

Creating a Sharing Culture: A Social Capital-informed Systematic Review of Leadership Support and Organisational Culture Interventions for Knowledge Sharing in Public Higher Education Institutions (2010–2024)

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Abstract: Knowledge sharing is repeatedly identified as critical to institutional learning and performance in public higher education institutions (HEIs), yet the evidence base remains fragmented regarding which leadership behaviours and organisational culture interventions actually change sharing practices in academic settings. Existing studies often emphasise barriers to knowledge sharing, with less synthesis of solution-oriented interventions, particularly within the bureaucratic and resource-constrained environments of publicly funded HEIs and vocational institutions. Applying the social capital theory to this systematic review adds a theoretical layer that deepens the analysis of how organisational culture and leadership support foster knowledge sharing. This study reports a systematic review (2010–2024) that synthesises empirical evidence on leadership and organisational culture interventions implemented to foster knowledge sharing among academics. Using a PRISMA-guided protocol, we will search major scholarly databases for peer-reviewed journal articles, case studies, and relevant book chapters, apply transparent inclusion/exclusion criteria, and manage screening in Covidence. The included studies will be analysed using qualitative content analysis to identify intervention types, leadership approaches, implementation conditions, and reported outcomes related to knowledge-sharing behaviours and culture change. The review will contribute (1) an evidence-based taxonomy of leadership and institutional interventions for knowledge sharing in public HEIs, (2) an assessment of reported effectiveness and common outcome measures, and (3) an integrative framework linking contextual constraints, social-psychological mechanisms (e.g., trust, psychological safety, incentives), and intervention outcomes. The findings aim to support both KM scholarship and institutional leaders seeking actionable strategies to build sustainable knowledge-sharing cultures in public higher education.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing, Knowledge management, Leadership support, Organisational culture, Higher education institution, Systematic review

1. Introduction and Research Problem

Leadership and the organisation's culture are seen as key determinants of successful knowledge sharing. Adding a theoretical lens like the Social Capital Theory adds a different dimension and layer to analysing how the culture in an organisation and the support of leadership contributes to the effective sharing of knowledge in higher education. Wagner, Beimborn, and Weitzel (2014) state that the Social Capital Theory explains the alignment that affects the performance of the organisation and that managers need to focus on operational aspects of alignment that go beyond communication that fosters knowledge, respect and trust in an organisation. Furthermore, Evangelinos and Jones (2009) discussed that social capital has assisted higher education institutions in overcoming obstacles that hinder them from evolving, and developing in education and research, and also that the members in an organisation are able to work in a collective manner towards a common goal. The behaviors of a leader toward subordinates can encourage them to grow and learn, and this can also build trust with them to allow knowledge sharing to take place. "The dynamic nature of knowledge sharing can be influenced by factors such as organisational culture, trust among team members, perceived value in sharing, and sometimes even competitive dynamics" (Zamiri and Esmaeili, 2024: 24). On the other hand, Mazorodze and Mkhize (2022) assert this by stating that for knowledge sharing to take place in higher education, the academics who are in this case the knowledge sources, must be encouraged in some way by leadership structures to share their knowledge.

Organisational culture can also effectively facilitate knowledge sharing within an organisation. Often, employees feel that there need to be incentives, willingness, and trust to share knowledge. Njiraine (2019) mentions that organisations must foster a healthy organisational culture that promotes knowledge sharing, where the right conditions, incentives, and mechanisms are in place for that to happen. It is worth mentioning that in Al-Kurdi, El-Haddadeh, and Eldabi (2020) they refer to organisational culture as organisational climate, which according to them takes a different perspective to the latter. Almujally and Joy (2017) state that when it comes to organisational culture, trust plays a huge role in the sharing of knowledge among academics in that it includes

trusting the quality of knowledge being shared and also trusting that other employees will share their valuable knowledge. Most importantly, Njiraine (2019) states that the organisational culture also requires the knowledge worker must be willing to share and must be receptive and seek out the knowledge sources of an organisation. Further, Gitau, Kang'aru, Njuguna and Orto (2022) states that a sustainable reward system can be used to manage knowledge sharing through the use of leadership styles, in that the intrinsic rewards can encourage the private sharing of knowledge and the extrinsic rewards can motivate institutional knowledge sharing.

This will in turn, improve the quantity and quality of sharing of knowledge and the visibility increases of the institution as well. In most cases, the leadership structures in an organisation are important for fostering an organisational culture that supports planning for succession and also reduces knowledge gaps through certain or specific training, encouraging and promoting knowledge sharing among employees, departments, groups, and business units. For public higher education institutions, creating a knowledge sharing culture is important because it directs their mission and vision of the organisation. Al-Kurdi, El-Haddadeh, and Eldabi (2020) identifies two types of leaderships which are transactional and transformation leadership. With transactional leadership, it involves some exchange between leaders, co-workers and followers in which agreements are reached of what the employee would receive if they achieve a negotiated level of performance, whereas transformational leadership is described as the effect a leader has on employees, the respect, admiration, and trust toward the leader which motivates them to do more and go beyond what was initially expected to being done.

Furthermore, Al-Kurdi, El-Haddadeh, and Eldabi (2020) states that the role of a leader is to be able to influence other people or subordinates in following orders that are aimed at achieving goals and the mission of the organisation, Al-Kurdi, El-Haddadeh, and Eldabi (2018) have earlier asserted that in the absence of factors like leadership support, organisational climate, culture, and trust, knowledge sharing cannot be achieved with just an information technology (IT) and knowledge management system (KMS) infrastructure. Almujaally and Joy (2017) state that the support of the top management was considered to be one of the most essential factors that could influence knowledge sharing through the use of web technology. This demonstrates that with the correct leadership strategy in an organisation, knowledge sharing can be effective to encourage and reinforce behaviors of employees. This paper explores creating a sharing culture through leadership support and organisational culture interventions for knowledge in public higher education institutions through the systematic review of literature. The analysis of peer-reviewed publications between 2010 and 2024 were systematically reviewed in this study.

2. Research Questions

RQ1: What types of leadership behaviours and organisational culture interventions are documented in the empirical literature for promoting knowledge sharing among academics using social capital in public higher education institutions, and how can they be classified systematically into a coherent taxonomy?

RQ2: How do contextual constraints and social capital mechanisms shape the interaction and implementation of the outcomes of cultural and leadership interventions for knowledge sharing in public higher education settings?

3. Methodology

This study is guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) to ensure a transparent and rigorous selection and synthesis of the articles. It has also used major scholarly databases like Web of Science and Scopus. The literature search in this study was guided by established protocols, which included analytical methods, criteria for screening, databases, and search terms. A systematic review is a scientific investigation that focuses on a specific question and uses explicit, pre-specified methods to identify and assess the findings of similar but separate studies. This study has selected a systematic review to ensure a robust analysis of the literature and to enable the identification of key themes and recommendations. This is suitable for this study because it allows for a comprehensive synthesis of the body of knowledge and it gave a detailed understanding of the Leadership and Organisational Culture Interventions for Knowledge Sharing in Public Higher Education Institutions.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Studies published between 2010 and 2024	Publications outside the specified data range
Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings	Editorials, blog posts, news articles
Studies focusing on Leadership support and Organisational Culture Interventions for Knowledge Sharing in Public Higher Education Institutions.	Studies unrelated to Leadership support and Organisational Culture Interventions for Knowledge Sharing in Public Higher Education Institutions.
Language: English	Studies related to private higher education institutions
Document type: Full text	
Download availability: Yes	

3.1 Search Strategy

The study used the following general search string, which was customised per database:

RQ1: *What types of leadership behaviours and organisational culture interventions are documented in the empirical literature for promoting knowledge sharing among academics using social capital in public higher education institutions, and how can they be classified systematically into a coherent taxonomy?*

(leader OR leadership OR "transformational leader*" OR "distributed leader*") AND ("organi?ational culture" OR "institutional culture" OR "sharing culture") AND (intervention* OR mechanism* OR strategy* OR practice*)*

AND ("knowledge shar" OR "knowledge exchange") AND ("social capital" OR trust OR network* OR norm* OR reciprocity OR "psychological safety") AND (academic* OR faculty OR lecturer*) AND ("higher education" OR university* OR college*)*

RQ2: *How do contextual constraints and social capital mechanisms shape the interaction and implementation of the outcomes of cultural and leadership interventions for knowledge sharing in public higher education settings?*

(leader OR leadership OR "organi?ational culture") AND ("knowledge shar*" OR "knowledge exchange")*

AND (intervention OR mechanism* OR strategy*) AND ("social capital" OR trust OR reciprocity OR network*) AND (constraint* OR barrier* OR bureaucracy OR resource* OR policy*) AND (academic* OR faculty) AND ("higher education" OR university*)*

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

A comprehensive systematic review was used to assess the A Social Capital-Informed Systematic Review of Leadership Support and Organisational Culture Interventions for Knowledge Sharing in Public Higher Education Institutions. PRISMA steps guided the process which ensured systematic identification, screening, eligibility assessment and final inclusion:

- Phase 1: Identification- The keywords and search strings above were used to retrieve relevant studies from SCOPUS and Web of Science. The intention was to collect literature addressing RQ1 and RQ2
- Phase 2: Screening- These articles were screened based on categories such as the title, date of publication, abstract, keywords, research questions, and contributions.
- Phase 3: Eligibility- The papers that remained were assessed for eligibility, strictly adhering to the to the PRISMA checklist to maintain transparency and objectivity.
- Phase 4: Inclusion- The final dataset included 13 articles that met all inclusion criteria. These documents were stored and organised for accessibility, referencing and analysis.

Figure 1 shows the execution of the phases mentioned above to collect the selected studies in this paper.

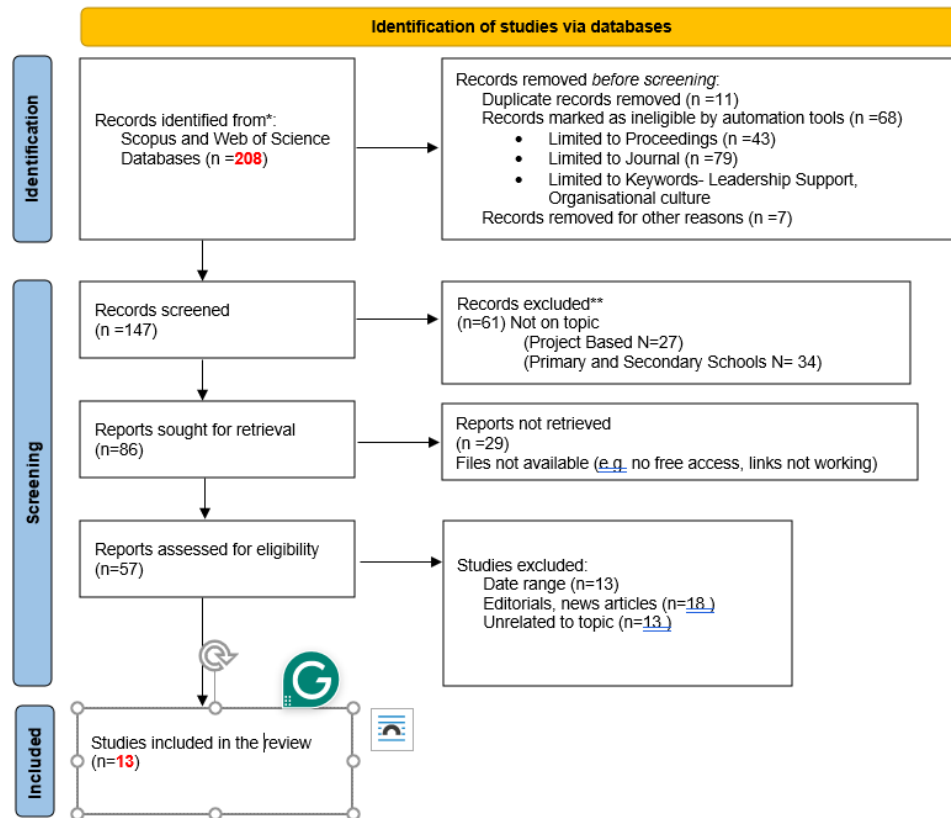


Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram of study selection (Adopted from Page et al. 2021)

Table 2: Results of key findings

REF	Author	Title	Key Findings
RA-1 (RQ1)	Phung, V.D., Hawryskiewicz, I., Chandran, D. and Ha, B.M.,	Promoting Knowledge Sharing Amongst Academics: A Case Study from Vietnam	Managers should increase the level of social pressure on sharing knowledge by enforcing the rules and regulations under which employees should be positive in sharing their knowledge. Strengthen trust between colleagues.
RA-2 (RQ1)	Rehman, K.U., Hafeez, I., Aslam, F., Maitlo, Q. and Syed, A.R.,	The Mediating Role of Trust and Organisational Commitment in the Relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management and Knowledge Sharing	Organisations should support employees in building socio-emotional relationships so that trust can develop among them. Knowledge sharing is dependent on employees' commitment to the organisation.
RA-3 (RQ1)	Oyenuga, O.G., Adebiyi, S.O., Mustapha, D.O. and Abimbola, B.O.,	Assessment of Knowledge Sharing Factors among Academic Staff in Nigerian Universities.	The main barrier of knowledge sharing from academics perception here was job politics. There seemed to be a culture of fear where the junior academic staff were unable to approach senior academic staff.
RA-4 (RQ1)	Sita Nirmala Kumaraswamy , K. and Chitale, C.M.,	Collaborative knowledge sharing strategy to enhance organizational learning	It was found that the industry-institute relationship needs to be enhanced to advance the level of linkage through joint research projects to promote the growth of the faculty.
RA-5 (RQ1)	Kim, S.J., Jang, Y., Yoo, M. and Song, J.H	The mutual impact of university president's leadership and organizational justice on knowledge sharing: the mediating effect of communication	Transformational leadership for innovation in the higher education setting is a possible antecedent for knowledge sharing. Further, it is implied that transformational leaders provide an innovative direction and vision to sustain the competitiveness of the university and encourage members to shared knowledge based on their leadership.

REF	Author	Title	Key Findings
RA-6 (RQ1)	Muqadas, F., Rehman, M., Aslam, U. and Ur-Rahman, U.,	Exploring the challenges, trends and issues for knowledge sharing A study on employees in public sector universities	It has been found that they categorise knowledge as a source of power, and employees hoard it for personal benefit, to increase their influence and maintain a worthy expression with their superiors.
RA-7 (RQ1)	Thi Chung, D. and Thi Tram Anh, P.,	Factors affecting knowledge sharing behaviour in public higher education institutions: An empirical study of Vietnam.	The management must improve lecturers' perceptions of trustworthiness and facilitate the development of an atmosphere where they feel comfortable to share knowledge.
RA-8 (RQ2)	Javaid, J., Soroya, S. and Mahmood, K.,	Impact of personal and organisational factors on knowledge sharing attitude of university teachers in Pakistan.	Faculty members have a good level of trust in each other, and they did not expect to receive monetary rewards, instead they were interested in non-monetary ones for sharing knowledge.
RA-9 (RQ2)	Rehman, U.U. and Iqbal,	Nexus of knowledge-oriented leadership, knowledge management, innovation and organizational performance in higher education.	It is highlighted that the critical role of leadership in a knowledge-intensive work setting in higher education, which is composed of elements of transactional and transformational leaders and is aligned to the expectations of the employees and the perspectives of the organisation, can facilitate a knowledge-oriented organisational structure and culture and enhance the competitiveness of the organisation.
RA-10 (RQ2)	Iqbal, A., Latif, F., Marimon, F., Sahibzada, U.F. and Hussain, S.,	From knowledge management to organisational performance: Modelling the mediating role of innovation and intellectual capital in higher education.	This study enlightened the inevitability of knowledge management enablers, which are leadership, culture, and the incentives that facilitate the related knowledge activities in a research university. Further, they positively and significantly influence the process of acquisition, sharing, and utilisation of knowledge.
RA-11 (RQ2)	Veer Ramjeawon, P. and Rowley, J.,	Knowledge management in higher education institutions: enablers and barriers in Mauritius.	Academics perceived knowledge-sharing enablers as qualified and experienced academic staff in public HEIs, as well as IT infrastructure, libraries, and some incentives for knowledge creation and transfer. Academics perceived barriers, including the absence of a clear policy framework and mechanisms for rewarding the creation of knowledge or research.
RA-12 (RQ2)	Neelam, N., Sheorey, P., Bhattacharya, S. and Kunte, M.,	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines for learning organisation in higher education and its impact on lifelong learning—evidence from Indian business schools.	Knowledge should be created and disseminated through means of collaborative reflective learning approaches, and the Faculty members prefer to exchange knowledge with peers from inside and outside the organisation through day-to-day work experiences, online meetings, short-term domain-specific development programs, exchange programs in the faculty and task groups. Moreover, engaging in professional dialogues is encouraged in faculties to collaborate and exchange knowledge to bring in innovation in curriculum and teaching and learning processes. This study followed the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) guidelines of learning organisations to validate the results.
RA-13 (RQ2)	Ononye, U.H. and Maduemezia, I.,	Knowledge-Oriented Leadership, Psychological Safety, Employee Voice, and Innovation.	A positive and significant relationship was found between knowledge-oriented leadership and innovation. The relevance of leadership that is knowledge-oriented is in providing the employees with a shared frame of reference to produce commitment to the utility of knowledge in the process of furthering innovation.

4. Discussion of key Findings

The findings of this research indicated that both leadership support and organisational cultures are essential strategies for creating a sharing culture, through a social capital-informed perspective. Akhavan, Hosseini, Abbasi, and Manteghi (2015) describe Social Capital Theory as the amount of actual and potential resources embedded in an available and derived network of relations that individuals and social units possess. Furthermore, in community-based organisations and research, social capital is used to describe the role of relational, embedded resources in dyadic networks, involving relationships and the exchange of resources related to knowledge management activities (Akhavan et al. 2015). This theory has three dimensions, which are

the structural, relational and cognitive. Utulu and Okoye (2010) stated that the root of social capital theory is how organisations and individuals self-gain what they want and determine the resources they need to relate with and the actors with whom they relate.

The findings from Sita Nirmala Kumaraswamy and Chitale (2012) and Thi Chung et al. (2022) on the relationship between industries and institutions, and how management must facilitate the development of an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing knowledge, which aligns with the structural dimension in the social capital theory. Structural dimension refers to the patterns and configurations among actors in a network and can be analysed from various angles, ranging from the firmness of the network to the significance of bond strength among network actors (Gebreyohans, Croasdell, and Meshesha 2022). The findings from Veer Ramjeawon and Rowley (2017), Iqbal et al. (2019), Rehman and Iqbal (2020), Neelam et al. (2020) and Kim et al. (2021) align with the cognitive dimension. Veer Ramjeawon and Rowley (2017) found that key enablers and barriers to knowledge sharing among academics included IT infrastructure, libraries, and incentives for knowledge creation and transfer. On the other hand, the absence of a clear policy framework was perceived as a barrier. Iqbal et al. (2019) found that leadership, culture, and incentives are key enablers of related knowledge activities in a research university. Rehman and Iqbal (2020) found that transactional and transformational leaders are key elements that enhance the organisational culture and structure of a higher education institution. Neelam et al. (2020) followed the OECD guidelines for Faculty members who prefer to exchange knowledge with peers from within and outside the organisation through various day-to-day work activities. Kim et al.'s (2021) study found that transformational leaders provide innovative direction and vision to sustain the university's competitiveness.

The cognitive dimension refers to the resources that provide a shared interpretation, representation and systems of meaning among parties. Moreover, it is the shared goals, visions, values, and languages among knowledge actors that facilitate understanding of individuals' collective goals and what they have agreed upon (Gebreyohans, Croasdell, and Meshesha 2022). The findings of Phung et al. (2019), Jarvaid et al. (2020), Rehman et al. (2020), and Ononye and Maduemezia (2024) emphasise the importance of strengthening knowledge self-efficacy and trust amongst colleagues, which are relational dimensions in the social capital theory. It is explained that, in the relational dimension, individuals must be ready and inspired to exchange knowledge with one another and be able to recognise one another within the organisation (Gebreyohans, Croasdell, and Meshesha 2022). Gebreyohans, Croasdell, and Meshesha (2022) further state that with the relational dimension, management's lack of support for interpersonal relationships among employees will weaken trust, with detrimental effects on the prospects for knowledge generation and sharing. This is reported in Muqadas et al. (2017) and Oyenuga et al. (2019), where it was found that a culture of fear seems to be instilled among employees, and that employees are hoarding knowledge to benefit themselves.

Based on the systematic review results, this study proposes a model (Fig 2) that explains knowledge sharing through leadership and organisational culture interventions in public higher education. The purpose is to explain the different contextual constraints that moderate these relationships across various institutions, to provide leadership and organisational culture interventions, and to enhance these interventions through the use of the three social capital mechanisms (structural, relational, and cognitive). These are key determinants of knowledge-sharing behaviour that will yield outcomes for the institution through either employee performance or fertile opportunities for learning and training.

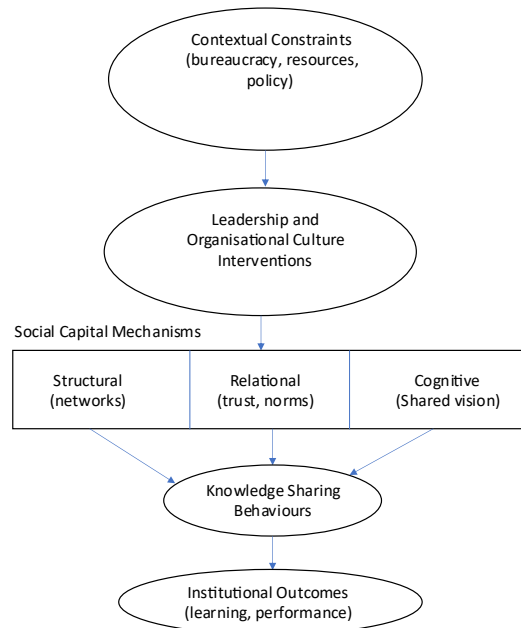


Figure 2: Proposed Model for Knowledge Sharing informed through the Social Capital Theory

5. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to investigate how sharing cultures are created through a social capital-informed systematic review of leadership and organisational culture interventions for knowledge sharing in public higher education institutions. This review synthesised rather than tested claims, and the dataset was restricted to Scopus and Web of Science, potentially biasing the results. Throughout the study, the systematic literature review of the 13 results used revealed alignment among the three dimensions of the Social Capital Theory: structural, relational, and cognitive. The results emphasised that, for knowledge sharing in higher education to succeed, trust, shared vision, goals, values, and networks are effective means, supported by leadership and the organisation's culture. It was also revealed that if management does not in any way support the exchange of knowledge among academics, for instance, by promoting a knowledge hoarding environment, and instilling a culture of fear, it will have detrimental effects on knowledge creation, generation, sharing and exchange. The proposed model for knowledge sharing, if applied strategically across various public higher education institutions, should foster supportive knowledge-sharing outcomes.

6. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This systematic review was written and informed by the Social Capital Theory. It also focused on how leadership support and organisational culture contribute to knowledge. Some insights emerged from the analysis of the 14 articles reviewed. Future research should investigate knowledge sharing between higher education institutions in the global north and the global south, focusing on the support provided to leaders and the organisation's culture to illustrate the practices and strategies used. This research can also integrate social capital theory in comparing public higher education institutions in the global north and the global south.

Funding: This study received no funding.

AI Declaration: For this research, the writing assistant software tool Grammarly was used. Also, DeepSeek was used to frame the topic and revise the research question to incorporate Social Capital. It was also used to propose a search string for searching the articles.

Ethics Declaration: For this research, ethical clearance was not required.

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