

# Knowledge Sharing and Its Relationship with Job Satisfaction in Companies: A Literature Review

## Abstract

Knowledge sharing is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of organizational success, innovation, and employee well-being. This literature review synthesizes classical and contemporary definitions, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings on the relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction in companies. Drawing on foundational theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and the SECI model, as well as recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses, the review critically examines the mechanisms, mediators, and moderators that shape this relationship. The analysis highlights the positive and often reciprocal association between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction, the influence of organizational culture, leadership, and contextual factors, and the methodological approaches used in the field. Key research gaps are identified, including the need for integrative theoretical models, longitudinal and cross-cultural studies, and greater attention to digital transformation and knowledge hiding. The review concludes with recommendations for future research and practical implications for fostering knowledge sharing and enhancing job satisfaction in diverse organizational contexts.

## Introduction

In the knowledge-driven economy of the 21st century, the ability of organizations to effectively manage and leverage their intellectual capital has become a decisive factor for sustained competitive advantage. Among the myriad processes that constitute knowledge management, knowledge sharing stands out as a pivotal mechanism through which organizations foster innovation, learning, and adaptability. Knowledge sharing refers to the exchange of information, skills, and expertise among individuals, teams, and organizational units, enabling the collective creation and application of knowledge to achieve organizational goals (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

The significance of knowledge sharing extends beyond organizational performance metrics; it is intimately linked to the well-being and satisfaction of employees. Job satisfaction, defined as the extent to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their jobs, is a multifaceted construct influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including the quality of interpersonal relationships, opportunities for growth, and the alignment of personal and organizational values (Herzberg et al., 1959; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). In recent years, a growing body of research has explored the interplay between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction, recognizing that employees who actively share knowledge are more likely to experience a sense of belonging,

achievement, and purpose, while satisfied employees are more inclined to contribute to the knowledge base of their organizations (Iqbal et al., 2018; Rafique & Mahmood, 2018).

The relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction is complex and dynamic, shaped by a constellation of individual, organizational, and contextual factors. Theoretical perspectives such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and the Job Characteristics Model provide foundational insights into the motivational underpinnings of job satisfaction, while models like Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI framework elucidate the processes through which knowledge is created and disseminated within organizations (Maslow, 1943; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Empirical studies across diverse sectors—including information technology, healthcare, and education—consistently demonstrate a positive association between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction, mediated by variables such as organizational culture, leadership style, trust, and communication quality (Aghaei et al., 2023; Tong et al., 2013).

Despite the burgeoning interest in this area, several research gaps persist. The literature is characterized by a predominance of cross-sectional studies, limited integration of theoretical frameworks, and a relative paucity of research on the impact of digital transformation, remote work, and negative knowledge behaviors such as knowledge hiding (Iqbal et al., 2018; Rafique & Mahmood, 2018). Moreover, the influence of cultural and contextual factors on the knowledge sharing–job satisfaction nexus remains underexplored, particularly in non-Western and multi-contextual settings (Ayestarán et al., 2022).

This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive and critical synthesis of the extant literature on knowledge sharing and its relationship with job satisfaction in companies. The review is structured as follows: first, it presents the theoretical background, including major theories and models of job satisfaction and knowledge sharing; second, it delineates classical and contemporary definitions of key constructs; third, it offers a critical synthesis of recent and classic empirical studies, highlighting mediating and moderating variables, methodological approaches, and sectoral differences; fourth, it identifies current research gaps and future directions; and finally, it concludes with a summary of key findings and implications for research and practice. The review adheres to APA 7th edition guidelines for structure and citation, and draws on a wide range of English-language academic sources to ensure a rigorous and balanced analysis.

## Theoretical Background

### Theories and Models of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been a central focus of organizational behavior research for decades, with numerous theories developed to explain its antecedents and consequences. Among the most influential are Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the Job Characteristics Model, and process theories such

as Vroom's Expectancy Theory and Adams' Equity Theory (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg et al., 1959; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Vroom, 1964).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs posits that individuals are motivated by a progression of needs, from basic physiological requirements to self-actualization. In the workplace, job satisfaction arises when work fulfills these needs, particularly higher-order needs such as esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors (e.g., salary, working conditions) that prevent dissatisfaction and motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition) that promote satisfaction. This theory suggests that addressing both sets of factors is essential for enhancing job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959).

The Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) identifies five core job dimensions—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback—that influence critical psychological states and, in turn, job satisfaction. Jobs designed to maximize these characteristics are more likely to foster motivation and satisfaction. Process theories such as Vroom's Expectancy Theory and Adams' Equity Theory emphasize the cognitive processes underlying job satisfaction, including expectations about outcomes and perceptions of fairness (Vroom, 1964).

Contemporary perspectives, such as Self-Determination Theory, highlight the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation and satisfaction at work. The Dispositional Approach suggests that personality traits and individual dispositions also play a role in shaping job satisfaction, independent of job characteristics or external factors.

## Theories and Models of Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing has been conceptualized through a variety of theoretical lenses, reflecting its multifaceted nature. Classical models often view knowledge sharing as a subset of knowledge management, focusing on the transfer of information and expertise between individuals or groups (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI model (1995) is foundational, describing knowledge creation and sharing through four processes: Socialization, Externalization, Combination, and Internalization. This model emphasizes the dynamic interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge within organizations (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Relational models highlight the social and psychological dimensions of knowledge sharing, including trust, reciprocity, and congruency in relational dynamics (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). Game-theoretic approaches conceptualize knowledge sharing as a strategic process, where individuals weigh the costs and benefits of sharing knowledge, influenced by factors such as trust and organizational incentives. The Knowledge-Sharing Organization (KSO) model shifts the focus from individual to systemic knowledge sharing, emphasizing organizational culture, shared mental models, and digital platforms as enablers (Ayestarán et al., 2022).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) positions knowledge as a strategic resource, with knowledge sharing essential for leveraging organizational capabilities and achieving competitive advantage. Social Exchange

Theory frames knowledge sharing as a social exchange process, driven by trust, reciprocity, and perceived benefits. Recent integrative models incorporate cultural, psychosocial, and technological aspects, recognizing the multi-level and interdisciplinary nature of knowledge sharing in modern organizations.

## Classical and Contemporary Definitions

### Knowledge Management

Classical definitions of knowledge management (KM) emphasize the systematic process of capturing, organizing, and leveraging knowledge to improve organizational performance. Davenport and Prusak (1998) define KM as “a process of capturing, distributing, and effectively using knowledge,” while Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) focus on the dynamic process of knowledge creation and conversion, particularly the interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge.

Contemporary definitions expand KM to include digital transformation, collaborative technologies, and the strategic role of knowledge in innovation and competitive advantage. Modern KM frameworks emphasize not only the storage and retrieval of knowledge but also the facilitation of knowledge flows, organizational learning, and the creation of a knowledge-sharing culture (Ghasemi et al., 2020).

### Knowledge Sharing

Classical definitions of knowledge sharing describe it as the act of making knowledge available to others within the organization. Bartol and Srivastava (2002) define knowledge sharing as “the process through which employees mutually exchange their knowledge and jointly create new knowledge,” while Ipe (2003) emphasizes the voluntary nature of knowledge sharing, involving both giving and receiving knowledge.

Contemporary perspectives recognize knowledge sharing as a situated and relational process, influenced by organizational culture, trust, incentives, and digital platforms. It is not just about the transfer of explicit knowledge, but also about the co-creation and contextualization of knowledge in practice. Modern definitions stress the importance of knowledge sharing for innovation, collaboration, and organizational agility, and acknowledge barriers such as silos, lack of trust, and inadequate systems (Ayestarán et al., 2022).

Comparison Table: Classical vs. Contemporary Definitions

Aspect	Classical Definitions	Contemporary Definitions
Knowledge Management	Capturing, storing, distributing knowledge	Knowledge flows, digital tools, strategic value
Knowledge Sharing	Transfer between individuals/groups	Situated, relational, co-creative process

Aspect	Classical Definitions	Contemporary Definitions
Scope	Primarily internal, explicit knowledge	Includes tacit knowledge, external networks, digital context
Drivers	Efficiency, productivity	Innovation, collaboration, organizational learning

## Critical Synthesis of Recent and Classic Studies

### Empirical Evidence on the Knowledge Sharing–Job Satisfaction Relationship

A substantial body of empirical research has examined the relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction across various organizational contexts. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses provide robust evidence of a significant, positive, and often reciprocal relationship between these constructs (Iqbal et al., 2018; Rafique & Mahmood, 2018).

Iqbal et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review of English-language empirical studies, finding that knowledge sharing positively impacts job satisfaction, and that higher job satisfaction, in turn, encourages more knowledge sharing among employees. This reciprocal effect underscores the dynamic interplay between individual and organizational factors in shaping both knowledge behaviors and employee well-being.

A recent systematic review and empirical study in the healthcare sector found that knowledge management processes—specifically knowledge creation and retention—significantly enhance job satisfaction, while knowledge transfer did not show a significant direct relationship with job satisfaction in this context (Aghaei et al., 2023). This finding suggests that the specific processes and mechanisms of knowledge management may differentially impact job satisfaction, depending on the organizational setting.

#### Sectoral Studies

- In the ICT sector in Hong Kong, knowledge sharing was found to mediate the relationship between organizational culture and job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of a collaborative culture in fostering both knowledge sharing and employee satisfaction (Tong et al., 2013).
- In the IT sector in Pakistan, knowledge management practices, including knowledge sharing, had a significant positive impact on job satisfaction, with learning opportunities and communication quality mediating this relationship (Iqbal et al., 2018).
- In the healthcare sector in Iran, knowledge creation and retention were positively associated with job satisfaction, while knowledge transfer was not, indicating sectoral differences in the mechanisms linking knowledge sharing and job satisfaction (Aghaei et al., 2023).

## Mediating and Moderating Variables

The relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction is influenced by a range of mediating and moderating variables:

**Mediators:** - General competencies (e.g., communication, problem-solving) developed through knowledge sharing enhance job satisfaction (Iqbal et al., 2018). - Knowledge sharing behavior itself can mediate the impact of leadership styles (e.g., servant leadership) on job satisfaction (Ayestarán et al., 2022). - Employee engagement partially mediates the relationship between knowledge management practices and job satisfaction (Aghaei et al., 2023). - Trust is a critical mediator, particularly in the context of tacit knowledge sharing (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002).

**Moderators:** - Leadership style (e.g., transformational, servant leadership) can enhance the positive effects of knowledge sharing on job satisfaction (Ayestarán et al., 2022). - Quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) moderates the relationship by fostering openness and integration (Tong et al., 2013). - Organizational culture that values openness and collaboration strengthens the knowledge sharing–job satisfaction link (Tong et al., 2013). - Individual dispositions such as hope, optimism, and proactive personality can make employees more likely to benefit from knowledge sharing (Iqbal et al., 2018). - Contextual and cultural factors (e.g., national culture, industry norms) also play a moderating role (Ayestarán et al., 2022).

## Methodological Approaches

Research on knowledge sharing and job satisfaction predominantly employs quantitative survey methods, often using validated scales and advanced statistical techniques such as structural equation modeling (SEM) to test complex relationships, including mediation and moderation effects (Aghaei et al., 2023; Iqbal et al., 2018). Systematic reviews and meta-analyses synthesize findings across studies, providing high-level evidence of the robustness of the relationship (Rafique & Mahmood, 2018).

Qualitative approaches (e.g., interviews, case studies) offer contextual depth but are less common. Mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Longitudinal and experimental designs are rare but needed to establish causality (Iqbal et al., 2018).

## Cultural and Contextual Factors

National and organizational culture significantly influence knowledge sharing and job satisfaction. Collectivist cultures may encourage group-based knowledge sharing, while individualist cultures may foster knowledge hoarding (Ayestarán et al., 2022). Organizational cultures that value trust, openness, and collaboration facilitate knowledge sharing and enhance job satisfaction (Tong et al., 2013).

Industry context also matters; knowledge-intensive sectors such as IT and healthcare place a premium on effective knowledge management practices, which are closely linked to job satisfaction. Leadership, learning opportunities, and communication quality are critical contextual factors that mediate and moderate the relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction (Aghaei et al., 2023; Tong et al., 2013).

## Research Gaps

Despite the substantial progress in understanding the relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction, several research gaps remain:

1. **Limited Integration of Theoretical Frameworks:** Most studies focus on either knowledge sharing or job satisfaction, with few integrative models that comprehensively explain their interrelationship (Iqbal et al., 2018).
2. **Underexplored Mediating and Moderating Variables:** More empirical work is needed to clarify the mechanisms through which knowledge sharing influences job satisfaction, including the roles of learning opportunities, organizational climate, and individual differences (Aghaei et al., 2023).
3. **Scarcity of Longitudinal and Causal Research Designs:** The predominance of cross-sectional studies limits causal inference. Longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to establish directionality and causality (Iqbal et al., 2018).
4. **Contextual and Cultural Limitations:** Most research is conducted in specific cultural or organizational contexts, limiting generalizability. More cross-cultural and multi-contextual studies are needed (Ayestarán et al., 2022).
5. **Neglect of Knowledge Hiding and Negative Behaviors:** The impact of knowledge hiding on job satisfaction and knowledge management processes is not well understood (Iqbal et al., 2018).
6. **Insufficient Focus on Digital and Remote Work Environments:** The dynamics of knowledge sharing and job satisfaction in digital and remote work settings are underexplored (Ayestarán et al., 2022).
7. **Lack of Comprehensive Meta-Analyses:** While some systematic reviews exist, comprehensive meta-analyses synthesizing the quantitative relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction are scarce (Rafique & Mahmood, 2018).
8. **Investigation of Individual Differences:** The influence of personality, motivation, and digital literacy on knowledge sharing and job satisfaction warrants further research (Iqbal et al., 2018).

## Conclusion

The literature unequivocally demonstrates a positive and often reciprocal relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction in companies. Theoretical frameworks such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs,

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and the SECI model provide valuable insights into the motivational and processual underpinnings of this relationship. Empirical studies across diverse sectors and cultural contexts consistently find that knowledge sharing enhances job satisfaction, mediated by factors such as organizational culture, leadership, trust, and communication quality.

However, the field is characterized by several research gaps, including the need for integrative theoretical models, longitudinal and cross-cultural studies, and greater attention to digital transformation, remote work, and negative knowledge behaviors. Addressing these gaps will require methodological innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a nuanced understanding of the cultural and contextual factors that shape knowledge sharing and job satisfaction.

For practitioners, the findings underscore the importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture, investing in leadership development, and leveraging technology to facilitate knowledge sharing. By doing so, companies can enhance not only their knowledge management capabilities but also the satisfaction and well-being of their employees.

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