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Impact of *Ulū al-Albāb* on Innovation and Customer Loyalty through Knowledge Transfer in ICT Firms

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Abstract

This study investigates the viewpoints of managers in information and communication technology (ICT) firms regarding the impact of *Ulū al-Albāb* in promoting innovation through knowledge transfer in maintaining customer loyalty. This study integrates the notion of stickiness in knowledge transfer with the impact of *Ulū al-Albāb* perspectives to enhance knowledge transfer among ICT firms. The primary contribution of this study is the promotion of *Ulū al-Albāb* perspectives in addressing the challenge of stickiness in knowledge transfer. The study reveals that the introduction of a policy instrument aimed at facilitating knowledge transfer and innovation, in conjunction with a policy concept for the advancement of science and technology, results in a decline in knowledge transfer and innovation inside ICT firms. The perspectives of *Ulū al-Albāb* enable knowledge workers to effectively employ their wisdom, religiosity, and spirituality to promote the knowledge transfer to foster creativity. The study suggests that the government reassess the policies of technology parks in order to promote innovation in Malaysia's ICT industry, while considering the perspectives of *Ulū al-Albāb*.

Keywords: *ulū al-albāb*, knowledge transfer, ICT firms

INTRODUCTION

In the current age of digitalization and artificial intelligence, the importance of data, information, and knowledge cannot be overstated. These factors significantly influence the competitive advantage and performance of organisations (Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019; Oranga, 2023; Kwok, Omran & Yu, 2024; Yufriadi, Syahrani & Afifi, 2024). Knowledge transmission plays a crucial role in the generation and execution of novel concepts (Vrana & Singh, 2021; Oranga, 2023; Kwok et al., 2024; Yufriadi et al., 2024).

From the perspective of *Ulū al-Albāb*, these efforts align with the principles of *Maqasid al-Shariah*, which aim to protect and promote the well-being of society (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Mhd. Sarif, Zainudin & Yahya, 2020; Mhd. Sarif, Zainudin & Ismail, 2021). Knowledge transmission and innovation have a vital role in achieving human well-being and driving economic advancement (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Oranga, 2023; Kwok et al., 2024; Yufriadi et al., 2024). Islamic teachings advocate for the ethical application of knowledge and technology to enhance society by establishing an environment that encourages

creativity and cooperation (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Mhd. Sarif et al., 2020; Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021). Advocating for accessibility and fairness in the use of digital advancements aligns with the Islamic values of justice and societal well-being (Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Oranga, 2023; Kwok et al., 2024; Yufriadi et al., 2024). Integrating the influence of Ulū al-Albāb into the digital and technical landscape has the potential to enhance ethical standards, promote fair economic growth, and ensure that technological advancements benefit the broader community while upholding moral and social responsibilities (Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Oranga, 2023; Kwok et al., 2024; Yufriadi et al., 2024).

There are two questions in this study: First, "What are the primary interpersonal and organisational barriers that hinder the process of knowledge transfer in Malaysia's information and communications technology sector? Second, "How can Ulū al-Albāb exert power over the processes of knowledge transfer and innovation in order to foster practices that are ethical, inclusive, and fair?"

This study has two research objectives. First, to investigate the organisational and interpersonal obstacles that impede the knowledge transmission process in Malaysia's ICT sector. Second, to examine the impact of Ulū al-Albāb on knowledge transfer for innovation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The digital economy is increasing; hence technology parks are needed to accelerate its development. However, reality often hinders this process (Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019; Vrana & Singh, 2021; Kwok et al. 2024). Ulū al-Albāb, with deep understanding and wisdom, are essential for advancing ethical, inclusive, and equitable practices through information and innovation (Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Oranga, 2023; Kwok et al., 2024; Yufriadi et al., 2024). Ulū al-Albāb, based on Islamic principles, prioritises ethical use of science and technology for societal advancement (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Sarif et al., 2020; Sarif et al., 2021). Their engagement ensures that the digital economy grows fairly, equally, and sustainably, making technology advances available to everyone and used wisely.

The transmission of knowledge requires knowledge itself. Participants must interact with this material. Information has significant social and economic impacts (Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Oranga, 2023; Kwok, 2024). Knowledge transfer requires both the desire and skill to do it (Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019; Yufriadi et al., 2024). Organisations value effective transfers because they spark creativity and innovation. It fosters innovation by sharing knowledge (Garvin and Grey, 1997; Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019; Yufriadi et al., 2024). The essential nature of the tacit dimension makes codification difficult, according to Nonaka (1995). Polanyi (1967) defines tacit nature as knowledge beyond one's ability to express it. Innovation from participant ideas, knowledge, and expertise is centred on this component (Polanyi, 1967; Baumard, 1999; Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019; Yufriadi et al., 2024).

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) studied explicit and tacit knowledge in business. Tacit knowledge transmission is difficult and requires increased organisational emphasis (Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019; Yufriadi et al., 2024). However, Cohen and Levinthal (1990)

warn that organisations must have enough absorptive ability to transmit knowledge effectively. Knowledge may be passed on with proper methods. Before transferring knowledge, Szulanski (1996) advises firms to identify implicit and explicit knowledge within and between enterprises. Hofstede (1991) notes that knowledge transmission can be difficult if enterprises cannot identify. Grant and Baden-Fuller (2000) suggest strategic inter-enterprise collaboration to reduce knowledge transfer problems. However, they advise businesses to stay alert for risks and uncertainties.

The impact of *Ulū al-Albāb*, meaning persons with discernment and sagacity, is crucial in this circumstance (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021). *Ulū al-Albāb* play a significant role in ethical, inclusive, and equitable knowledge transfer and innovation processes (Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Oranga, 2023; Kwok et al., 2024; Yufriadi et al., 2024). Furthermore, *Ulū al-Albāb*'s competence can aid in conveying tacit knowledge (Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019; Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Vrana & Singh, 2021; Kwok et al., 2024). *Ulū al-Albāb*'s involvement ensures that knowledge distribution and innovation initiatives consider societal impacts, not just financial gains (Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Oranga, 2023; Kwok et al., 2024; Yufriadi et al., 2024). Incorporating *Ulū al-Albāb* principles can help businesses overcome interpersonal and organisational challenges in knowledge transmission (Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Oranga, 2023; Kwok et al., 2024; Yufriadi et al., 2024). *Ulū al-Albāb*'s impact on knowledge transmission and innovation is crucial for promoting ethical, inclusive, and egalitarian behaviour (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021; Oranga, 2023). Their leadership ensures that the digital economy advances fairly, equitably, and socially, resulting in more stable and sustainable economic growth (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Kwok et al., 2024). The next sections will explore how *Ulū al-Albāb* can improve knowledge transmission and innovation in the digital economy.

Ulū al-Albāb refers to individuals who understand and discern existence and its goals within the Tawhidic framework. In the business environment, the *Ulū al-Albāb* model applies to individuals inside organisations who follow this paradigm for business activity. According to Mohd Kamal Hassan (2010, p. 187), the Tawhidic paradigm in Islam emphasises serving Allah as true servants, vicegerents, and believers for the betterment of humanity, as stated in Qur'an 3:110. It seeks for a balanced community (*ummataṅ wasataṅ li-takūnū shuhada' 'alā al-nāṅ*), as stated in Qur'an 2:143.

Al-Faruqi (1992, p. 5) states that those who follow the Tawhidic paradigm possess the knowledge, abilities, and motivation to fulfil the Divine trust (*al-amānah*) and required obligations (*al-farā'id*) provided in the Qur'an and Sunnah. According to Surah Hud, 11:6, and Surah Az-Zumar, 39:41, these people perform their duties rationally and with Allah's unique human ability.

The holistic *Ulū al-Albāb* business model integrates Islamic ethics with commercial practices. This paradigm emphasises several key elements (Al-Faruqi, 1992; Mohd Kamal Hassan, 2010; Mhd. Sarif, 2015). Tawhidic direction first. The model underlines that all commercial actions must follow the Tawhidic paradigm, which is founded on Allah's unity. Businesses

are run with the goal of serving Allah and improving humanity under this worldview. The Tawhidic paradigm requires individuals in business to consider themselves as true devotees of Allah (*'ibād al-Rahmān*) and engage in business with sincerity and dedication to Allah. 4. Vicegerents on earth (*khulafā' fī al-ard*) handle resources wisely and ethically as stewards. Fifth, sincere believers (*al-mu'minūn*) exhibit steadfast faith and integrity in all economic operations. Sixth, promotes economic fairness, equality, and equilibrium for a harmonious community (*ummataṅ wasataṅ*). Seventh, this paradigm requires corporate executives to be well-versed and skilled. This includes academic business knowledge and living experience inspired by Islamic values. To effectively implement the *Ulū al-Albāb* model, corporations should establish ethical frameworks with codes of conduct and rules based on Islamic values (Al-Faruqi, 1992; Mohd Kamal Hassan, 2010; Mhd. Sarif, 2015). Intellectuals work hard to achieve the organization's goals as servants and representatives of Allah. They combine faith (*īmān*) and knowledge (*'ilm*) to fulfil responsibilities (*amānah*) and obligations (*mas'ulīyyah*) (Zarkasyi, 2010; Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Mhd. Sarif et al., 2021).

High-IQ people need information to expand their minds and skills to manage companies, aligning priorities, resources, and efforts to use learned knowledge. Zarkasyi (2010, pp. 162-164) suggests that individuals might acquire knowledge through human and Divine teaching. People learn by interacting with others or through instruction (Zabeda, 2004, 2008). This learning can be rewarded financially or otherwise (Zabeda, 2008).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study used qualitative research methods, including personal interviews. This method helps explain the background, which quantitative methods like surveys cannot (Wainwright, 1997; Patton, 1990). Furthermore, the personal interview enables for further research and validation of interviewees' material. Interviews inform hypotheses and generalisations (Ezzy, 2002). Stakeholder interviews illuminate many subjects, particularly social and cultural contexts (Myers, 2000). Malaysian small and medium ICT enterprises were interviewed in June and July 2023. The study interviewed 12 executives, including two CEOs, three senior managers, and seven company executives.

Cultural resistance is a major interpersonal barrier, according to informants. Due to a cultural tendency for maintaining the status quo over innovation and knowledge sharing, adopting the path of least resistance limits knowledge transfer. Lack of intellectual property rights might inhibit open knowledge transmission and collaboration, raising ethical difficulties. Financial restrictions are a major organisational challenge. Many Malaysian ICT companies lack the funds to conduct extensive R&D or manufacture competitive ICT goods. This financial constraint limits innovation and growth (Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019; Vrana & Singh, 2021; Kwok et al. 2024). Their ability to invest in new technology and knowledge transfer is further limited by government financial aid and incentives.

Industry trade-oriented business strategies can provide challenges. Malaysia's ICT industry trades more than develops new technology. Instead of developing their own technology, firms sell imported technology, which limits local knowledge and experience (Mezghani &

Aloulou, 2019; Vrana & Singh, 2021; Kwok et al. 2024). The word "technopreneur" is sometimes used to describe traders rather than inventors, showing a discrepancy between industry practices and technical entrepreneurship.

Collaboration is also lacking. It is unclear if local ICT companies share information through collaborations or MOUs with overseas corporations. Lack of international collaboration limits exposure to global best practices and new technology (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019; Vrana & Singh, 2021; Kwok et al. 2024). Foreign enterprises are reticent to collaborate with local ICT companies, isolating Malaysian firms from global knowledge networks.

These interpersonal and organisational barriers hinder knowledge transmission in Malaysia's ICT sector, impeding growth and innovation. IT companies can absorb outside knowledge, according to Enterprises 1, 2, 3, and 4; Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Vrana & Singh, 2021). Despite the tacit dimension's difficulty (Enterprises 3, 4, 5 and 6; Szulanski, 1996; Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Kwok et al., 2024) and the likely influence of individual culture and conviction (Enterprises 7, 8, 9, and 10; Hofstede, 1991; Mezghani & Aloulou, 2019), wisdom of practice is shared. Inter-company collaboration does this (Grant & Baden-Fuller, 2000; Vrana & Singh, 2021; Oranga, 2023). SECI may be able to achieve inter-enterprise knowledge transfer in technology parks (Enterprises 6, 7, and 10; Oranga, 2023; Kwok et al., 2024).

Ulū al-Albāb, meaning persons with deep understanding and discernment, can significantly effect knowledge diffusion and creativity (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Kwok et al., 2024). This is especially true in the Malaysian ICT sector, where basic impediments have been overcome. Ulū al-Albāb can greatly promote autonomous creativity. Malaysian ICT firms rely largely on foreign technology and lack financial resources for independent R&D (Mhd. Sarif et al., 2020; Kwok, 2024). Ulū al-Albāb can significantly impact the Malaysian ICT industry by promoting ethical practices, originality, inclusion, and knowledge exchange (Mhd. Sarif, 2015; Kwok et al., 2024). This can help Malaysia's ICT sector become greener, more economically strong, and more ethical (Thiersten and Wilhelm, 2001; Enterprise 11; Luger, 1992; Enterprises 3, 4, and 5; Mhd. Sarif, 2015).

Enterprises 9, 10, and 11 show that profit-making and political goals can coexist in a profitable and efficient collaboration. All respondents are optimistic about technology parks' spatial benefits, as Krugman (1997) and Mhd. note. Sarif (2015). Singh (2001), Porter (1998), and Mhd. agree that Malaysia's technology parks are ideal for ICT SMEs and offer short-term growth. Sarif (2015). Ulū al-Albāb can greatly impact the Malaysian ICT industry by shaping knowledge transfer and innovation processes. The industry they create can be commercially competitive, environmentally sustainable, and ethical. Ulū al-Albāb can support Malaysia's ICT sector's growth by promoting ethical behaviours, creativity, diversity, and information exchange.

In conclusion, cultural resistance and ethical difficulties are major interpersonal barriers in Malaysia's ICT sector, according to informants. Preserving the status quo hampers

knowledge sharing and innovation. In addition, violating intellectual property rights discourages open collaboration. Organisational impediments are also significant. Financial constraints prevent many Malaysian ICT enterprises from conducting extensive research and development or producing competitive ICT products. Their dependence on government subsidies limits their ability to invest in innovative technology and knowledge transfer activities. People with deep comprehension and strong observation, known as Ulū al-Albāb, can greatly impact knowledge transfer and creativity. Supporting local ICT company R&D policies and programmes can promote autonomous innovation. Setting and implementing guidelines can help improve ethics. Additionally, they can promote industry diversity and equity. By encouraging collaborations and offering channels for information sharing, they can help spread knowledge. These financial and collaborative issues must be addressed for Malaysian ICT enterprises to expand and innovate.

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