

# THE ROLES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOR IN MYANMAR'S PRIVATE BANKS

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## Abstract

This research discloses the roles of social capital, knowledge sharing intentions, and knowledge sharing behavior in the context of Myanmar's private banking sector. Two hundred and seventy five questionnaires were collected from mid-management level employees in the private banking sector using a survey technique. To estimate the proposed research model, structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied. The results, firstly highlight that social capital significantly influences knowledge sharing intentions, and secondly, that knowledge sharing intentions partially mediate the path from social capital and knowledge sharing behavior. This confirms the importance of socially-related factors regarding the motivation and behavior aspects of knowledge sharing between individuals. The findings enable organizations in Myanmar to appreciate the sharing behavior between employees, regarding knowledge. With respect to the practical implications, this study could offer useful insights into how organizations can design and implement effective practices to enhance knowledge sharing behavior in their organization, via effective stimulation of motivation. In this way, organizations can attain sustainable development of human capital and gain a competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** Social capital, knowledge sharing intention, knowledge sharing behavior

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is a core resource that allows firms to sustain business growth and gain a competitive advantage (Castaneda, Ríos, & Durán, 2016; Siri, 2019; Wang & Noe, 2010). This is essentially true in the current era for all sectors where knowledge resources have become a key competitive advantage. Therefore, receiving, exchanging or sharing and applying knowledge could develop the abilities and capabilities of employees and their organizations.

However, management of knowledge is not an easy task as this process involves many challenges. This is because people have different cognitive, social and psychological backgrounds. Thus, appreciation of how humans interact with each other becomes fundamentally imperative. This challenge has become an agenda to be addressed in developing countries like Myanmar which are striving towards sustainable development.

The market economy is gradually emerging in Myanmar following the 2011 election, and various foreign direct investments have since come into the country, especially after 2015 when a democratic government began leading the country. Many sectors are developing along with the changing competitive global economy. Among them, the private banking industry appears to have become one of the fastest-growing service sectors. Yet, there are challenges in the banking sector in Myanmar, and developing human resources is one of the most

important challenges to be addressed (GIZ, 2016). Prior researchers have found that knowledge sharing among members in various organizations contributes to effective development of human capital in organizations (Ndinguri, Prieto, & Machtmes, 2012; Wang & Noe, 2010). This is also true for the private banks in Myanmar; effective management of the knowledge sharing process therefore seems to be an important aspect of human capital development. Thus, major research attention is warranted to explore how knowledge sharing can be managed in private banks in Myanmar.

Previous studies of knowledge sharing in many industries do exist. However, not much has been studied regarding developing countries. Many researchers have also studied knowledge sharing from different perspectives. The goal of this paper is to explore whether there are relationships that exist among social capital, the knowledge sharing intentions of employees, and their actual sharing behavior. Specifically, this study will examine how social capital affects knowledge sharing among middle-level management staff in Myanmar, a developing country.

The remaining parts of this research are arranged as follows: The second section reviews the existing literature regarding social capital and individual behavior of knowledge sharing, in light of a conceptual framework and hypothesized relationships. The next section expounds on the research

methodology applied, followed by the research findings. The final section presents a discussion of the implications and limitations of the study.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Background

#### 2.1.1 Knowledge Sharing

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) stated that knowledge proves itself in action. Polanyi (1966) classified knowledge as implicit and explicit, and also explained that implicit knowledge could be assumed as tacit knowledge or “experience-based” knowledge. Even though knowledge can be assumed as explicit and tacit, most knowledge has a tacit nature (Polanyi, 1966). The tacit nature of knowledge cannot be simply diffused; instead, it is obtainable by imitating or practicing, and expressed by behavior (Chen, Chang, & Tseng, 2012; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Polanyi, 1966). In this global economy, knowledge becomes one of the key intangible resources and many organizations are attempting to create value based on knowledge assets (Wang & Noe, 2010). Such intangible assets are the key building blocks of competitive advantages, which can be built through the sharing of knowledge among organizational members (Wang & Noe, 2010). In this context, the process of sharing knowledge should not be compelled but emboldened (Gibbert & Krause, 2002); however, in reality employees tend to be reluctant to exchange their

knowledge for various reasons such as insufficient time or communication channels, as well as power concerns and other reasons (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002; Riege, 2005). Therefore, employees should be motivated and capable of sharing to achieve better knowledge sharing in organizations. From the behavioral intention perspective, knowledge sharing behavior within an organization cannot be obtained without taking intentions into consideration (Reychav & Weisberg, 2010).

#### 2.1.2 Theoretical foundation

The relationship between intentions and behavior has been proved by countless studies especially in knowledge management. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) from Ajzen (1991) and social capital theory (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998) are also widely applied theories. Consequently, this study sheds light on the integration of the two theories to provide enlightenment regarding the knowledge sharing behavior of employees.

##### *(a) Theory of Planned Behavior*

In the theory of planned behavior (TPB), Ajzen (1991) expounds the extent to which an individual’s actual behavior is shaped and controlled by his or her attitudes, motivation and willingness, and perceptions. The TPB has been applied in multidisciplinary studies, and particularly its application in knowledge sharing studies has received remarkable attention from mainstream scholars (Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005; Hua, Kim, & Lee,

2016; Reychav & Weisberg, 2010; Zhang & Ng, 2012) in which behavioral intention is addressed; the TPB is manifested by willingness that is associated with actual knowledge sharing behavior.

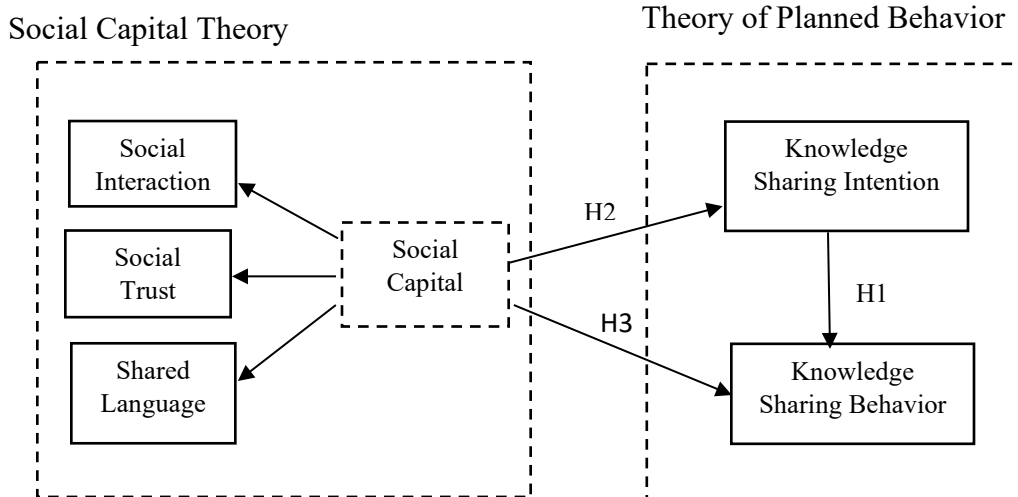
**(b) Social Capital**

The social capital theory is increasingly applied in literature considering knowledge management, describing how individuals and organizations share knowledge and achieve a competitive advantage (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Chang & Chuang, 2011; Siri, 2019). Social capital refers to “the sum of actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from, the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit” (Nahapiet & Ghoshal,1998,p. 243); it contains structural, relational and cognitive dimensions. The structural dimension is comprised of the

configuration of networks, network ties, and social interactions, whereas the relational dimension is generally described as being comprised of obligations, social trust and trustworthiness (Chang & Chuang, 2011; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Common perspectives and mutual understandings, such as shared goals and shared language are perceived as part of the cognitive dimension (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

**2.2 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis**

A causal relationship model was developed, in which social capital serves as a predictor of both knowledge sharing intentions and actual behavior, and knowledge sharing intentions act as a mediator as shown in Figure 1.



Source: Developed by the researchers (2019)

**Figure 1: Research Model**

The knowledge sharing process (including sharing intentions and actual behavior) was a dependent variable in this study, and can be described as the intentions of individuals to share knowledge which result in actual actions. The independent variable is social capital, including social interactions, social trust, and shared language, all of which contribute to the second order construct in this study. Additionally, the mediating effect of knowledge sharing intentions is assessed.

### **2.2.1 Knowledge Sharing Intention and Knowledge Sharing Behavior**

A substantial number of studies have investigated the relationship between intentions and behavior especially regarding knowledge management (Ajzen, 1991; Hau, Kim, & Lee, 2016; Hau, Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2013; Reyhav & Weisberg, 2010; Yang & Farn, 2009). However, these discussions were derived from different aspects. As discussed by many scholars, the higher the level of knowledge sharing intentions, the greater the extent to which people convert such intentions into actual action (Castaneda et al., 2016; Castañeda & Ignacio, 2015; Hau et al., 2016; Thakadu, Irani, & Telg, 2013). Few studies have shown insignificant findings, meaning that intentions do not always generate positive action (Yang & Farn, 2009).

Since studies of knowledge sharing intentions and behavior, have mainly been conducted in a western context (Chatzoglou & Vraimaki, 2009; Mafabi, Nasiima, Muhimbise,

Kasekende, & Nakiyonga, 2017), updates of the evidence in this regard from developing countries such as Myanmar remain insufficient; as a result, the link between these two factors is to be explored. Accordingly, the hypothesis was formulated:

*H1:* The higher the knowledge sharing intentions, the greater the knowledge sharing behavior will be.

### **2.2.2 Social Capital and Knowledge Sharing**

From the perspective of social capital theory, the social capital of employees positively directs their knowledge sharing process. If an organization can build strong social capital, it can strengthen the knowledge sharing among employees. Previous studies have empirically shown the positive effect of each dimension of social capital (social interaction, social trust and shared language) on knowledge sharing (Chang & Chaung, 2011; Chow & Chan, 2008; Zhang, Liu, Chen, & Gong, 2017). Social interaction measures the extent to which people establish and maintain a relationship with one another for the exchange of knowledge (Chang & Chuang, 2011; Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006). Moreover, social trust measures the confidence that people have in others, and the higher the level of trust people have, the greater their intentions are likely to be regarding the sharing of knowledge with others; this eventually causes an actual sharing action (Bock et al., 2005; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). Shared language can expand the common understanding

between social members, which can clarify misunderstandings (Chang & Chuang, 2011). Social capital in this study is a second-order construct with three dimensions, social interaction, social trust, and shared language (Siri, 2019). The combined effect of social capital can influence knowledge sharing intentions as well as knowledge sharing behavior. From these aspects, the following hypotheses were established:

*H2:* The stronger the social capital, the higher the knowledge sharing intentions will be.

*H3:* The stronger the social capital, the higher the knowledge sharing behavior will be.

### **2.2.3. The Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing Intentions**

According to knowledge management literature, factors of social capital influence one's behavioral intentions, and also have a significant effect on one's actual behavior (Hau et al., 2016). Therefore, intentions can be assumed to be an important factor and can perform as a mediating factor in predicting a specific behavior from the perspective of the TPB. Mafabi et al. (2017) revealed the mediating effect of behavioral intentions. However, the mediating role of knowledge sharing intentions has not been widely tested in previous studies (Abdillah, Lin, Anita, Suroto, & Hadiyati, 2018). Having substantial social capital would affect employees' desire for sharing knowledge, and this desire or intention would eventually have an impact on the actual

knowledge sharing behavior. Hence, hypothesis 4 was developed as follows:

*H4:* Knowledge sharing intentions mediate the relationship between social capital and knowledge sharing behavior.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Sample and Data Collection**

This research applied a quantitative method, in which data were collected via a survey from staff in middle management positions at major private banks located in Yangon, Myanmar. The major private banks Kanbawza (KBZ), Ayeyarway Bank Ltd. (AYA), Co-operation Bank Ltd. (CB), Myanmar Apex Bank Ltd. (MAB), Myawaddy Bank Ltd. (MWD), and Yoma Bank Ltd., altogether account for 82% of assets, and 80.1% of employees of the private banking sector as a whole (GIZ, 2018). The data collection period took place for two months from June to July in 2018. The data collection process took place by requesting the respondents to fill out a paper-based self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaires for this study were taken from an earlier study and back translation techniques were applied for measurement equivalence across culture (Schaffer & Riordan, 2003) since the original questions were in English and needed to be translated into the Myanmar language. Initially, 350 questionnaires were distributed. After deleting missing data and removing outliers by using

Mahalanobis distance (Mahalanobis, 1936), 275 samples remained, yielding a 78.57% response rate for further analysis.

### **3.2 Measures**

In this study, constructs of knowledge sharing intentions and behavior were conceptualized and operationalized to each include three items from Bock et.al., (2005). Social capital consisted of social interaction with five items, social trust with six items, and shared language with three items, collectively making up the study's constructive first-order dimension (Chang & Chuang, 2011).

A five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaires, in which the respondents were requested to answer whether they agreed with each statement by indicating their level of agreement.

### **3.3 Analysis Method**

SPSS was applied to analyze the descriptive statistics such as the respondent profiles, and to conduct the reliability test to obtain Cronbach's alphas of the constructs used in the questionnaires. The analysis was done using Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) as it maximizes the interpretability of both measurement and structural modes (Hair et al.,1998). The first stage of this approach was evaluating the

measurement model that specifies the indication for each construct, and assesses the reliability of each construct by executing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). When the measurement model shows adequate in-fix indices, one can have more confidence in the findings related to the assessment of the hypothesized structural model (Byrne, 2001). Therefore, after the first stage had been accomplished, the second stage of SEM, the structural model was estimated.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Profile of respondents**

From the 275 respondents, 69.8% were female and 30.2% were male. In terms of age of the respondents, 42.6% were between the age of 30 and 39, 32.6% ranged from 20 to 29, 22.5% were in the age range of 40 to 49 years, and only 3.4% had an age between 50 and 59 years. Regarding education levels, the majority of respondents (82.6%) held a bachelor's degree, while 17.4% of respondents were master's degree holders.

### **4.2 Measurement Model Test**

For assessing the measurement model, this study performed a confirmatory factor analysis for scale assessment. Table 1 indicates the validation of scales for the measurement items.

**Table 1: The scale assessment and CFA result**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math> (&gt; 0.7)</b>	<b>CR (&gt;0.7)</b>	<b>AVE (&gt;0.5)</b>	<b>Loadings</b>
Social Capital	SI1	0.818	0.97	0.5	0.61
	SI2				0.71
	SI3				0.68
	SI4				0.74
	SI5				0.66
	ST1				0.75
	ST2				0.78
	ST3				0.81
	ST4				0.76
	SL1				0.72
	SL2				0.80
	SL3				0.61
	Knowledge Sharing Intention				KSI1
KSI2		0.72			
KSI3		0.63			
Knowledge Sharing Behavior	KSB1	0.73	0.71	0.4	0.71
	KSB2				0.73
	KSB3				0.65

For Cronbach's alpha, i.e., the reliability of the measurement constructs evaluated according to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), the minimum cutoff  $> 0.7$  was used to confirm the internal consistency. All the coefficient alphas were above 0.73, which met the required value of 0.7 and satisfied the scale reliability. Construct reliability was evaluated by the measure of composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998; Zhang et al., 2017). From the CFA result, social capital obtained composite reliability of 0.97, whereas knowledge sharing intentions showed

a CR value of 0.9 and knowledge sharing behavior yielded a CR value of 0.71. All the values fulfilled the required values for acceptable reliability. AVE values also met the preferable value of more than 0.5, suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (2012).

In this research, construct validity was tested on the basis of convergent and discriminant validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Zapkau, Schwens, Steinmetz, & Kabst, 2015). For convergent validity, all the standardized factor loadings were checked, resulting in values above 0.6 which were significant. Since all the factor loading values were more than the minimum threshold of 0.4 (Ford,



MacCallum, & Tait, 1986; Zapkau et al., 2015), it can be implied that every item attained convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was observed by using Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria. The results revealed that the discriminant is established for all the constructs as the square root of the AVE of the constructs was compared and found to have values greater than those of the correction values of the corresponding constructs (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black,1998; Zhang et al.,2017). The descriptive statistics, correlations and discriminant validity results are presented in Table 2.

The Chi-square/df ratio of the measurement model in this study is 2.26 which is below 3.0, with CFI = 0.923; TLI = 0.908; and GFI= 0.901, all of which satisfy the acceptable fit of 0.9 recommended by Byrne (2001); the RMSEA = 0.056 which remains in

the acceptable range of < 0.8 (Hair et al.,1998). The values of the results confirmed that the measurement model in the current study has a good fit.

### 4.3 Assessment of Structural Model and Testing of Hypothesis

The second step of the analysis was concerned with testing the hypotheses of the full structural model. The results showed a statistically significant result for the chi-square test (291.409, p=0.000). Other relevant measures such as CFI=0.905; GFI= 0.895; TLI=0.89 and RMSEA= 0.061, were all acceptable for goodness of fit (Hair et.al, 1998; Zhang et al.,2017). As such we can assure the good fit of the structural model. The hypotheses results are exhibited in Figure 2 and Table 3.

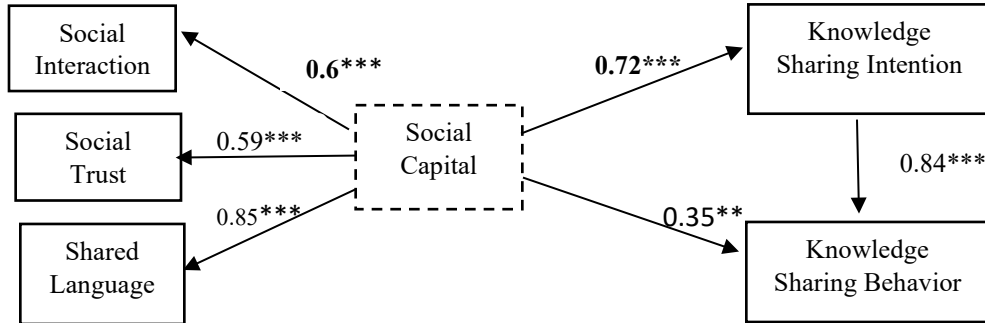
**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics results, Correlations and Discriminant Validity**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>KSI</b>	<b>KSB</b>
<b>SC</b>	275	3.67	0.76	<b>0.71</b>		
<b>KSI</b>	275	4.16	0.58	0.47**	<b>0.73</b>	
<b>KSB</b>	275	3.56	0.83	0.51**	0.58**	<b>0.65</b>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.0 level (2-tailed)

Note: The Diagonal elements with boldface numbers are the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE).

SC: Social Capital; KSI: Knowledge Sharing Intentions; KSB: Knowledge Sharing Behavior



\*\*\*p<0.001; \*\*p<0.05; \* p<0.01

**Figure 2: Results of the Structural Equation Model**

**Table 3: Structural Model Results**

Hypothesis	CR	$\beta$	Result
H1: The higher the knowledge sharing intentions, the greater the knowledge sharing behavior will be.	5.26	0.84*** (s.e = 0.137)	Accept
H2: The stronger the social capital, the higher the knowledge sharing intentions will be.	6.37	0.72 *** (s.e = 0.139)	Accept
H3: The stronger the social capital, the higher the knowledge sharing behavior will be.	2.23	0.35** (s.e = 0.156)	Accept

\*\*\* p<0.001; \*\*p<0.05; \*p<0.01

The above findings verified that knowledge sharing intentions are positively associated with knowledge sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.84$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). For the linkage between social capital and knowledge sharing intentions, the results showed a significant positive

effect of social capital on knowledge sharing intentions ( $\beta = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, social capital significantly influences knowledge sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.736$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Social capital is a second-order construct reflected by social

interaction ( $\beta = 0.6$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), social trust ( $\beta = 0.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and shared language ( $\beta = 0.87$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). All of the outcome values support the hypotheses.

From the results, it was found that the indirect or mediating effect of knowledge sharing intentions is 0.64 ( $0.72 \times 0.84$ ), resulting from the relationship between social capital and knowledge sharing behavior. The direct effect from social capital to knowledge sharing behavior is ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The total effect = 0.99, which shows a higher value than the direct effect. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is also supported and indicates a partial mediating effect of knowledge sharing interactions between social capital and knowledge sharing behavior.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study attempted to explore the linkage between social capital and knowledge sharing in the private banking institutions of Myanmar. The results of the research findings point out that the hypothesized relationships do exist.

### **5.1 Discussions and Implications**

Regarding social capital and knowledge sharing, the findings appear to be consistent with earlier scholars that claimed the association between social capital and knowledge sharing (Chang & Chuang, 2011; Chow & Chan, 2008; Hau et al., 2016), suggesting social capital is a

determining factor in the knowledge sharing process.

This finding is reflected by the nature of the context and the subjects. For the middle level managers in the banks, their nature of work requires a lot of interaction and communication, which requires the building of trust and to be trusted by others; it is also required to have a common goal and understanding in the organization. These factors tend to support the claim that social capital is essential for knowledge sharing behavior, and that knowledge sharing behavior will be achieved when one possesses the willingness and intention to share knowledge.

However, with regard to the mediating effect of knowledge sharing intentions, surprisingly, our data suggests only partial mediation of knowledge sharing intentions between social capital and knowledge sharing behavior. There are two possible reasons: Firstly, knowledge sharing behavior could be achieved through another factor, such as rules and regulations of the organization, peer pressure, or culture other than intention. Secondly, in this context, social capital appears to be sufficient for sharing one's valuable resources like knowledge, even without having a conscious thought about his or her underlying motivation for sharing.

Nevertheless, this study may elucidate two essential theoretical contributions. Firstly, this study advances the earlier work of Hau et al. (2013) by integrating knowledge sharing behavior into a social capital-knowledge sharing intention model,

thereby expanding the view of social capital and its subsequent impact on both intentions and behavior. By this means, this research also illuminates knowledge sharing intentions as a mediating mechanism between social capital and knowledge sharing behavior, i.e., a process that few studies have addressed. Secondly, while prior scholars have focused on the independent effects of social capital dimensions, this research modelled social capital as a second-order construct and detected how social capital, which is made up of the three dimensions provided by Hau et al. (2013), as a whole affects the knowledge sharing process.

There are some managerial implications that can be useful for organizations. The study also suggests that organizations should plan for stronger social capital, which will ultimately lead to more knowledge sharing, and in this way sustainable development and a competitive advantage will be achieved. The practitioners especially the human resource managers should understand and develop employee motivation that promotes social capital and can enhance knowledge sharing behavior, therefore organizations should provide socialization mechanisms to increase trust and to have a shared sense within the organization. An understanding of the value of social capital and a directed effort towards its development could be the key to gaining a competitive advantage.

Moreover, this study points out the importance of creating opportunities to share knowledge

among employees in an organization. Organizations can provide this in the work environment, for example small meeting rooms, meeting squares, coffee corners, and virtual platforms for intra-organizational members, as well as making time available for such interaction so that the organizational members can communicate and share knowledge.

## 5.2 Limitations of the Study

It is required that the following limitations are taken into consideration or are overcome by future research. Using cross-sectional data can limit justification when compared with using longitudinal data. Moreover, this study applied a survey method, where questionnaires were employed to collect perceptual views on the study variables; future research could use a triangulation method such as observation or other data sources to measure the variables, especially regarding behavior associated with knowledge sharing. Our questionnaires were developed to understand the respondents' views, therefore self-reporting data were gathered, and as such the results may be biased. Finally, the samples in this research came from only one sector in a single country. Thus, it is advisable to be careful in generalizing these findings into other sectors or different countries.

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**Appendix: Descriptive Statistics of the Variables**

<b>Measures</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b><i>Social Capital</i></b>		
SI1. I maintain close social relationships with other members in the organization.	3.95	0.70
SI3. I have frequent communication with some members in the organization.	3.97	0.58
SI4. I know some members in the organization on a personal level.	3.56	0.89
SI5. I usually interact and communicate with members from different departments in the organization.	3.66	0.78
ST1. I believe that the members in the organization will not take advantage of others even when the opportunity arises.	3.55	0.94
ST2. I believe that the members in the organization will always keep the promises they make to one another.	3.58	0.83
ST3. I feel that the members in the organization are truthful in sharing their ideas, feelings, and hopes.	3.27	0.86
ST4. If I have difficulties at work, I can freely talk to other organization members and I know that they will respond constructively and caringly.	3.81	0.73
SL1. The members in my organization use common terms or jargon when sharing information.	3.91	0.7
SL2. The members in my organization communicate in an understandable manner to share information.	3.69	0.71
SL3. My colleagues have the same technical background in relation to the field of our work as I do.	3.54	0.72
	<b>3.67</b>	<b>0.76</b>
<b><i>Knowledge-Sharing Intention</i></b>		
KSI1. I intend to share my experience or know-how from work with other organizational members in the future.	4.26	0.54
KSI2. I will provide my know-where or know-whom at the request of other organizational members.	4.25	0.59
KSI3. I will share my know-how from work with my co-workers.	3.99	0.61
	<b>4.16</b>	<b>0.58</b>
<b><i>Knowledge-Sharing Behavior</i></b>		
KSB1. Colleagues in my organization share know-how from their work experience with each other.	3.76	0.73
KSB2. I share the information I have with my colleagues when they ask me to.	3.88	0.81
KSB3. In my organization, new content and knowledge are shared or posted frequently among members.	3.05	0.99
	<b>3.56</b>	<b>0.84</b>