

Determinant of Knowledge Sharing among Lecturers in Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract: Lecturers in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are constantly burdened with numerous responsibilities, including meeting students' information needs and performing their duties optimally. Addressing students' information needs and maintaining effective teaching and learning processes requires adequate tacit knowledge application. Therefore, knowledge sharing among lecturers is crucial for fostering and transforming activities within HEIs. The knowledge that is created and stored must be shared to retain its value; otherwise, it becomes useless. Despite the opportunities and benefits associated with knowledge sharing (KS), some lecturers still find it difficult and are reluctant to share their knowledge, learning experiences, and skills due to a lack of trust. It is on this premise, that this study investigates the determinants of knowledge sharing among lecturers in HEIs. The research is guided by two objectives: to establish why knowledge sharing is essential in HEIs and to determine strategies that could promote trust among lecturers to facilitate knowledge sharing. The social exchange theory underpins this study, which employs a literature review of articles within a qualitative research approach. The findings reveal that knowledge sharing helps to highlight each lecturer's unique contributions, particularly in problem-solving initiatives. Trust is identified as a fundamental strategy for enhancing collaboration among lecturers. When trust is present, lecturers are more likely to be open and committed to their responsibilities and maintain integrity, reliability, and effective communication. The study fosters mutual understanding and teamwork among lecturers to enhance collaboration and social interaction. This collaborative environment can pave the way for the exchange of knowledge, information, and skills, ultimately benefiting the entire HEI community.

Keywords: Determinant, Trust, Knowledge, knowledge sharing, Lecturers, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

1. Introduction

This paper reports on the determinants of knowledge sharing among lecturers in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Nigeria. Lecturers in HEIs are constantly burdened with numerous responsibilities, including meeting students' information needs and performing their duties optimally. Addressing students' information needs and maintaining effective teaching and learning processes requires adequate tacit knowledge. Therefore, knowledge sharing among lecturers is a crucial factor in fostering and transforming activities within HEIs. The knowledge that is created and stored must be shared to retain its value; otherwise, it becomes useless. Despite the opportunities and benefits associated with knowledge sharing (KS), some lecturers still find it difficult and are reluctant to share their knowledge, learning experiences, and acquired skills due to a lack of trust in one another. HEIs encompass post-secondary or tertiary educational institutions, such as colleges, polytechnics, vocational institutes, and universities. These institutions aim to foster learning and generate knowledge to accomplish educational objectives (Alemu, 2018). HEIs have played an indispensable role in society, including providing information and guidance to meet students' varied information needs (Bantanur, Mukherjee, & Shankar, 2015). Students' information needs range from coursework and scholarships for further education to examination preparation, assignment completion, job opportunities, career development, and acquiring competencies/skills to address real-life problems (Khan & Jan, 2022). In Nigeria, where this study is situated, the educational sector is managed by the Federal Ministry of Education (Oyebade & Dike, 2013). Nigerian HEIs were established to develop skilled manpower, which, in turn, enhances the intellectual competence of individuals. The acquisition of physical and intellectual skills, promotion of scholarship, and community service are critical issues in the Nigerian economy (Oyebade & Dike, 2013).

To enhance teaching, learning, research, and knowledge transfer, diverse training programs need to be promoted among lecturers in HEIs. The Ministry of Education should effectively manage all educational institutions, regardless of their type. The National Universities Commission (NUC), which serves as the supervisory body for all tertiary institutions in Nigeria, should ensure that universities meet the needs of students and society at large (NUC, 2012). For academics in HEIs to achieve this objective, lecturers need to trust one another. Knowledge sharing, a key component of knowledge management (KM), is crucial for the growth and success of any organization due to its ability to improve products and services. KM fosters creativity, innovation, cost reduction, sustainability of competitiveness, and the achievement of organizational objectives

by building trust among lecturers. KS also helps HEIs respond to changes, promotes collaboration, and ensures they remain current with up-to-date information and developments both within and outside the institutions.

HEIs have become knowledge-intensive organizations focused on the creation and dissemination of knowledge through teaching, learning, research, published articles, curriculum development, administration, and sharing of knowledge (Ramjeawon & Rowley, 2018; Fullwood & Rowley, 2017). They also aim to make knowledge available to information seekers (Ozmen, 2010). Since created knowledge supports learning, teaching, and research, lecturers need to harness this success by providing education and training programs to students (Fullwood & Rowley, 2017; Ozmen, 2010). The authors of this paper emphasize that to meet the diverse information needs of students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) and other staff members, lecturers require versatile knowledge and skills in their areas of expertise. This would enhance their ability to perform their duties optimally. However, many lecturers, especially in Nigerian HEIs, are still reluctant to share their knowledge, learned skills, and experiences due to a lack of trust. Based on the authors' personal experience of over ten years working in HEIs, it has been observed that many lecturers view knowledge as power. They believe that sharing their knowledge might allow others to surpass them in various aspects of life, gain more power, and uncover new knowledge and secrets in their teaching fields. As a result, they prefer to keep their knowledge for personal self-interest. This reluctance to share knowledge is detrimental because adequate knowledge that is not shared cannot contribute to organizational growth. Sharing knowledge allows lecturers to learn and unlearn, which is crucial for their career progression.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the determinant of knowledge sharing among lecturers in HEIs in Nigeria. To guide this further the following research objectives of “to establish why knowledge sharing is essential in HEIs and to determine strategies that could promote trust as a factor among lecturers in knowledge sharing in HEIs” were broken into sub-themes, namely:

- The understanding of what knowledge entails
- Why knowledge is essential in HEIs
- The effect of trust on knowledge sharing among lecturers in HEIs.
- Strategies that could promote trust for knowledge sharing among lecturers in HEIs.

The next section describes the literature review, theory adopted, methodology and conclusion presented in the study.

3. Literature Review

The literature review of this paper was guided by the sub-themes earlier mentioned in this study.

3.1 Knowledge

Knowledge has become an indispensable component for institutions to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors (Wang, Wang & Liang, 2014). The knowledge utilized by an organization advances its operations through the tasks carried out by employees. This knowledge can be categorized into explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is written, documented, and made available to the public or individuals through various means. Examples include knowledge published in books, journal articles, and magazines, and shared through seminars, meetings, and conferences. In contrast, tacit knowledge encompasses individual intuition, values, experiences, and beliefs, which are not easily communicated or transmitted (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). While tacit knowledge gives an organization a competitive advantage, it is difficult to acquire, diffuse, observe, and share within organizations (Savolainen, 2008). Knowledge is crucial in any organization because it aids in the development and improvement of products and services (Ceylan, 2013). Managing knowledge effectively is important as it leads to positive outcomes. Knowledge management (KM) is a strategy that includes managing intellectual capital, generating, and transferring knowledge, adopting best practices, and fostering innovation, all of which are centered on knowledge sharing (Kimile et al., 2020).

KM is believed to help collect information about various facts and gain the skills and experiences of faculty members in HEIs, thereby enhancing academic activities. For lecturers to sustain their teaching, learning, and research practices, they require deep knowledge that aligns with global standards in the lectureship profession. Extant literature and the experiences of authors who have worked in HEIs suggest that the most effective way for lecturers to sustain their teaching, learning, and research practices while adhering to global standards is by

cultivating a culture of KS (Ali, Gohneim, & Al Ronbaie, 2014; Jeyanthi & Shrivastava, 2019) across their various domains. The acquisition of adequate tacit knowledge among lecturers in HEIs not only fosters and transforms the organization but also helps lecturers excel in their profession. Therefore, it is essential to share created, stored, and managed knowledge to maintain its usefulness and value within the organization. KS has become an indispensable tool in HEIs, enabling lecturers to exchange ideas and insights. The act of sharing lecturers' know-how with colleagues takes various forms (Adamseged & Hong, 2018), including face-to-face communication, group discussions, online forums, conferences, written correspondence, research publications, technical reports, media advisories, and training programs.

The outcome of the KS process can lead to competitive advantages, improved services, enhanced productivity, and better job performance for lecturers (Chikezie, Dibua, & Ihim, 2016). Achieving the overall objectives of an institution is closely tied to the opportunities associated with KS. However, despite these benefits, many lecturers in Africa, specifically in Nigerian HEIs, still find it difficult and are reluctant to share their knowledge due to a lack of trust (Awodoyin, Osisanwo, Adetoro & Adeyemo, 2016; Eiriemokhale & Idiedo, 2020). They fear that sharing their knowledge will diminish their fame and allow their colleagues to gain more knowledge and skills (Muqadas, Rehman, Aslam & Ur-Rahman, 2017). If lecturers refuse to share what they know and learn, they miss out on understanding the best practices in teaching, learning, and research. Continuous openness and sharing are necessary to perform tasks effectively and to learn new strategies. The implication is that one's current knowledge might become outdated compared to others. Sharing knowledge allows for correction and support from those who are more knowledgeable, which can be crucial during interactions and discussions.

The success of lecturers' expertise depends largely on their exposure, experiences, and engagement in various projects within and outside the organization. Drawing from their experiences working at different HEIs, the authors of this paper have observed that many lecturers are reluctant to share their tacit knowledge. They fear that such knowledge might be used against them in the future for promotions, writing articles, career growth, or gaining a competitive advantage. This knowledge is precious to lecturers because it takes a long time to build. Tacit knowledge includes personal knowledge, understanding, know-how, experiences, beliefs, values, and intuitions gained through learning, education, and experience. It is embedded in individuals' minds and can only be shared through interaction and communication with others. Kamal, Manjit, and Gurvinder (2007) emphasize the importance of KS in knowledge-based organizations like universities, where many employees are knowledge workers. In an educational environment, effective KS ensures that academics can realize and develop their potential to the fullest. HEIs play a key role in knowledge creation, especially tacit knowledge, which is difficult to create and is often innovative. This explains the reluctance to share it. Academic staff who have developed this embedded knowledge believe it constitutes the intellectual capital of an educational institution, crucial for its overall functioning and success (Kacperska & Łukasiewicz, 2020). Therefore, the only way to share this knowledge among colleagues is through trust, as the knowledge owners do not want their contributions jeopardized when shared (Kacperska & Łukasiewicz, 2020).

3.2 Why Knowledge is Essential in HEIs

Knowledge has become a critical factor in all organizations, especially HEIs. Like other organizations, HEIs heavily rely on knowledge to carry out various tasks. The types of knowledge crucial to these institutions include explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is routinely consulted by lecturers and students in fulfilling their responsibilities, whether completing academic tasks, managing teaching and learning, conducting research, engaging in community development, or participating in academic citizenship. Lecturers rely extensively on applying knowledge to execute their teaching and learning duties, such as developing course materials/modules, writing research papers, and engaging in interactions and presentations during conferences, seminars, and workshops. From students registering for courses to attending classes and participating in extracurricular activities until graduation, the application of knowledge underpins their achievements and progress. It is crucial to emphasize that knowledge is akin to the water humans drink daily. Just as water sustains human life, knowledge serves as the fundamental resource for everything in HEIs and professional life. Without knowledge, human existence, including that of lecturers in HEIs, becomes uncertain because every aspect of academic work involves the application of knowledge. The consideration of knowledge lies in how data and information available to lecturers are transformed into knowledge. Lecturers engage in searching for data, which consists of raw figures or factual details about events, while information is the result of interpreted, processed, or explained data (Pangil & Nasurddin, 2013). Knowledge, in turn, comprises experiences and actionable information that reduce uncertainty and enhance decision-making (Afolayan, 2020). There are two types of knowledge: tacit and explicit. Tacit knowledge resides in individuals' minds, acquired through experience in an intangible form

(Gamble, 2020). It is challenging to articulate, interpret, and formalize (Polanyi, 1962), often shared through regular interactions, discussions, workshops, and seminars (Ehijiabone & Olatokun, 2020). Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is easily communicated, encoded, understood, written, documented, explained, and shared (Jain & Moreno, 2015).

3.3 Effect of Trust in Knowledge Sharing among Lecturers in HEIs

The concept of trust is often interpreted differently across the world. It holds deep significance in various contexts and to different individuals. Trust lacks a singular, universal definition that fully encapsulates its essence. Dirks and de Jong (2022) define trust as "a generalized expectancy held by an individual or group that another will behave in ways desired, promised verbally, or written statement." Dirks and de Jong (2022) suggest that trust is a psychological state involving vulnerability based on positive expectations of another's intentions or behaviour. These scholarly definitions illustrate that trust is cultivated through interactions, whether among individuals or within organizational settings. Indeed, trust cannot develop without interpersonal communication and engagement. It evolves gradually; the more individuals interact, the stronger their bonds and willingness to rely on each other's promises. Trust encompasses elements such as benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness (Dirks, & de Jong, 2022; Enakrire & Smuts, 2024). It's no surprise that every organization seeks trustworthy, dependable, and amicable employees with low self-orientation. Trust is built on honesty, reliability, integrity, and confidence in an institution or individual (Annansingh, Howell, Liu & Baptista, 2018). In HEIs, trust plays a crucial role in enabling lecturers to fulfil their duties in teaching and research. A culture of trust fosters increased interaction, communication, and strong bonds among lecturers, facilitating learning, growth, and improvement in their respective fields (Brown, 2014). Research has linked trust among employees to organizational support, heightened commitment, reduced turnover intention, and a more open organizational climate (Ferre, Connell, & Travaglione, 2004; Thomas & Zolin, 2009).

Trust is essential for KS because it serves as a crucial facilitator of collaboration and effective exchange of information. Studies by Akanbi and Ondari (2017), Akosile and Olatokun (2019), and Mutahar et al. (2022) have identified trust as a key factor that supports collaboration and KS. In HEIs, fostering KS activities requires a foundation of trust (Ogunmokun et al., 2020). Within knowledge-intensive environments like HEIs, lecturers highly value their time, position, and expertise, which are safeguarded through their skills, know-how, and years of experience. They are mindful of protecting their reputation and integrity and choose carefully whom they share knowledge with due to potential risks such as sabotage. If lecturers lack confidence in their colleagues' intentions, particularly fearing misuse of shared knowledge, they may hesitate to collaborate. Instances of mistrust among lecturers, perhaps stemming from societal divisions, can negatively impact KS initiatives. However, the positive effects of KS can also be profound. When knowledge is shared among colleagues, HEIs can demonstrate excellence and gain global recognition through achievements such as high-ranking scholarly publications and academic awards. Such outcomes highlight the positive impact of trust in facilitating KS among lecturers, supported by active participation in workshops, seminars, and conferences. This collaborative environment not only enhances individual reputations but also contributes to institutional success and recognition.

Elaimi and Persaud (2014) argue that a major reason why lecturers may hesitate to share knowledge is the fear of diminishing its value. Knowledge, whether tacit or explicit, is inherently valuable. Sharing tacit knowledge particularly hinges on trust, as the possessor must feel confident in the recipient's integrity and intentions. Tacit and explicit knowledge are indispensable in HEIs, working together to enable lecturers to achieve their goals effectively. Establishing trust fosters an environment where lecturers feel comfortable sharing their expertise, experiences, and skills, thereby promoting KS among peers. Holste and Fields (2010), Savolainen (2019), and Aruoren, Odori, and Igemoha (2021) highlight the significance of trust in KS among lecturers. Trust among employees not only enhances their willingness to share knowledge and expertise but also stimulates creativity and fosters an open environment for the free flow of ideas and information. Conversely, a lack of trust can lead lecturers to withhold valuable information, resulting in decreased productivity. The presence of trust can enhance lecturers' capabilities through shared knowledge, boost research productivity, improve student grades through well-invested teaching materials, and contribute to institutional sustainability.

3.4 Strategies for Promoting Trust Among Lecturers for Knowledge Sharing in HEIs

Various authors have proposed strategies to foster trust among lecturers in HEIs, tailored to different contexts. Brewster and Railsback (2003) advocate for enhancing faculty communication, promoting collaboration, cultivating relationships, and engaging in discussions aligned with institutional vision and mission. They also

highlight the importance of nonverbal communication and the application of soft skills, such as soliciting feedback and asking questions among colleagues. Wong (2020) suggests fostering a culture of coaching and mentoring younger colleagues to cultivate inclusivity, transparency, and honesty within HEIs. Other strategies to build trust among lecturers include effective communication, team participation, leveraging reliable technology for interaction, promoting cultural inclusiveness, and fostering mutual respect (Kwaye, 2018). These strategies, when implemented, significantly enhance KS among lecturers in HEIs by creating an environment conducive to freely sharing knowledge, expertise, and skills through platforms like seminars, social interactions, inter-departmental collaborations, and accessible knowledge repositories (Mpanya, 2005).

4. Social Exchange Theory

This study is underpinned by the Social Exchange Theory developed by Homans (1958) and Blau (1964). Homans (1958) explained that the theory explores exchanges between parties, which involve tangible or intangible, profitable, or unprofitable transactions. Blau (1964) expands on this, emphasizing that the theory hinges on trust, personal obligations, gratitude, and mutual expectations between parties. Individuals regulate their interactions based on the perceived costs and benefits, without any binding contractual agreements ensuring rewards for efforts or interactions. Thus, employees' trust in an organization correlates with their willingness to invest energy, time, and effort (Blau, 1964). The theory elucidates how trust could facilitate KS among lecturers in HEIs. Trust catalyzes social exchanges, fostering interactions, relationships, intimacy, and cooperation among employees and colleagues. Kurtulus, Kruse, and Blasi (2011) suggest that employees trust their colleagues, supervisors, and managers to treat them fairly. Through KS, this treatment relates to honesty in their engagement in positive behaviours that impact organizational outcomes. Trust is pivotal for sustaining relationships and interactions, with the expectation that positive actions of honesty, fairness, and generosity will be reciprocated, despite the absence of formal contractual obligations (Gambetta, 1988; Tariq et al., 2012). In HEIs, trust empowers lecturers to engage vulnerably, fostering interactions, collaboration, and strong bonds as they exchange ideas, experiences, skills, and expertise, anticipating reciprocal gestures from their peers. Conversely, a lack of trust in HEIs can lead to dysfunction, and reluctance to interact, communicate, cooperate, or collaborate, fostering cliques within the organization and resulting in frustration, decreased productivity, performance anxiety, and a reluctance to share knowledge (Brown et al., 2015; Fang, 2021; Patmore, 2020). The Social Exchange Theory is highly relevant to understanding why and how KS among lecturers is crucial in Nigerian HEIs, as well as how trust facilitates this process. As a lecturer, before sharing experiences, skills, and know-how with colleagues, it must ensure that the knowledge is used appropriately. With trust, colleagues will reciprocate by sharing their own experiences and skills in the future. The theory is essential in the workplace, demonstrating honesty, trustworthiness, and willingness to share knowledge, and expecting the same among colleagues.

5. Methodology

This study applied a literature review method where the researchers harvested different articles from the online database of Google Scholar. The researchers read through the articles and internalised the content based on the topic under investigation. Most of what the researchers focused on were key terms of "Trust", "Effect of trust", "knowledge sharing among lecturers", and "strategies that could promote trust for knowledge sharing" in the literature gathered for the study. While reading through the various literature gathered for the study, the researchers used their observation method in selecting the various literature that speaks directly to the discourse of KS among lecturers in HEIs. The findings obtained while reading and internalizing the research papers harvested for the study were later used to buttress the understanding of various scholars' research studies. Starting from when the literature for the study was harvested up until when the paper was developed and edited took the authors three months. Since the literature sourced for the study was in an open database, there was no ethical consideration because a human factor was not involved.

6. Conclusion

The study identifies trust as a critical determinant that can enhance KS among lecturers in HEIs. Many lecturers hesitate to share their tacit knowledge due to fears of diminishing their recognition and allowing colleagues to gain an advantage. However, withholding knowledge means missing out on understanding best practices in teaching, learning, and research. The study emphasizes that trust among lecturers stimulates creativity and creates an open environment for the free flow of ideas and information. According to the Social Exchange Theory applied in this study, when knowledge is shared voluntarily without immediate reward, there is an expectation of reciprocal assistance in the future. Lecturers play a pivotal role in HEIs, initiating knowledge-sharing activities

as they fulfil their duties in teaching, research, academic citizenship, and community development. The study underscores the importance of lecturers sharing their knowledge, experiences, skills, and expertise under the condition that they trust their colleagues to handle this knowledge responsibly. KS involves lecturers willingly exchanging their knowledge and skills, which is essential for advancing tasks and transforming HEIs. To establish concrete and sustainable knowledge sharing among lecturers in HEIs, the study advocates prioritizing mutual understanding, collegiality, and teamwork. This approach is crucial as trust and knowledge sharing operate within social exchange relationships. By fostering mutual understanding and teamwork, HEIs can create a collaborative environment conducive to exchanging knowledge, information, and skills, ultimately benefiting the entire academic community.

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