

Digital Literacy and Knowledge Sharing Among Young Professionals: A Mixed-methods Study

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Abstract: The increasing integration of digital technologies into hybrid and remote workplaces has fundamentally transformed how knowledge is created, shared and applied among early-career professionals. Although digital literacy is widely recognised as an essential workplace competency, its contribution to knowledge sharing within Knowledge Management remains insufficiently understood. Existing KM research has largely focused on technological infrastructures and formal knowledge-sharing systems, with comparatively limited attention given to the social, behavioural and relational mechanisms through which digital literacy influences knowledge sharing in digital mediated workplaces. To address this gap, this study adopted a sequential mixed-methods design integrating a systematic literature review with qualitative focus group discussions involving early-career professionals working across multiple industries. Findings from both data sources were analysed thematically and integrated to generate comprehensive insights into digitally enabled knowledge-sharing practices. The integrated analysis identified three interconnected themes: digital fluency as an enabler of knowledge sharing, the growing importance of informal digital knowledge ecosystems, and the critical role of trust, psychological safety and organisational culture in shaping knowledge-sharing behaviour. The findings demonstrate that digital literacy extends beyond technical competence to include behavioural and relational capabilities that shape knowledge-sharing activities. Although participants reported high levels of digital fluency, effective knowledge sharing depended upon organisational norms, trust, psychological safety and confidence. Informal digital platforms emerged as valuable spaces for collaborative learning, yet also created challenges relating to credibility, visibility and knowledge validation. The study advances Knowledge Management research by conceptualising digital literacy as a multidimensional capability that facilitates knowledge sharing through social interaction, trust and collaborative engagement rather than technical competence alone. The findings provide practical guidance for organisations seeking to develop digitally enabled knowledge-sharing cultures by strengthening psychological safety, supporting informal learning and aligning digital technologies with organisational knowledge-sharing practices.

Keywords: Digital literacy, Knowledge sharing, Early-career professionals, Hybrid work, Informal learning, Organisational learning, Trust, Knowledge management

1. Introduction

The rapid digital transformation of organisations has fundamentally reshaped how knowledge is created, shared and applied within contemporary workplaces. Hybrid and remote work environments have accelerated reliance on digital collaboration technologies, requiring employees to not only access information but also to actively contribute to organisational knowledge creation. In particular, the rise of hybrid and remote work environments has intensified reliance on digital platforms such as Microsoft Teams and LinkedIn, positioning them as central infrastructures for organisational communication and knowledge exchange. From a KM perspective, knowledge sharing is fundamentally a social process rather than merely a technological activity. Social Capital Theory suggests that knowledge exchange is strengthened through relationships characterised by trust, reciprocity and shared understanding. Consequently, digital literacy should not only be viewed as the ability to operate digital technologies but also as an enabler of collaborative interaction and relationship building within digital world environments (Aslan, Mold, van Marwijk & Armes: 2024). While digital literacy is conceptualised in terms of technical proficiency, its role extends beyond functional skills to include cognitive, social and behavioural dimensions. In digitally mediated work environments, knowledge-sharing is not solely dependent on access to technology but is also shaped by factors such as trust, confidence and perceptions of peer credibility (Tran & Nguyen, 2022).

Although KM literature consistently recognises knowledge sharing as central to organisational learning and innovation, much of the existing research continues to focus on technological infrastructures, repositories and formal KM systems. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding how individual capabilities and interpersonal relationships shape knowledge-sharing behaviour within digitally mediated workplaces (Boufounou, Mavroudi, Toudas & Georgakopoulos: 2022). Likewise, studies examining digital literacy frequently conceptualise it as a technical competency while overlooking its influence on trust, confidence, collaboration and informal learning, all of which underpin effective knowledge sharing. The increasing use of collaborative technologies, enterprise social media and instant messaging platforms has also created new opportunities and challenges for knowledge sharing where visibility, psychological safety and perceptions of credibility significantly influence employees' willingness to contribute knowledge (Bednarz, Markiewicz & Szmelter-Jarosz: 2024).

Despite increasing scholarly interest in both digital literacy and knowledge sharing, these concepts have largely evolved as separate streams of research. Limited empirical evidence explains how digital literacy shapes knowledge-sharing behaviour among early-career professionals working within digitally mediated environments, particularly when social factors such as trust, confidence, psychological safety and organisational culture are considered simultaneously. Furthermore, relatively few studies integrate evidence from both systematic literature reviews and empirical qualitative investigations to provide a comprehensive understanding of these relationships. This study addresses these gaps through a mixed-methods approach that combines a systematic literature review with virtual focus group discussions to examine how digital literacy enables knowledge sharing in contemporary workplaces. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- How does digital literacy influence knowledge-sharing practices among early-career professionals?
- What factors enable or constrain knowledge-sharing in digitally mediated work environments?
- How do trust, confidence and organisational context shape participation in digital knowledge-sharing processes?

This paper contributes to KM research by demonstrating that digital literacy extends beyond technical competence to influence knowledge sharing through behavioural, relational and organisational mechanisms.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews existing literature on digital literacy and knowledge-sharing focusing on how digital capabilities, social dynamics and organisational contexts shape knowledge exchange in digitally mediated work environments.

2.1 Digital Literacy in Professional Contexts

Digital literacy has evolved from a purely technical competency into a multidimensional construct encompassing technical, cognitive, communicative and critical thinking capabilities. Contemporary research increasingly recognises that digital literacy enables individuals not only to operate digital technologies but also to evaluate information critically, collaborate effectively and participate meaningfully within digital knowledge ecosystems (Aslan et al., 2024). Within knowledge-intensive organisations, these competencies are essential for locating, evaluating, creating and sharing knowledge across increasingly digital workplaces. Digitally literate individuals demonstrate greater confidence (Bednarz et al., 2024). However, disparities in digital literacy influence participation in organisational processes. It also shapes how individuals assess credibility and engage with knowledge sources, making it foundational for knowledge-intensive work.

2.2 Knowledge Sharing in Digital Work Environments

Knowledge sharing is central to KM and organisational learning in digital environments; it occurs through both formal systems and informal platforms such as collaborative tools and social networks. However, knowledge sharing is influenced by social and behavioural factors such as trust, motivation and perceived value (Tran & Nguyen, 2022). Individuals are more likely to share knowledge when supported by organisational culture and psychological safety while fear of negative evaluation may lead to knowledge withholding. This highlights knowledge sharing as a socially embedded practice rather than a purely technological process. Knowledge sharing is fundamentally a social process that depends upon relationships between individuals rather than solely on technological infrastructure. Social Capital Theory proposes that trust, shared norms and reciprocal relationships encourage individuals to exchange knowledge voluntarily, while Communities of Practice emphasise learning through participation within collaborative communities. Together, these perspectives suggest that digital technologies facilitate knowledge sharing only when accompanied by supportive social structures and organisational cultures.

2.3 Digital Literacy and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

Although digital literacy and knowledge sharing have each received considerable scholarly attention. Relatively few studies have explicitly examined how the former shape the latter. Existing research generally concludes that digitally literate employees communicate more effectively, adapt more readily to collaborative technologies and participate more confidently in digital communities. However, the mechanisms through which digital literacy influences knowledge-sharing behaviour remain insufficiently understood, particularly regarding the roles of trust, confidence and organisational culture. Digital literacy enables individuals to use communication platforms effectively and influences how they interpret interactions and engage in knowledge-sharing activities

(Jayathilaka & Udara, 2024). In contrast, those with limited digital skills may experience uncertainty and even lack confidence in contributing to digital discussions which inhibits participation (Dai & Guo, 2022). This suggests that digital literacy functions not only as a technical skill but also as a behavioural enabler that shapes participation in knowledge-sharing processes.

2.4 Informal Learning, Trust and Social Dynamics

Digital environments have expanded opportunities for informal learning, where individuals acquire knowledge through observation, interaction and participation in online communities. Informal knowledge sharing often occurs through peer-to-peer communication channels such as messaging platforms and social networks which enables rapid and context-specific knowledge exchange. However, these environments also introduce complexities related to trust and social dynamics. Trust plays a crucial role in determining whether individuals feel comfortable sharing knowledge in environments where contributions are visible and subject to evaluation (Tran & Nguyen, 2022). Concerns about credibility, vulnerability and reputation can influence participation especially among early-career professionals who are still developing their professional identities.

Emotional and social factors such as perceived competence, fear of judgement and organisational culture further shape knowledge-sharing behaviour (Bednarz et al., 2024). These factors highlight that participation in digital knowledge ecosystems is not purely rational but rather influenced by subjective experiences and social interactions. These findings are consistent with Social Capital Theory which argues that knowledge sharing depends upon trust, reciprocity and shared understanding among organisational members. Similarly, Communities of Practice propose that learning emerges through participation in collaborative communities rather than through formal knowledge repositories alone. Consequently, informal digital environments should be viewed as important social spaces where knowledge is negotiated, refined and transferred through continuous interaction.

2.5 Research gap

Although research on digital literacy and knowledge sharing has expanded considerably during the past decade, three important gaps remain. First, digital literacy continues to be examined primarily as a technical competency, with limited consideration of its behavioural and relational influence on knowledge-sharing practices. Second, existing KM research has predominantly focused on formal organisational systems, providing comparatively little insight into informal digital knowledge-sharing environments where employees increasingly collaborate. Third, relatively few empirical studies have integrated systematic literature evidence with qualitative experiences to explain how digital literacy, trust, confidence and organisational culture collectively influence knowledge-sharing behaviour among early-career professionals. Addressing these gaps is important because digital workplaces increasingly depend upon collaborative knowledge exchange rather than information access alone. Accordingly, this study integrates findings from a systematic literature review with focus group discussions to develop a richer understanding of how digital literacy enables knowledge sharing within contemporary organisations.

3. Research Design and Methodology

This study adopted a sequential mixed-methods research design that integrated a systematic literature review (SLR) with qualitative focus group discussions. The mixed-methods approach was selected because it enabled the researcher to first establish a comprehensive theoretical understanding of digital literacy and knowledge sharing before exploring how these concepts are experienced by early-career professionals in digitally mediated workplaces. Integrating both methods strengthened the study by allowing theoretical evidence to be compared with empirical experiences, thereby providing a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.1 Systematic Literature Review

The SLR was undertaken to establish the theoretical foundation for the study and identify current knowledge relating to digital literacy, knowledge sharing and digitally mediated work environments. A structured review was considered appropriate because it enables the transparent identification, evaluation and synthesis of existing evidence while minimising selection bias. The review followed a structured and transparent process guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Framework to ensure methodological rigour and replicability (Ammirato, Felicetti, Linzalone & Corvello: 2023). Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2025 were retrieved from the Clarivate Web of Science database. Boolean search strings combining keywords and synonyms were developed to maximise retrieval accuracy. Search terms included combinations of 'digital literacy', 'digital competence', 'knowledge sharing', 'knowledge

management', digital workplace'; 'hybrid work'; 'organisational learning' and related terminology using AND/OR operators.

The screening process followed the PRISMA framework. Records were initially screened by title and abstract before full-text assessment. Studies were excluded if they were not peer-reviewed, were published outside the selected timeframe, did not address digital literacy or knowledge sharing within professional environments, or lacked sufficient methodological detail. The remaining studies were subjected to full-text review before final inclusion. Inclusion criteria focused on studies that addressed digital competencies, KM practices and workplace learning while non-peer-reviewed and irrelevant studies were excluded. The screening process involved identification, eligibility assessment and final inclusion of relevant studies. A total of 26 selected articles was analysed using a structured data extraction process. Microsoft Excel was used to capture key variables such as research focus, theoretical frameworks and findings related to digital literacy and knowledge-sharing behaviour (Hammoda & Foli: 2024). The analysis employed thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and relationships across the literature.

3.2 Focus Group Data Collection

To enrich the literature review, primary data was collected through virtual focus group discussions. Focus groups were selected as they enable in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions, experiences and social interactions (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

Two virtual focus group discussions were conducted, each comprising eight early-career professionals (n=16). Participants represented a range of industries including finance, education, Information Technology (IT), retail and professional services. Recruiting participants from multiple sectors enabled the study to capture diverse experiences relating to digital literacy and knowledge sharing practices across different organisational contexts.

Participants were aged between 21 and 35 years and had experience working within hybrid or digitally enabled environments. Selection was based on purposive sampling to ensure participants possessed practical experience using digital collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams, LinkedIn, SharePoint and organisational messaging applications for professional communication and knowledge exchange. Each focus group lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was facilitated by the researcher using a semi-structured interview guide. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to discuss their experiences of digital literacy, organisational culture, trust, informal learning and knowledge-sharing practices. The semi-structured approach allowed participants to elaborate on issues that emerged naturally during discussion while ensuring consistency across both focus groups.

3.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's six stage thematic analysis approach. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim before repeated familiarisation with the data. Initial codes were generated inductively and subsequently grouped into broader categories. Related categories were then refined into overarching themes representing recurring patterns across participant experiences. The coding process was iterative allowing themes to be refined through repeated comparison with both the focus group data and the findings emerging from the SLR. (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The analysis followed an iterative process where initial codes were developed and refined into broader themes. Key themes identified included digital confidence, trust in peers, informal learning practices, knowledge-sharing barriers and organisational influence. These themes were then compared with findings from the SLR to identify areas of convergence and divergence. This integrative analytical approach enabled the study to connect theoretical insights with practical observations. Integration occurred during the interpretation stage. Themes identified through the SLR were compared with those emerging from the focus group discussions to identify areas of convergence, divergence and complementarity. This integrative approach enabled theoretical concepts identified in the literature to be examined alongside participants lived experiences, thereby strengthening the credibility and richness of the study's conclusions.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the relevant institutional research ethics committee. Ethical approval was obtained before participant recruitment commence. All participants received an information sheet explaining the purpose of the study and signed informed consent forms prior to participation. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Participation in the focus groups were voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and no

personally identifiable information was recorded. All data was securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. The study adhered to established ethical guideline for research writing involving human participants, ensuring respect for participant privacy, autonomy and data integrity. Figure 1 illustrates the mixed-methods research design, showing how theoretical insights derived from the SLR were integrated with empirical insights from focus group discussions to inform the study's findings.

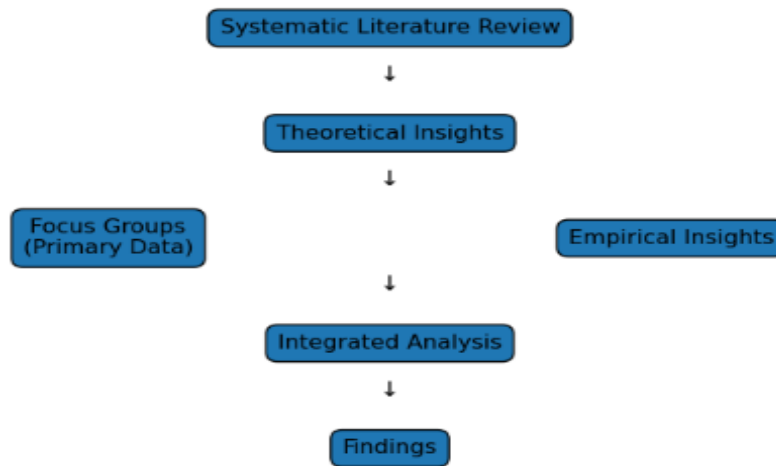


Figure 1: Research Design and Data Integration Process (Source: Author's Own, 2026)

Figure 1 illustrates the sequential integration of the two methodological phases. The SLR established the theoretical foundation while the focus group discussions provided empirical evidence that was subsequently integrated during thematic interpretation to produce the final findings.

4. Findings

This section presents the integrated findings from the SLR and the focus group discussions. Rather than reporting each method separately, findings are synthesised Across both datasets to illustrate areas of convergence and divergence. Three overarching themes emerged from the analysis: (1) digital fluency and knowledge-sharing capability. (2) informal digital platforms as knowledge ecosystems and (3) trust, visibility and organisational culture determinants if knowledge-sharing.

Table 1: Summary of Key Themes from Findings (Source: Author's Own, 2026)

Theme	Description	Supporting Insight
Digital Fluency	High technical competence.	Confident with platforms but unsure how to share.
Informal Learning	Peer-led knowledge exchange.	Use of chats and communities.
Trust and Visibility	Psychological safety concerns.	Fear of judgement limits sharing.
Organisational Context	Culture influences behaviour.	Support equals more sharing.

Table 1 summarizes the key themes identified from the integration of the SLR and focus group discussions highlighting the main factors influencing knowledge-sharing behaviour among early-career professionals.

The themes shown in Table 1 were constantly identified across both phases of the study, the SLR highlighted these concepts as recurring factors influencing digital knowledge sharing, while the focus groups provided practical examples illustrating how these themes influence employees' everyday experience.

4.1 Digital Fluency and Knowledge-sharing Capability

Findings from both the literature review and the focus groups indicate that early-career professionals generally exhibit high levels of digital fluency. Participants consistently reported confidence in using collaborative technologies such as Microsoft Teams, LinkedIn and organisational communication platforms. However, they distinguished between being digitally competent and knowing how to contribute knowledge effectively within professional setting. One participant explained: "Using Teams is easy. Knowing whether my ideas are good

enough to share with everyone is the difficult part". This quotation illustrates that technical competence alone does not necessarily translate into confident knowledge-sharing behaviour. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that younger professionals possess strong baseline digital competencies and were well-equipped to operate within digitally mediated work environments (Aslan et al., 2024).

However, the findings reveal that digital fluency does not automatically translate into effective knowledge sharing behaviour. While participants were technically capable, many expressed uncertainties about how, when and what to share in professional contexts. This suggests that digital literacy extends beyond technical ability to include contextual understanding and communicative competence. While digital literacy enables access and participation, effective knowledge-sharing requires additional layers of confidence, clarity and organisational alignment (Bednarz et al., 2024). Collectively, the literature review and participant narratives demonstrate that digital literacy should be understood as a multidimensional capability encompassing technical competence, communication skills, confidence and contextual awareness. These dimensions jointly influence whether employees actively participate in organisational knowledge sharing.

4.2 Informal Digital Platforms and Peer-led Learning

The SLR identified informal digital communication platforms as increasingly important mechanisms for collaborative learning and rapid knowledge exchange. Participants confirmed that much of their day-to-day learning occurred through informal conversations rather than formal KM systems. A key theme emerging from the focus group discussions is the significant role of informal digital platforms in facilitating knowledge sharing. Participants identified messaging platforms and communities as key knowledge-sharing spaces. As one participant explained: "If I need help quickly, I won't search SharePoint, I'll message someone on Teams because I'll get an answer". These platforms were perceived as more accessible and less formal than official organisational systems, enabling a quicker and more interactive knowledge exchange (Tran & Nguyen, 2022). Another participant stated: "The official systems have information, but people explain things better". Informal platforms support spontaneous interactions and create opportunities for collaborative problem solving. However, the findings also reveal tensions associated with these spaces. While informal channels encourage participation, they also introduce ambiguity regarding boundaries, accountability and credibility. Participants noted that while these platforms are useful for immediate problem-solving, they may lack structure and reliability compared to formal KM systems. Taken together, the SLR and focus group findings suggest that informal digital platforms function as complementary knowledge ecosystems that support collaboration, rapid problem solving and experiential learning. However, organisations must establish governance mechanisms to ensure information quality and organisational memory are maintained.

4.3 Trust, Visibility and Knowledge-sharing Barriers

Trust emerged as the strongest social factor across both datasets. The SLR consistently identified trust as a prerequisite for knowledge sharing, while participants repeatedly described how organisational culture influenced their willingness to contribute knowledge. Trust emerged as a central factor influencing knowledge-sharing behaviour. Both the literature and focus group findings indicate that individuals are more likely to share knowledge in environments where they feel psychologically safe and confident in their contributions (Tran & Nguyen, 2022). Participants expressed concerns about judgement in visible digital spaces. One participant remarked: "If I know people will criticise what I post, I'd rather keep quiet". A recurring tension identified in the findings is the balance between vulnerability and visibility. Where digital platforms increase opportunities for visibility and recognition, they also expose individuals to scrutiny. This can lead to cautious behaviour where individuals limit their participation or choose to share only when they feel certain of their knowledge. Additionally, organisational culture was identified as a significant influencing factor. Participants working in supportive and collaborative environments reported higher levels of knowledge sharing, while those in less supportive contexts were more likely to withhold information. The convergence between the literature review and participant experiences demonstrates that digital literacy alone cannot sustain knowledge-sharing behaviour. Rather, participation emerges through the interaction of digital competence, interpersonal trust, organisational culture and psychological safety, organisational structures.

4.4 Integrated Discussion

The mixed-methods design enabled theoretical findings from the SLR to be compared directly with participants' lived experiences. High levels of convergence were observed across the two datasets. The literature consistently identified digital literacy, trust and collaborative culture as critical enablers of knowledge sharing, while participants provided practical examples illustrating how these factors influence everyday workplace behaviour.

Areas of divergence were also evident. Whereas the literature frequently emphasised organisational systems, participants highlighted informal digital interactions as equally important mechanisms for collaborative learning. These complementary findings strengthened confidence in the study's overall conclusions and demonstrate the value of integrating systematic literature evidence with qualitative enquiry.

Table 2: Integration of Mixed-Methods Findings (Source: Author's Own, 2026)

Theme	SLR Finding	Focus Group Finding	Integrated Interpretation
Digital Fluency	Digital literacy improves collaboration.	Participants confident with technology but uncertain about sharing.	Technical skills require behavioural confidence.
Informal Learning	Informal platforms encourage learning.	Teams, WhatsApp and LinkedIn widely used.	Informal learning complements formal KM.
Trust	Trust encourages knowledge sharing.	Fear of judgement reduces participation.	Psychological safety influences knowledge exchange.

5. Discussion

This study examined how digital literacy shapes knowledge-sharing behaviour among early-career professionals operating within digitally mediated workplaces. By integrating evidence from the SLR with empirical findings from the focus groups, the discussion interprets the results within the broader KM literature and explains their theoretical and practical significance.

5.1 Digital Literacy as a Behavioural Enabler

The findings suggest that digital literacy should be reconceptualised within KM as more than a technical capability. Rather than simply enabling employees to operate digital technologies, digital literacy appears to influence how individuals communicate, evaluate information, collaborate with colleagues and participate in organisational knowledge-sharing processes. Consistent with existing literature, participants demonstrated high levels of digital fluency and confidence in navigating digital platforms. This finding supports previous research suggesting that digital literacy facilitates collaboration; however, the present study extends this work by demonstrating behavioural confidence and organisational context mediate the translation of digital competence into actual knowledge-sharing behaviour. However, the study extends prior research by showing that digital literacy alone does not guarantee active or effective knowledge sharing. Rather than functioning solely as technical skill, digital literacy emerges as a behavioural enabler that shapes how individuals interpret, evaluate and engage in knowledge-sharing processes. Participants' uncertainty regarding what to share and how to share it suggests that digital competence must be completed by contextual understanding and communicative confidence.

5.2 The Role of Informal Digital Knowledge Ecosystems

A significant contribution of this study is the identification of informal digital platforms as critical sites of knowledge sharing. Participants rely on informal channels for peer-based learning. These platforms function as decentralised knowledge ecosystems where knowledge is continuously created, shared and refined through interaction. This highlights the significance of informal knowledge-sharing processes (Tran & Nguyen, 2022). However, the findings also reveal inherent tensions within these environments. While informal platforms enable accessibility and immediacy, they often lack structure, governance and validation mechanisms. This creates challenges related to information credibility and consistency. As such, informal knowledge-sharing spaces should be understood as complementary to formal systems as opposed to substitutes. This finding challenges traditional KM perspectives that position formal knowledge repositories as the primary mechanism for organisational learning. Instead, participants demonstrated a clear preference for informal digital communication channels because they provided faster more personalised and contextually relevant knowledge exchange. This suggests that organisations should recognise informal digital platforms as legitimate components of organisational knowledge ecosystems rather than viewing them a peripheral communication tool. While previous studies acknowledge the growing role of collaborative technologies, the present findings demonstrate that employees frequently privilege interpersonal accessibility over formal knowledge repositories. This represents an important extension of current KM research.

5.3 Trust, Visibility and the Social Dynamics of Knowledge Sharing

The most significant finding of this study is the central role of trust in shaping knowledge-sharing behaviour. Although participants generally possessed sufficient digital competence, their willingness to contribute knowledge depended largely upon perceptions of psychological safety, organisational support and peer acceptance. This finding aligned with Social Capital Theory which argues that trust represents one of the most important conditions for voluntary knowledge exchange. Participants consistently indicated that environments characterised by mutual respect, supportive leadership and collaborative cultures encourage more active participation in knowledge sharing. Conversely, concerns regarding criticism judgement and professional reputation discourage contributions despite high levels of digital literacy. These findings indicate that investments in digital technologies alone are unlikely to improve organisational knowledge sharing unless accompanied by initiatives that strengthen trust, collaboration and psychological safety.

5.4 Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to KM literature in three important ways. First, it demonstrates that digital literacy should be conceptualised as a multidimensional organisational capability rather than a technical competency. Second, it illustrates how Social Capital Theory provides a useful explanation for understanding why digital literacy facilitates knowledge sharing through trust, reciprocal relationships and collaborative engagement. Third, the study demonstrates the value of integrating systematic literature evidence with qualitative inquiry to provide a richer understanding of digitally enabled knowledge-sharing behaviour. Practically, the findings indicate that organisations should complement investments in digital technologies with initiatives that strengthen employees' confidence, trust and collaborative behaviours. Organisations should establish psychologically safe digital environments, encourage informal peer learning, recognise collaborative contributions and provide guidance regarding appropriate knowledge-sharing practices. These initiatives may enhance organisational learning while improving employee engagement and knowledge exchange.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how digital literacy influences knowledge-sharing practices among early-career professionals working within digitally mediated organisations. By integrating evidence from a SLR with qualitative insights from focus group discussions, the study demonstrates that digital literacy extends beyond technical competence to encompass behavioural, cognitive and social capabilities that facilitate knowledge sharing. The findings further demonstrate that informal digital platforms have become important knowledge-sharing environments that support collaboration and peer learning, although their effectiveness depends on trust, psychological safety and supportive organisational cultures. The study contributes to KM research by demonstrating that successful knowledge sharing is influenced not only by digital technologies but also by the interaction between digital literacy, interpersonal trust and organisational culture. This extends existing understandings of digital literacy by positioning it as a multidimensional organisational capability that enables collaborative knowledge exchange. Practically, the findings suggest that organisations should complement investments in digital technologies with initiatives that strengthen digital literacy, encourage informal learning, establish psychologically safe work environments and promote collaborative knowledge-sharing behaviours. Such initiatives have the potential to improve organisational learning, employee engagement and knowledge exchange in increasingly digital workplaces.

While the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between digital literacy and knowledge sharing, several limitations should be acknowledged. The qualitative phase involved a relatively small group of early-career professionals and therefore may not fully represent experiences across all industries or organisational contexts. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study captured participants' experiences at a single point in time. Future research could build on these findings by undertaking longitudinal investigations, examining different organisational contexts and employing quantitative techniques such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to further explore the relationships between digital literacy, trust, organisational culture and knowledge-sharing behaviour.

Ethics Declaration: This study involved primary data collection through virtual focus group discussions. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Johannesburg (Ref: 2025SciS008). Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all participants. All data was anonymised and handled in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines.

AI Declaration: No AI tools were used in the development of the paper. All work, including the analysis, interpretation and writing was conducted solely by the author.

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