and commitment to participate in cost reduction policy implementation. This finding is consistent with the previous studies such as Selamat et al. (2017) and Selamat et al. (2015). In other words, attitude towards government was perceived by civil servants as a determinant to participate or not to participate in the discussion on cost reduction policy implementation. The probable explanation could be the norm that attitude towards government is the most important value in every civil servant and reducing expenditure is not exceptional. This is because, based on the norm of reciprocity, when government is good and can be trusted civil servants may feel obligated to reciprocate and become more committed to organizational plans and goals.

Surprisingly, this study found that attitude towards leaders was not positively and significantly influenced civil servants' commitment to share knowledge or ideas on what is the best strategy to reduce office expenditure and commitment to participate in cost reduction policy implementation. Implicit in this finding is that civil servants do not perceive management as an important factor in cost reduction policy implementation. This scenario might be influenced by civil servants' awareness to work professionally whereby they must implement any policies that are implemented by the current management. They should not let political preference influence their performance and responsibility in the workplace.

Last but not least, mediating role of knowledge sharing commitment cannot be obtained in the practical setting. Possible explanation for this scenario is that organizational incentives are considered as the main driver by civil servants in deciding whether to participate or not in cost reduction policy implementation. Nevertheless, this study uncovered that knowledge sharing commitment partially mediated the relationship between means and cost reduction commitment. Implicit in this finding is that training on public sector financial management (means) should be given utmost priority in the process of developing civil servants' commitment to share ideas on strategies to reduce public organization operational costs and commitment to participate in cost reduction policy implementation.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to determine whether the values of means, attitude towards leaders and attitude towards government develop civil servants' commitment to share knowledge or ideas on what is the best strategy to reduce office expenditure and in turn commitment to participate in cost reduction policy implementation. From the findings, the proposed conceptual framework was partly validated. The findings showed that the effect of

means and attitude towards government on civil servants' commitment to participate in cost reduction policy implementation were significant. On the other hand, the effect of attitude towards government on the commitment to share knowledge or ideas on what is the best strategy to reduce office expenditure was significant. Lastly, this study uncovered that knowledge sharing commitment partially mediated the relationship between means and cost reduction commitment.

Although this study have contributed to public financial management area, several limitations have to be considered. First, the context of this study is limited to civil servants. For future research it is suggested that a comparison is made between civil servants and practitioners. Second, this research conceptual framework was tested and examined from the Malaysian perspective. Thus obtaining feedback from the public sector in other countries is necessary. Third, this research adopted cross-sectional survey for data collection. To gain a broad view on the issues related to public organization cost reduction and knowledge sharing, a longitudinal study is advised. Last but not least, unit of analysis of this study was an individual whereby civil servants were selected as the respondents. To gain more variance in the analysis, obtaining feedback from top management in the public agencies is strongly recommended.

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