

Evaluating Task Knowledge as a Mediator in the Relationship between Knowledge Sharing and Innovative Work Behaviour

Shahnawaz Muhammed^a, Valmira Osmanaj^b, Atik Kulakli^c and Syed Faizan Hussain Zaidi^d
College of Business Administration, American University of the Middle East, Egaila, Kuwait

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Abstract: It is widely recognized that knowledge sharing contributes to innovation in organizations. The implicit assumption in the linkage between individual knowledge sharing and their innovative work behaviour is that individuals gain certain qualities while being engaged in knowledge sharing that enable them to become more innovative. In this paper, we explore employee task knowledge as a key mediator in the relationship between knowledge sharing and their innovative work behaviour. Data collected from knowledge workers from several manufacturing and service based organizations is used to test the mediation hypotheses. Results support our mediation hypothesis and show that task knowledge partially mediates knowledge sharing's impact on innovative work behaviour. Knowledge sharing had a positive impact on innovative work behaviour even after considering task knowledge as a mediator, suggesting other mechanisms at work in addition to their task knowledge in how knowledge sharing contributes to innovation. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings are also discussed.


1 INTRODUCTION


Driven by the need to introduce new products faster, increased competition, changing global environment, and to simply maximize the use of available resources, organizations today are increasingly focused on fostering innovation within their workforce. As Kahn (2018) noted "innovation is everywhere today" (p. 453). It is gaining increasing presence in organizational mission and vision statements, and in business school curriculums (Kahn, 2018).


Though the debate as to what innovation really means in an organizational context is still an on-going concern (Fagerberg, Mowery, & Nelson, 2005), Kahn (2108) suggests that it could be understood from an outcome, process, and a mind-set perspective. From each of these perspectives, as organizations focus on producing innovative outputs related to their products, process and other organizational outcomes, focus on the innovation process itself, and develop an innovation supportive culture in their organizations,


they have to do this firstly by enabling their workforce to be innovative (West & Farr, 1989). In addition to innovations occurring in business functions focused on it, such as in R&D and in new product development, researchers have emphasized the importance of innovations arising from all functions of the organization due to their potential to come up with creative ideas and the impact it could have on organizations (Amabile, 1996; Bäckström & Bengtsson, 2019; Hoyrup, 2012; Kesting & Ulhoi, 2010; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Smith et al., 2012). We adopt such a broad perspective of innovation and focus on innovative work behaviour (IWB) of employees across the spectrum in this study.

Several authors have suggested that knowledge sharing is an important element facilitating such innovations in the workplace (Akram, Haider & Hussain, 2019; Bontis, Bart, Sáenz, Aramburu, & Rivera, 2009; Kamaşak & Bulutlar, 2010; Wang & Wang, 2012; Ritala, Olander, Michailova, & Husted, 2015; Khan & Khan, 2019). While how knowledge sharing facilitating development of intellectual

^a  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6031-5376>

^b  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9864-8627>

^c  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2368-3225>

^d  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1931-1004>

capital that eventually leads to organizational innovation is well documented in literature, a clear understanding of how knowledge sharing may contribute to innovation at the individual level is still elusive. This research aims to contribute to a better understanding of how such a contribution is possible at the individual level. While studies have shown that knowledge sharing impacts innovation at the individual level (Akram et al., 2019; Ritala et al., 2015; Khan & Khan, 2019), the tacit assumptions in most of these studies have been that sharing knowledge (both knowledge giving and knowledge taking) bestows certain qualities in the individuals that make them more innovative. However, very few studies have empirically examined what these qualities are in relation to knowledge sharing that make employees more innovative. Similar to how knowledge sharing at an organizational level contributes to the organizational knowledge (Han, Yoon, & Chae, 2020; Nonaka, 1994; Widén-Wulff & Ginman, 2004; Yang, 2007), we present individual's task related knowledge as a key mediator in the relationship between knowledge sharing and their innovative work. In essence, the thesis of this article is to empirically explore the contention that for knowledge sharing to have an impact on workers innovation, it does so by primarily enhancing their task related knowledge.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing in organizations has received substantial attention in the management literature and specifically in the literature related to knowledge management. This is not surprising since it is one of the important processes in an organization by which information essential to the organizational functioning becomes available to the organizational entities, no matter how small or large the organization is. Though individual level contributions to society are important in many ways, organizations amplify such impact. An essential aspect of these organizations and its success is their ability to communicate and coordinate the actions of its sub-units, and more fundamentally of the individual entities in it, for a larger common purpose (Thomas, Thomas, Manrodt & Rutner, 2001; Greenberg & Baron, 2002). Knowledge sharing is one such key form of communication where provider and recipient are engaged in transferring ones understanding to the

recipient of that knowledge (Muhammed, Doll & Deng, 2011; Van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004).

Ipe (2003) indicates that knowledge sharing is "the act of making knowledge available to others within the organization. Knowledge sharing between individuals is the process by which knowledge held by an individual is converted into a form that can be understood, absorbed, and used by other individuals." (p.341). In an organizational context, Bartol and Srivastava (2002) define knowledge sharing as "individuals sharing organizationally relevant information, ideas, suggestions, and expertise with one another" (p. 65). Similarly, building on Cummings (2004) and Pulakos, Dorsey and Borman (2003), Wang and Noe (2010) note that individual knowledge sharing in an organizational context involves "provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures" (p. 117).

Individual knowledge sharing being the fundamental aspect of knowledge sharing that takes place at all other higher levels of abstraction. In this paper, we focus on knowledge sharing at this level. Further we focus on the knowledge outflow of individual level knowledge (knowledge giving), and define knowledge sharing as an act of making individual knowledge available to others, similar to the definition adopted by Ipe (2003). We adopted this perspective of knowledge sharing in this research, to evaluate the extent to which individual knowledge sharing contributes to their innovative work behaviour through their task related knowledge.

2.2 Task Knowledge

Based on various objectives, knowledge has been categorized from many perspectives. One such perspective is to view individual knowledge that is relevant to their work as task knowledge. In the service innovation perspective, task knowledge is the accumulation of facts, comprehensions, skills, and lessons learned from previous and emergent service development activities and originate from different functions within the company (Storey & Kahn, 2010). Task knowledge structures are functionally equivalent to the knowledge structures that people have and use when they carry out any task at their work (Johnson, Johnson, Waddington, & Shouls, 2001). The foundation of the task approach relies on influential work which divides workplace's activities into tasks. Tasks are constructed on the activities accomplished by organizations' employees related to

their particular occupations (Autor, Levy & Murnane, 2003).

Helfat and Peteraf (2003) describe organizational capability as “the ability of an organization to perform a coordinated set of tasks, utilizing organizational resources, for the purpose of achieving a particular end result” (p. 999). Therefore, organizational knowledge plays a vital role to achieve the successful completion of these set of tasks. Task oriented knowledge is hence knowledge relevant for organizational actions. Organizations are sustained by acquiring knowledge relevant to its various tasks and allocating these to right positions for accomplishing the task. From this point, optimal level of knowledge acquisition and talent is required to determine the complexity of task knowledge. Communication plays an important role in shaping the relationship between individual talents and administers the organizational process and structure that integrates detached knowledge to perform tasks more proficiently. The task based approach identifies the organization process that optimizes the relations between tasks and talents as the core of organizational capital (Garicano & Wu, 2010).

Fonseca, de Faria and Lima (2017) explain the firm innovation process from a task based viewpoint and presented a view of human capital which is based on the tasks that firms’ workers accomplish. Authors proposed a measure of cognitive analytical and interpersonal tasks as the degree of abstractism. They content that “the level of abstractism of a firm not only has an effect on a firm’s propensity to innovate, but also on its product innovation performance” (p. 616). Further, authors propose measures of task which allow the assessment of the optimal organizational task structure to maximize the inclination of a firm to innovate and subsequently improve its product innovation performance. Thus, innovation performance is exploited at transitional value of the degree of abstractism in organizations. Innovation management literature stresses this relationship between human capital characteristics and innovation performance (Faems & Subramanian, 2013).

While task knowledge can be viewed from many perspectives in organizations, it is challenging to measure it at the right level of abstraction that makes it usable for substantive analysis. To be able to maintain a generic abstraction that is required to capture the full breadth of individual’s task knowledge in differing contexts while at the same time keeping the construct at a manageable level for such research, we adopt the conceptualization proposed by Muhammed, Doll and Deng (2009) and

view task knowledge comprising of conceptual, contextual and operational knowledge. Conceptual knowledge is the “deeper understanding of why a person is engaged in a particular task” (p. 4) and it provides the rationale for individuals for their actions and addresses the ‘know-why’ aspect of a given task (Garud, 1997; Hulme, 2014). It becomes easier to assimilate other types of information when such knowledge related to one’s organizational task is present (Kim, 1993). Operational knowledge is the knowledge individuals immediately need to accomplish their task (such as know-what and know-how) (Garud, 1997; Hulme, 2014). This is often referred to as the declarative and procedural knowledge that individuals carry (Schultze & Leidner, 2002; Zack, 1999). Without a satisfactory level of operational knowledge individuals may not be able to even accomplish their routine tasks let alone to be innovative in their work. Contextual knowledge is what individuals know in addition to the immediate knowledge required to complete the task (operational knowledge) and may enrich the existing knowledge with what may not be obvious (such as know-who, know-where, and know-when) (Atherton, 2013; Howell & Boies, 2004). These three knowledge components capture the breadth of knowledge that employees bear on in accomplishing their organizational tasks.

2.3 Innovative Work Behaviour

Increasing employees’ knowledge sharing, as a means to generate new ideas, is considered vital for the organizations which are striving to innovate products and services, achieve competitive advantages and attain a strong market position (Masih, Sriratanaviriyakul, El-Den, & Azam, 2018; Ologbo, Nor, & Okyere-Kwakye, 2015). “Creativity and innovation at work are the process, outcomes, and products of attempts to develop and introduce new and improved ways of doing things.” (Anderson, Potocnik & Zhou, 2014, p.4). According to Che, Wu, Wang, & Yang (2019), innovation is a combination of idea generation (generation of domain-specific, novel and useful new ideas) and idea implementation (implementing new ideas to practice).

While a substantial research investigates the innovation process in organisations (Rothaermel & Hess, 2007; Stalk, Evans, & Shulman, 1992), there is an increasing focus on innovation at an individual level and how it affects organizations (Grigoriou & Rothaermel, 2014; Maqbool, Černe, & Bortoluzzi, 2019; Odetunde, 2019). Considering the fact that the innovation capability of the organisations derives

from their employees' innovation capabilities, employee innovative work behaviour (IWB) is crucial to the organization success and innovation (Arsawan, Kariati, Prayustika, & Wirga, 2019; Odetunde, 2019; Scott & Bruce, 1994). IWB indicates the intentional creation, introduction and application of new ideas, processes, products or services within their work-role, group or organizational context (Janssen, 2000; Odetunde, 2019; Radaelli, Lettieri, Mura, & Spiller, 2014; Scott & Bruce, 1994). According to a study conducted by Janssen (2000), IWB encompasses three main tasks: idea generation (developing novel ideas); idea promotion (obtaining external support); and idea application (producing a model or prototype of the idea).

The employee's ideas are nurtured through communication and exchange of expertise that are substantial for stimulating innovative ideas (Masih et al., 2018). Both the knowledge denoting and knowledge collecting play an important influence on employee's innovative behaviour (Hassan et al., 2018). Ability to elaborate, re-combine and disseminate knowledge is skill-set required both for knowledge sharing and innovation (Radaelli et al., 2014). However, how such innovations occur has not been sufficiently explored. Thus, the focus of this study is to analyse the impact knowledge sharing have on employee's ability to be creative, by generating domain-specific, novel and useful new ideas and implementing these new ideas into their work, and the role of task knowledge in this relationship.

3 THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

The focus of this research is in understanding if and how knowledge sharing contributes to employees innovative work behaviour. A central theme in this argument is that individuals become more innovative when knowledge sharing helps them build knowledge relevant to their work which we address in this paper as 'task knowledge'. In the next two sections we develop this thesis further and propose the hypotheses in the light of extant literature.

3.1 Knowledge Sharing and Innovative Work Behaviour

Radaelli et al. (2014) claimed that employees who share knowledge engage more in creating, promoting and implementing innovations. According to Githii (2014), exchanging ideas and information through

communication boost innovation. In a study conducted by Arsawan et al. (2019), the authors found out that employees who share knowledge can improve self-quality by taking positive values in the form of capability, competence, skill, and trust. Also, Radaelli et al. (2014), found that knowledge sharing enliven knowledge recombination and re-elaboration that stimulates the generation, promotion and application of new ideas.

Akram and Bokhari (2011) found in their study that knowledge sharing is positively related to individual performance. In addition, they argued that successful knowledge transfer requires high level of individual motivation so that knowledge seeker and knowledge provider openly share and accept it. Based on the review conducted by Githii, (2014), there is overwhelming evidence showing that knowledge management practices play a significant role in innovation and suggest that employee innovation should be supported by organizational systems and structures that encourage their efforts to learn and acquire new knowledge. Also, Masih et al. (2018) content in their study that knowledge sharing promotes employees' innovation capabilities and the employees should be given incentives by the management in order to increase both their knowledge sharing and innovative capabilities.

Phung, Hawryszkiewicz and Chandran (2019) studied the impact of knowledge-sharing behaviour on the innovative work behaviour in university settings in developing countries, focusing on the moderating role of transformational leadership. The authors found that knowledge-sharing behaviour positively affects innovative work behaviour, and recommended leaders to focus on promoting innovative behaviours of employees during their daily work through encouraging knowledge sharing. Several more studies point to the positive impact of knowledge sharing on innovation (Bontis et al., 2009; Jada Mukhopadhyay & Titiyal, 2019; Kamaşak & Bulutlar, 2010; Kim & Park, 2017; Leonardi, 2014; Radaelli et al., 2014).

H1: Knowledge sharing has a significant positive effect on innovative work behaviour.

3.2 Task Knowledge as a Mediator

When organizations focus on knowledge management, the emphasis is usually on the macro elements, such as organizational level innovation, improved performance, and competitive advantage. While this is important from a strategic perspective, such innovations are driven by amalgamation of

innovations by individual employees in their day-to-day work. Further, organizations innovate when employees share their knowledge and innovations widely across the organization. Knowledge sharing thus is key focus area in organizational knowledge management initiatives. It refers to the delivery of task information in collaborative environment to resolve problems. Developing new ideas for accomplishing the task and implementing policies and procedures are the important aspects of knowledge sharing (Cummings, 2004). Creativity, learning, and performance are viewed as most common factors in this context that are affected by knowledge sharing (Ahmad & Karim, 2019). Knowledge sharing hence contributes to building the social capital in organizations that can drive innovation (Widén-Wulff & Ginman, 2004).

According to Storey and Kahn (2010), a positive relationship exist between task knowledge and innovation due to the fact that task knowledge increases the company stock knowledge that is further utilized to increase proficiency and boost innovation of new service development. Similar results were found in the study of Akgün, Dayan and Di Benedetto (2008), where the authors analysed the impact of the team knowledge in the new product development. The authors found that both declarative and procedural knowledge of the team affected positively the team's knowledge base which led to a positive impact in the new products' creativity and success. Moreover, Afsar & Umrani (2019) suggested that the task complexity has a significant effect on motivation to learn and develop their work related knowledge, which enhances the innovative work behaviour of the employees.

While there is some research suggesting that knowledge could sometimes impede innovation, as in the case when employees become too comfortable with the knowledge that they have in doing their work and resist change and seeking new knowledge. For example, Subramaniam & Youndt (2005) discovered in their study that human capital negatively impacted the radical innovative capability (to generate innovations that significantly transform existing products and services). The authors argue that possessing viciously independent experts, who hesitate to share their ideas with their colleagues, may be counterproductive for organizations. However, in a knowledge sharing context, people seek out new knowledge and are willing to share what they know. While it is important to understand what prompts the employees to share knowledge and a substantial work has been done in this regard (Bock, Zmud, Kim, and Lee, 2005; Lin, 2007), our focus is in exploring how

knowledge sharing impacts their innovative capability by building their task related knowledge.

As discussed earlier, knowledge in the organizational context could be conceptualized as conceptual, contextual and operational knowledge (Muhammed et al., 2009). As individuals share their knowledge among their colleagues and other online and offline communities related to their work, they build a network of connections on which they could depend on when they face certain roadblocks in their work, and hence directly contributing to their operational knowledge. Such forums and communities also act as a platform where they may come across a broad range of information contributing to their contextual knowledge. Engaging in sharing knowledge requires individuals to think about what they may tacitly know and consciously turn it into a form that is understandable and receivable by the audience (Muhammed et al., 2011). This process can enhance the conceptual understanding of what they may already know and acquire in this process. Hence, sharing knowledge can contribute to gaining further knowledge. In fact this may be a more effective way to quickly gain and broaden one's task knowledge eventually, leading to new ideas and further innovations.

It is widely recognized that innovation involves more than creating new ideas, and may involve selection, development implementation of those ideas at the least (Backstrom & Bengtsson, 2019; Dodgson 2017). While contextual knowledge helps individuals to connect disparate ideas thus contributing to creating novel outcomes in their work (Howell & Boies, 2004), conceptual knowledge helps individuals to develop a broader and more critical perspective of such creation and would help in evaluating which of those creative ideas may be best implemented. Since operational task knowledge is the knowledge related to the actual skill and know-how of one's task, a higher level of such operational task knowledge would also help individuals to implement their novel productions contributing to a successful innovation. Given together, we can safely suggest that their task knowledge conceptualized as comprising of conceptual, contextual and operational knowledge contributes to all the phases of innovation (Nurulim et al., 2019). Hence, as hypothesized in the previous section while knowledge sharing may directly impact employees innovative work behaviour, there is compelling rationale suggesting that a large portion of this impact may be due to the enhanced task knowledge that knowledge sharing may help gain. In other words it is highly likely that task knowledge is a key mediator in this relationship between

knowledge sharing and employee's innovative work behaviour.

H2: Task knowledge mediates the relationship between knowledge sharing and innovative work behaviour.

4 METHODS

This research uses a cross-sectional survey design to collect the data used to test the hypothesized model. Measures used in this study were developed based on generally accepted psychometric principles (Churchill, 1979). Face validity of the measures were assessed in the pre-test stage by having five experts and five target respondents examine the items against the construct definition (Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003). Measures were further refined based on a pilot survey before using it in the large scale data collection. After receiving the responses, the data was evaluated for any potential problems and missing values. Further it was assessed for any potential biases, such as non-response bias and common method bias. Next, before assessing the substantive relationships, validity and reliability of the measures were assessed. Once the measures were assessed to be sound, substantive relationships and the related hypotheses were tested using hierarchical linear regression and mediation analysis.

4.1 Measures

Responses to all measures were anchored on a five-point Likert type scale except for the outcome variable innovative work behaviour, which was measured on a seven-point Likert type scale. Participants were asked to reflect on the past six months at their work to answer the questionnaire. The final measure for knowledge sharing included three items such as "I have shared my insights with others" "I have shared my knowledge with others" and "I have shared my work-related knowledge with others". For task knowledge, a three dimensional measure inclusive of conceptual, contextual and operational knowledge as proposed by Muhammed et al. (2009) was used. Items for knowledge sharing and tasks knowledge were anchored from (1) none or to a very little extent to and (5) to a very great extent. For innovative work behaviour, a three item measure similar to De Jong and Den Hartog (2010), and Afsar and Umrani (2019) were used. It included items such as "my work was creative", "my work was original and practical", and "I was the first to use certain ideas

in my kind of work". Respondents were asked to indicate the level of their innovative output compared to other individuals in similar position, and the items were anchored from (1) Not at all to (7) To an exceptionally high degree. Further, respondent's position in the organization, level of education, age and gender are used as controls.

4.2 Data Collection

Data was collected using a web-based survey targeting knowledge workers in various manufacturing and related industries. Most of the responses were from US firms. A total of 154 usable responses were received for a response rate of 24% based on the click-through. Responses were received from knowledge workers in wide spectrum of industries. 42% of the respondents worked in various manufacturing and related firms, 39% were from computer, information technology or software firms and the remaining 19% indicated that they were from firms other than these two sectors. The respondents also represented firms of various sizes with most number of responses from individuals working in large organizations that employed more than 500 individuals (40%), 25% of the responses were from individuals in small firms that employed fewer than 50 and the rest were from medium sized organizations.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Measurement Assessment

A confirmatory factor analysis was done initially to assess the overall measurement model. Before testing for substantive analysis, it is imperative that we assess the convergent validity and the discriminant validity of the measures. A confirmatory factor analysis with all items including the summated scales of the three dimensions of task knowledge was constructed. Factor loading for all items in this measurement model were significantly loaded on their respective constructs, and exceeded the minimum requirement. The loadings ranged from 0.73 to 0.94. The resultant measurement model showed excellent fit ($\chi^2 = 36.8$, $df = 24$, $p\text{-value} = 0.045$, $RMSEA = 0.046$, $GFI = 0.97$, $NNFI = 0.99$, $CFI = 0.99$). The composite reliabilities (CR) were 0.92 for knowledge sharing, 0.80 for task knowledge, and 0.89 for innovative work behaviour. Similarly, AVE ranged from 0.58 (task knowledge) to 0.79 (knowledge sharing) indicating good convergent validity of the measurement instruments.

Discriminant validity is the ability of the constructs to differentiate from other unrelated constructs and is assessed by evaluating the AVE for each construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Kline, 2010). The squared correlations for each construct were less than its AVE, indicating sufficient discriminant validity (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Highest correlation was 0.45 (between knowledge sharing and task knowledge) and was below the recommended 0.70 providing further evidence of discrimination (Ping, 2004). The scales also displayed good reliabilities as assessed using Cronbach’s alpha (α) and range from 0.79 (Task knowledge) to 0.91 (knowledge sharing).

5.2 Mediating Effect of Task Knowledge

A three-step regression procedure was used to test the mediating effect of task knowledge in the relationship between knowledge sharing and innovative work behaviour (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The procedure include first for testing the direct effect of independent variable (knowledge sharing) on dependent variable (innovative work behaviour) as hypothesized in H1. If this relationship is significant then two other models are evaluated. The second one with the independent variable and the moderator, and in the third model, the outcome variable- innovative work behaviour is regressed on both knowledge sharing and task knowledge. In order to test the

mediation hypothesis using hierarchical regression analysis summated scales of the measures where used. Table 1 shows the results of the three regression models. The first model is represented as Model 1 and indicates that, after considering the effect of the control variables, knowledge sharing had a significant impact on innovative work behaviour ($\beta = .39, p < .001$) thus supporting hypotheses H1. From the control variables except for education in Model 1 and 2, and age in Model 3, they did not have any significant impact on innovative work behaviour or task knowledge.

Model 2 shows the regression result of knowledge sharing and task knowledge on innovative work behaviour. In this model, both knowledge sharing ($p < .05$) and task knowledge ($p < .001$) had a significant positive impact on innovative work behaviour and showed a significant increase in the variance explained (9.2%) compared to Model 1. In order to fully establish mediation, it is also essential that we test task knowledge as the criterion variable with knowledge sharing as the predictor (Model 3). This model showed a strong significant relationship between knowledge sharing and task knowledge ($\beta = .23, p < .001$). The above findings combined support the hypotheses related to task knowledge as the mediator (Hypotheses H2). Support for both hypothesis H1 and H2 indicate a partial mediation of task knowledge in the relationship between knowledge sharing and innovative work behaviour.

Table 1: Results of regression analysis for testing mediation.

	Innovative Work Behavior								Task Knowledge			
	Unstandardized coefficients				Unstandardized coefficients				Unstandardized coefficients			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	Sig.	β	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	Sig.	β	Std. Error	<i>t</i>	Sig.
(Constant)	4.953	0.602	8.230	0.000	3.247	0.700	4.639	0.000	2.702	0.312	8.651	0.000
Control variables												
Position	-0.060	0.061	-0.993	0.322	-0.077	0.058	-1.340	0.182	0.027	0.032	0.858	0.392
Education	-0.265	0.083	-3.201	0.002	-0.224	0.079	-2.831	0.005	-0.065	0.043	-1.515	0.132
Age	0.084	0.085	0.988	0.325	0.032	0.082	0.387	0.699	0.083	0.044	1.880	0.062
Gender	-0.182	0.230	-0.789	0.431	-0.250	0.219	-1.144	0.255	0.109	0.119	0.910	0.364
Main effect												
Knowledge Sharing	0.387	0.101	3.825	0.000	0.240	0.102	2.356	0.020	0.232	0.052	4.422	0.000
Mediating effect												
Task Knowledge					0.631	0.150	4.204	0.000				
N	154				154				154			
F-Value	4.834				7.427				6.214			
R-sq	0.140				0.233				0.174			
ΔR -sq					0.092							

6 DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Knowledge sharing has been associated with innovation in many different contexts but, how it may contribute to innovation at an individual level has not been investigated sufficiently well in the literature. This research aimed to address this gap, and proposed that one of the key mechanism by which individuals can be more innovative by sharing knowledge is when such knowledge sharing contributes to their task related knowledge. As proposed in hypotheses H1 and supported by results, this study confirms the role knowledge sharing can play in helping individuals to be more innovative in their workplace. Managers looking for greater innovations from their employees may take note of this and encourage knowledge sharing within their organizations. They should look at ways to motivate individuals to share their knowledge and provide structural support mechanisms such as technological platforms, and incentives build into organizational reward systems for this (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002; Le & Lei, 2019).

The results also supported our second hypotheses related to the mediating role of task knowledge in the relationship between knowledge sharing and employee's innovative work behaviour. This provides important insights into how individuals can become more innovative by sharing their knowledge. As they engage in knowledge sharing, they should be reflective of how it may improve their own knowledge which could help them become more innovative at work. Since knowledge sharing is one of the main aspects of many knowledge management initiatives, a better understanding of not only what motivates employees to engage in knowledge sharing, but also what impact it could have on individual's work and how such impact is manifested would be an on-going concern for many managers. Findings are in line with other studies that suggest that knowledge sharing in organizations impacts its performance only when employees utilize the knowledge that they gain through knowledge sharing (Zaim, Muhammed & Tarim, 2019).

While task knowledge is a significant mediator of knowledge sharing's impact on innovation, the findings of this study show that it only partially mediates this relationship. This opens up avenues for future researchers to evaluate other aspects of knowledge sharing's impact on innovation. For example, in a recent study Asurakkody and Hee (2020) found self-leadership to be a mediator in this relationship. While recognizing the limitation of measuring individual knowledge in an organizational

context at a very broad scale and the varied complexities that may be masked by such an approach, this research shows the usefulness of measuring task knowledge at such a scale and how important substantive relations may be effected by it. Future research could use similar measure of task knowledge to evaluate other substantive relationships, especially, the ones in the knowledge management area since a better understanding of how the various initiatives improve the knowledge stock of individuals and organizations would be of interest to researchers and practitioners in this field.

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