



COLLABORATIVE CLIMATE AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING ATTITUDE: A STUDY ON SUDANESE INSURANCE COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study tested the collaborative climate effect (CC) on knowledge sharing Attitude (KSA) in Sudanese insurance firms, based on the theory of social exchange (TSE). **Method:** This study is descriptive. A questionnaire was used for data collection from a non-probability sample (convenience sample) of (395) employees among Sudanese insurance firms. This study employed structural equation modeling using SPSS and its endowers' program AMOS. The path coefficient analysis was used to test the proposed hypotheses. **Findings:** The findings showed that only one component of CC has a significant positive influence on KSA (i.e., collaborative belief), whereas the other remaining components of CC (ie, immediate supervisor and workgroup) have a negative influence on KSA. These findings were discussed in light of previous literature. **Limitation:** The study acknowledged some limitations related to the use of non-probability sampling, and cross-sectional design and suggestions for future research have been recommended. The study- offering useful implications to theory and practice, study help practitioner and teams leaders to understand the importance of creating a climate that encourages Social ties between colleagues and a good relationship.immediate supervisor, workgroup, collaborative belief.

Keywords: collaborative knowledge environment, intention, knowledge sharing, attitude

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge has always been a prime source through which human societies have advanced materially and elevated themselves spiritually. Knowledge comprises many hundreds of fields and sub-fields, known as subjects, which are interlocking and interlinking. This universe of knowledge is infinite, dynamic, and continuously expanding. The structure of a subject is never complete or closed; every aspect always remains open, offering new problems for further study and research. Knowledge is also seen as personal and public knowledge, as explicit and tacit/implicit knowledge.

Knowledge sharing is the activity of sharing components of knowledge (information, expertise, and skills) amongst members of a community. It has been regarded mostly in organizations for making organizational competitiveness (as a competitive advantage) in today's turbulent business. At the same time, issues regarding knowledge as a personal property reduce the propensity for sharing it amongst the organizational members (Dalkir, 2005). Employees may be reluctant to share knowledge as part of organizational culture norms, lack of trust, miss

management support, absence of reciprocity, or fear of losing power (Sharma and Singh, 2012). K.S. may be Valuable for employees in recognizing efficient work procedures, immediate information accessibility, and the time investment for learning new things (Reychav and Weisberg, 2010).

It is very useful for organizations to have a collaboration climate (CC) that motivates individuals to share knowledge (Jokanović, et al, 2020; Alipour and Darikvand, 2020; Ahmad, and Widén, 2018; Yasin, et al., 2020; Yasin, et al., 2020). Many scholars have emphasized the perceptions of CC on knowledge sharing intention amongst employees within the organization, Bock and Kim, (2002). Amongst all, the impact of collaborative Climate is rarely investigated on knowledge sharing Attitude, Organizational Climate refers to shared and agreed on perceptions of employees of their work climate. The general concept of organizational Climate is an interpretation of organizational messages by the organization or business unit members. The Climate emerges from what individuals perceive to be crucial and influential in their work. Studying Climate is essential to capture the aspects of the social environment consciously perceived by organizational members, Shim, (2010). How staff perceives the Climate determines how they will behave with it based on a social exchange perspective. Collaborative Climate refers to shared factors of an organization's culture that inspires staff to share knowledge (Sveiby and Simons, 2002).

Attitudes affect people in their intention decisions and everything they do and reflect what they are hence; it is a determining factor in people's behavior. Also, it provides people with a framework to interpret the world and integrate new experiences, as noted by Ogunmoye (2008). Thus, by understanding an individual's attitude towards something, one can predict with high precision his or her overall pattern of behavior to the object. As mentioned by Susantri and Wood (2011), based on the working Climate, employees can be pushed to more involvement in knowledge sharing activities, where these employees' attitude and willingness in K.S. are highly dependent on their assumption or expectation of profit or loss from their contributions (extrinsic value of motivation). However, according to Riege (2006), in his paper on barriers to knowledge sharing, some people tend to hoard their knowledge and not even giving attention to what they could get from sharing activities. He has pointed out some important factors that hinder knowledge sharing. He classified them as individual factors (e.g., lack of trust, fear of loss of power, and lack of social network), organizational factors (e.g., lack of leadership, lack of appropriate reward system, and lack of sharing opportunities), and technological factors (e.g., inappropriate information technology (I.T.) systems and lack of training). According to the discussion above, the aims of this study to understand the conditional factors that support the individual's knowledge-sharing attitude in the organizations.

Statement of the Problem

Knowledge Management (K.M.) literature emphasizes knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer, and knowledge transfer barriers (Paulin and Suneson, 2012). Knowledge sharing is more often in the focus of authors who approach Knowledge Management at the individual level, while knowledge transfer is the focus of authors who deal with K.M. at a group, or organizational level.

Based on the literature review and background of the Problem stated above, several knowledge gaps have been identified to be addressed in the current study. These gaps are presented as



follows: Firstly, most studies in this field focused on factors that affecting knowledge sharing, such as subjective norm and motivations reword. Few studies included quantifiable data about employees' attitudes toward sharing knowledge concerning managerial support or organizational culture for K.S. (Holste and Fields, 2010; Reychav and Weisberg, 2010). Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between collaborative climate and knowledge sharing Attitude.

Second, most studies focused on studying the collaborative Climate as a one construct variable (Khanam, 2007; Shim, 2010; Feist et al., 2020), but this study adopts the cooperative Climate as a multidimensional variable. **Lastly**, the main studies in the knowledge sharing field have been carried out in eastern and South-East Asian countries. Only a few studies have been conducted in organizations of Arab countries; also, few studies have been conducted in knowledge sharing in the service sector. Hence, a study on knowledge sharing can uncover many implications for both practitioners and managers, for this reason, there is a need to conduct such a study in underdeveloped countries, more precisely in Sudan to provide a variety of skills and expertise, can help to provide a good understanding for organizational knowledge sharing; thus the study addressed the following questions: what the relationship between collaborative climate (CC) dimensions and knowledge sharing attitude?

This study is designed to offer significant value to organizational leaders who introduce knowledge sharing practices and fill gaps in the existing literature on knowledge sharing attitude. In a successful K.S. environment, such as a collaborative climate, leaders encourage the creation, sharing, learning, and organization of knowledge. Besides, this paper provides multiple contributions to the area of CC research. First, it provides more insight and explanation for CC from different perspectives. Why CC enhances the knowledge sharing attitude, it generates empirical results on the relative importance relationship among the Construct of CC in under developing countries, particularly in Sudanese insurance Companies.

This paper is organized as follows: section 1 introduction, Section 2 focuses on literature review and discussion of CC from different perspectives, and knowledge sharing attitude, Section 3 research methodology, and instrument development. Section 4 illustrates the data analysis. Section 5 discussion of the study findings, lastly, Section 6 conclusion (research implications and future research).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Collaborative climate:

- *Concept of Collaborative Climate:*

Khanam et al. (2017), defined collaborative climate' as an organizational culture where the organization promotes effective teamwork for coordinating all tasks in the organization, by which they can achieve their organizational goal easily, Climate emerges from what organization members perceive to be important and influential in their jobs or business, therefore studying Climate is more appropriate to capture the aspects of the Social environment consciously perceived by organizational members (Shim, 2010). How staff perceives the Climate determines how they will behave with it based on a social exchange perspective. Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), if the staff perceive the organization as a supportive organization, based on a reciprocity rule, they tend to be more effective in the organization.



Collaborative Climate refers to shared components of an organization's culture that inspires staff to share knowledge (Sveiby and Simons, 2002). As Sveiby and Simons (2002) mentioned, the success of knowledge sharing practices relies on the incorporation of trust and the collaboration features of organizational culture. Most researchers assured that in the collaborative Climate of a business unit, an immediate supervising and co-workers in a workgroup play important roles in knowledge sharing. Collaboration environment Intra-team KS is important for accomplishing specific project tasks. K.S. within a collaborative environment and a group may be a highly effective and value-adding process. Members gain new knowledge together through joint discussions, participate in the same projects, reflect on research, bring in experts to consult with the team, and attending activities together.

According to previous studies, the components of the CC are direct supervisor support, organizational culture, employee position, and working group support, which will be discussed as follows:

- ***Dimensions of collaboration climate:***

- ✓ ***Immediate Supervisor Support:***

Supervisor support is defined as "the degree to which supervisors' value their employee's contributions and care about their well-being. Even though supervisors are in many cases charged with a variety of responsibilities, providing support to their employees is considered a fundamental aspect of supervisory work. (Penning de Vries et al., 2020) Managers' support may positively influence employees' willingness to share knowledge within an organization (Boh and Wong, 2013). Sohail and Daud (2009) investigated participants from higher education institutions, finding positive relationships between management's support for K.S. and a strong K.S. culture. Wang and Noe (2010) revealed that support from management is a critical aspect for K.S., and organizational leaders should require and reward managers for providing suitable support for encouraging KS.

- ✓ ***Collaborative belief:***

A belief that individuals' knowledge should be distributed and shared within groups and teams can set cultural support for knowledge sharing (Ahmed et al., 2016; Khalil and Seleim, 2010), For organizations, to get the benefits of their knowledge-based resources, it is imperative to nurture a culture that will boost knowledge transfer activities (Ahmed et al., 2016); therefore knowledge sharing focuses on the bearer of knowledge and on the context in which knowledge is created and shared, i.e., the focus on collaboration. Petrov et al 2020, have clarified that the perspective that knowledge is embedded and constructed inside social networks., (2020). They articulate that knowledge cannot be processed in the same way as information, due to the continually redefining and reconstituting through dynamic and interactive social networks. Knowledge sharing can be achieved if there is reciprocal respect, attention, and understanding Exchange of tacit knowledge requires a culture appropriate for this type of sharing. The integration of knowledge among communities within organizations is the most dependent on people and organizational culture (Davenport and Prusak, 2000).

- ✓ ***Work Group Support:***

Workgroup facilitates frequent interaction among members, which increases the likelihood that employees will be sharing know-how on different matters (Avnet and Weigel, 2012; Ahmed et



al., 2016). Organizations that rely on workgroups are considered more suitable for disseminating knowledge among employees than those where work is done individually; the workgroup allows working collectively and with greater harmony, which eventually encourages the exchange of knowledge.

Some individuals donate knowledge because they are excited to share, and the workgroup provides excellent conditions to fulfil this excitement. Thus, the good workgroup provides the environment for fruitful knowledge sharing by combining knowledge donors and recipients in teams. It is, therefore, expected that workgroup would positively impact knowledge sharing Kim, & Han, (2006).

Knowledge Sharing Attitude

The benefits of knowledge-sharing are confirmed by many kinds of research, cited in the literature and agreed upon among business organizations and academia. The sharing of knowledge in organizations, departments, groups, and individuals is considered a crucial process for effectively managing knowledge. Attitudes toward knowledge sharing refer to the extent of an individual's positive or negative thoughts and feeling on sharing knowledge. It is the sum of an individual's views on knowledge sharing. On one side is the relationship between the motivation and attitudes toward knowledge sharing, which can be studied using social exchange relationships (Bock et al., 2005). Social Exchange Theory explains why employees perform a certain behavior, because they are expecting rewards, and they are likely to select the best behaviors that maximize benefits and minimize costs (Wang and Noe, 2010).



Theoretical framework and hypotheses development:

- ***The Relationship between CC and KSA:***

The effects of organizational Climate as general on knowledge sharing have been widely studied (Siakas et al., 2020; Petrov et al., 2020; Pee and Min., 2017; Connelly and Kelloway., 2003). The consensus among these researchers is that organizational Climate is a critical driver of knowledge sharing and that some climates are more conducive to knowledge sharing than others. Khosravi, Ahmad, and Sedera (2014) demonstrate that knowledge sharing flow depends on developing mutual trust among colleagues, building good relationships with the supervisor, and ensuring organizational and team support, having proper team supervisor, a flexible working environment in a diverse workgroup, and a development culture in a university inspires students to generate and share new knowledge. Ciganek, Mao, and Srite (2010) noted that organizational climate factors, such as open communication, confidence, and trust in-group members and management support, had a significant impact on shared knowledge.

- ***Theory of social exchange and CC:***

The theoretical foundations used to develop the research model of this study are based on the social exchange theory (SET). It is one of the most widely used models dealing with interpersonal interactions involving behavior, affection, products, and communications from a social psychological perspective (Blau, 1964). Social exchange is a relationship in which the participants have exhibited behavior in each other's presence on repeated occasions, created products for each other, or communicated with each other. According to the social exchange theory, if the staff perceives the organization or unit as supportive, based on a reciprocity rule, they tend to be more effective at work. Collaborative Climate can be defined as shared elements

of an organization's culture that inspires staff to share knowledge (Sveiby and Simons, 2002). Therefore, the success of knowledge management practices depends on the incorporation of trust and collaboration in organizational culture. The prior study determined the most important collaborative climate factors that affect knowledge sharing: immediate superior and co-workers in a workgroup (Wu, Lin, and Lin, 2006; Li, 2015; Ahmed et al., 2016), according to the framework figure 1 and the direction of the relationship. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H: Collaborative Climate is positively associated with Knowledge sharing attitude:

- H1: Immediate Supervisor is positively associated with Knowledge sharing attitude.
- H2: Collaborative belief is positively associated with Knowledge sharing attitude.
- H3: Work Group Support is positively associated with Knowledge sharing attitude.

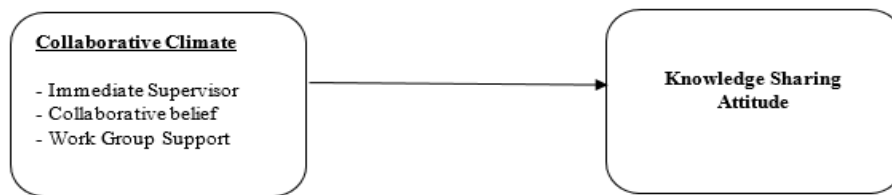


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT:

This research is quantitatively classified as an experimental study. It is carried out by employing a 22-items questionnaire, the questionnaire was used as an instrument for the assessment of three dimensions of the collaborative Climate and attitude to knowledge sharing in this study, in form of a five-point Likert type scale. Collaborative Knowledge Environment CKE measured by 20 items adopted from (Sveiby and Simons, 2002), and attitude toward knowledge sharing was measured by four items which were sourced from the work of (Olatokun and Nneamaka, 2013). The population for our research involved 395 employees from Sudanese insurance firms. To test the hypotheses, the convenience sampling method was used to collecting data from the study population. Convenience sampling is most appropriate and cost-effective for collecting data when the survey period is of a short time.

Using AMOS, different statistical techniques were carried out, such as frequencies, Cronbach's alpha, person's correlations, and path analysis was used to test the direct effect of CC on KSA.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Characteristics of respondents:

Based on the descriptive statistics using the frequency analysis this part investigates the profiles of persons that participated in the survey in the light of six characteristics, these are gender, age, marital status, qualifications, position, and experience. The following paragraph show the respondent's characteristics, in-term of gender, (61.7%) respondents were male and (38.3%) respondents were female that represent the lower ratio of male.

Furthermore, the respondent's age, from 20 to 30 are representing (24.4%), From 31 to 40 representing (34.0%), From 41 to 50 representing (27.5%), From 51 to 60 (12.7%), the last group those who are above 60 years are few number 5 frequencies and represented (1.5%). The

respondent's marital status, which fills up the questionnaires, the majority were married representing (70.1 %) followed by a single are representing (25.0%), and others representing (4.9%) as lower ratio. Concerning the respondent's qualifications, the majority were graduates which represent (65.1%), followed by postgraduate representing (29%). The Undergraduates were representing (5.8%), others were representing (.6%) represent the lower ratio. Regarding the Job level, the majority of the respondents' employee (58.6%) followed by a Head of departments were (22.5%), followed by Manager were (11.7%), and other were (7.1%) represent the lower ratio. Regarding the experience, the high response rate for those who were having more than 15years (29.6%) followed by the category from 11 to 15were (26.9%), followed the category from 5 to 10 were rate (24.7%), and Less than 5 years were rate (18.8%) represent the lower ratio.

- **Confirmatory factor analysis for collaborative knowledge environment**

The statistical analysis software package was used AMOA (Analysis of Moments of Structure) to perform the process of confirmatory factor analysis for the model, as this package is used to test the hypotheses relating to the existence or non-existence of a relationship between the variables and underlying factors. The confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the factor model's ability to change from the actual dataset and compare several models of factors in this area. Figure (2) below shows the Confirmatory Factor Analysis for independent variables (CC)

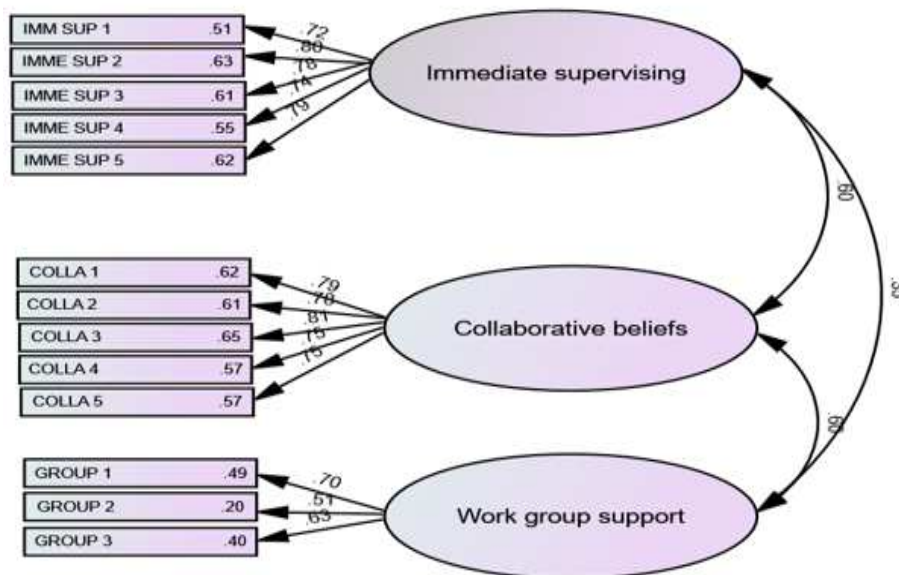


Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis for CC

Source: Prepared by the researcher from data (2019)

- **Confirmatory factor analysis for Knowledge Sharing Attitude:**

Reliability analysis

This study used Cronbach's alpha as a diagnostic tool to assess the degree of internal consistency between multiple measurements of variables. (Hair *et al*, 2010) stated that the lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, although it may decrease to 0.60 in exploratory research. While Nunnally (1978) considered Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.60 is taken



as reliable. Given that Cronbach's alpha has been the most widely used measure (Sharma, 2000). Table 1 presents a reliability of the variables of the study. Confirmed that all the scales display a satisfactory level of reliability (Cronbach's alpha exceed the minimum value of 0.60). Therefore, it can be concluded that the measures have an acceptable level of reliability

Table 1: reliability analysis of the variables

Construct	Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Collaborative Climate	immediate supervisor	9	0.920
	Collaborative belief	5	0.882
	Work Group Support	3	0.766
Attitude toward Knowledge Sharing	Attitude toward Knowledge Sharing	5	0.885

Hypotheses testing

This section aims to investigate the Main hypotheses in this study which assumes that the collaborative climate dimensions positively associated with the knowledge sharing attitude as shown in table (2) below:

Table 2: Collaborative Climate and attitude toward knowledge sharing

Relationship			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
attitude toward knowledge	<---	immediate supervising	0.036	0.047	0.776	0.438
attitude toward knowledge	<---	Collaborative belief	0.114	0.060	1.889	0.059
attitude toward knowledge	<---	work group support	0.083	0.056	1.478	0.139

DISCUSSION:

This study reveals the impact of collaborative Climate on knowledge sharing attitude in Sudanese insurance companies, the results point towards the importance of collaborative Climate in achieving employees' attitude toward knowledge sharing, also provides detailed insights about the nature of relationships between the variables:

Immediate Supervisor has been found to have no impact on knowledge sharing attitude. The mean value of the Immediate Supervising reports that there is a low level of Immediate Supervisor support in organizations that are studied. Consequently, the low level of Immediate Supervisor support is an insignificant predictor of knowledge sharing attitude. In contrast to that, some studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between Immediate Supervisor and knowledge sharing attitude (Srivastava et al., 2006; Al-Kurdi et al., 2020)

This study found that Collaborative belief is positively associated with Knowledge sharing attitude. This result is similar to Sveiby and Simons (2002) study where emphasizes the importance of one specific aspect of organizational culture for knowledge sharing. This aspect consists of values, beliefs, and atmosphere that characterize a common mental space accepted by knowledge workers which affect behavior and readiness to share knowledge.

Teamwork has been found to have no impact on knowledge sharing attitude. Some prior studies such as Al-Adaileh and Al-Atawi's (2011) study in a telecommunications organization in Saudi

Arabia found that teamwork and collaboration did not necessarily promote knowledge sharing. Similar to several other studies (e.g., Lin and Lee, 2004; Lin, 2007), they found that perception of management support is critical to knowledge sharing as a practice, not merely an initiative. whereas some Previous research has revealed that there is a positive relationship between teamwork and knowledge sharing (Ahmed et al., 2016; Chuang et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature in several ways, First, the current findings add to a growing body of literature on Collaborative Climate; by providing an empirical examination of the framework linking the relationship between Collaborative climate and knowledge sharing attitude. second, the findings reveal that not all CC dimensions are equally valuable to the firm's knowledge sharing Attitude; because two CC dimensions (i.e., immediate supervisor, and workgroup support) appeared to have no significant impact on KSA. In contrast, the remaining (collaborative belief) was found to influence KSA.

From a practical perspective, the results of the study have many implications for organizations initiating or striving to promote employees' attitudes toward knowledge sharing. The results of this study help practitioner and team leaders to understand the importance of creating a climate that encourages Social ties between colleagues and a good relationship, which will help the moving of knowledge from individual levels, to a group or team levels, to organizational Levels, and inter-organizational levels. moreover, the study found that collaborative belief has the highest impact on knowledge sharing attitude. Therefore, management should demonstrate its support for creating and reinforcing the good collaborative belief among their employees.



Future Research:

Based on the first limitation stated the current study did not determine the type of knowledge to be shared, future researchers need to determine the type of knowledge that is shared; thus, to consider. For instance, how knowledge type intervenes the effects on knowledge sharing Attitude. Second, according to Denscombe (2000), to generalize the findings of a survey, the sample should be carefully selected to be representative of the population; it also needs to be in a reasonable size. Accordingly, future researches with a large sample size are likely to provide a higher degree of statistical significance. Third, a longitudinal study is needed to further clarify the findings and provide an accurate understanding of the causal relationship between CC and KSA, as well as to examine whether the effect of different CC dimensions change over time as the corporation characteristics change.

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