TACIT AND EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING AMONG LECTURERS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KANO STATE

By

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Abstract

This study examined tacit and explicit knowledge sharing among lecturers in public universities in Kano State. The objectives of the study were to identify the types of knowledge shared by lecturers in the universities under study and to identify the inhibitors of knowledge sharing among lecturers in the universities under study. The study adopted a quantitative research approach using a descriptive survey design. The study population consisted of 346 lecturers. The findings revealed that lecturers shared various forms of tacit knowledge, including expert suggestions (92%), expertise in web design (91%), and new work processes (86.4%). They also shared explicit knowledge, including expert suggestions (96%) and newly learned work processes (89.2%). The study further revealed several factors that inhibited effective knowledge sharing, including inadequate management support, problems with organizational culture, lack of trust, poor leadership, lack of encouragement for creativity and innovation, and lack of incentives, motivation, and rewards. The study concluded that enhancing the sharing of both tacit and explicit knowledge could contribute to more effective academic activities among lecturers in their respective universities.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing, tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, lecturers, universities, Kano State

Introduction

As the world moves towards a knowledge-based economy, knowledge is increasingly regarded as a factor of production alongside land, labour, and capital. Knowledge is particularly important to both public and private organisations, especially higher education institutions such as universities (Sizer, 2001). Knowledge is embedded in the human mind and reflects what an individual knows and understands. Consequently, knowledge exists in virtually all spheres of human endeavour. It is essential to human beings because individuals require knowledge to effectively perform their routine activities. In the academic environment, knowledge enables lecturers to become more creative and innovative in carrying out their teaching, research, and other academic responsibilities. Thus, knowledge is a crucial resource for human development and societal progress.

Davenport (2013) defined knowledge as a fluid mixture of framed experience, values, contextual information, expert insight, and grounded intuition that provides an environment and framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and

information. Knowledge originates in and is applied through the minds of individuals who possess it.

Knowledge in organisations is commonly classified into two broad types: tacit and explicit knowledge (Dorathy, 2011). Tacit knowledge refers to knowledge that individuals possess in their minds and is often difficult to articulate or document. It generally requires extensive personal interaction, experience, and trust to be shared effectively. Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is knowledge that can be captured, documented, stored, and communicated through documents, databases, manuals, reports, and other formal channels. In the context of this study, knowledge refers to data combined with experience, interpretation, reflection, creativity, and information that is processed, analysed, and placed within a particular context.

The overall purpose of this study is to provide insight into tacit and explicit knowledge sharing among lecturers in universities in Kano State and Nigeria at large. The study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of how lecturers share knowledge through both human-oriented and codification strategies. Human-oriented strategies include symposiums, interviews and video interactions, exhibitions and book fairs, communities of practice, and home and office visits, while codification strategies include the use of social media platforms and other technological systems.

The study adopted a quantitative research methodology because it was considered suitable for examining the study variables across the target population. The study population comprised lecturers in universities in Kano State. The study was underpinned by four theoretical perspectives: the Knowledge Sharing Model, Social Capital Theory, the Knowledge Sharing Capability Model, and the Organizational Knowledge Creation Theory, popularly known as the SECI Model. These perspectives provided the theoretical lens for examining tacit and explicit knowledge sharing among lecturers in universities in Kano State.

The study covers lecturers from selected universities in Kano State, including Bayero University, Kano; Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil; Yusuf Maitama Sule University, Kano; and Kano University of Science and Technology, Wudil.

Statement of the Problem

The significance of tacit and explicit knowledge to academic activities cannot be overemphasized because knowledge sharing is essential for institutional growth and societal development. Hussein and Nassuora (2011) indicated that tacit and explicit knowledge facilitate the development of new and market-focused strategic plans, as well as competitiveness and responsiveness in relation to research grants, contracts, and commercial opportunities. As knowledge serves as a driver of innovation and development, universities need to recognize its critical importance in enabling lecturers to perform their responsibilities more effectively.

Universities, as centres of academic excellence, play an important role in socio-economic development through knowledge creation, production, dissemination, and sharing. They are expected to promote the sharing of both tacit and explicit knowledge to improve the quality of teaching, research, and other academic processes.

Despite the significance of knowledge sharing to academic activities, observations suggest that universities in Kano State may be constrained by inadequate application and sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge. This observation is supported by Yang (2020), who noted that despite the growing importance of knowledge-sharing practices to university competitiveness, several barriers make it difficult for knowledge sharing to achieve its intended goals and produce positive outcomes.

Some of the factors that may inhibit knowledge sharing include the perception that “knowledge is power,” failure to recognize the usefulness of particular knowledge to others, knowledge-hoarding attitudes, lack of trust, lack of time, individualism, inadequate mechanisms for

knowledge capture, inadequate technology, internal competition, and top-down decision-making. These challenges may limit the effective exchange and utilization of knowledge among lecturers.

Furthermore, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining tacit and explicit knowledge sharing among lecturers in universities in Kano State. This gap provides justification for the present study, which seeks to identify the types of knowledge shared by lecturers and examine the factors that inhibit knowledge-sharing practices among them.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine tacit and explicit knowledge sharing among lecturers in universities in Kano State.
Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the types of knowledge shared by lecturers in the universities under study; and
2. Identify the inhibitors of knowledge sharing among lecturers in the universities under study.

Literature Review

Types of Knowledge Shared among Lecturers in Universities in Kano State Knowledge can be categorized in several ways. It can, for example, be classified into declarative and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge refers to the "knowing that" type of knowledge and concerns factual information, whereas procedural knowledge refers to the "knowing how" type of knowledge and concerns the processes underlying particular actions (Leach, Wall, & Jackson, 2003).

In higher education institutions, much knowledge is codified in paper and electronic documents and embedded in the daily academic activities of institutions. Examples include lecture notes, new innovations and discoveries, new knowledge-sharing strategies, research publications, student orientation manuals, and guides on how to use library resources. Other forms of academic knowledge include knowledge of how to write scholarly articles, prepare PowerPoint presentations, conduct data analysis, use software applications, design websites, use library resources and facilities, provide guidance and counseling, and use social media applications.

Similarly, various forms of knowledge have been identified in the literature. Davenport (2013) distinguished between informal and formal knowledge. Informal knowledge can be acquired through social interactions and may subsequently contribute to the creation of more formal forms of knowledge. Formal knowledge is generally easier to document and share and is often obtained from books and other recorded sources.

Gourlay (2006) identified four forms of knowledge: object-based knowledge, know-how knowledge, professional knowledge, and coordinating knowledge. David and Foray (2002) distinguished between procedural knowledge, which relates to skills and the ability to perform a task, and declarative knowledge, which concerns beliefs about relationships between variables. Other scholars have distinguished among relational knowledge (know-with), causal knowledge (know-why), and conditional knowledge (know-when) (Nolan Norton Institute, 1991). Knowledge has also been classified as social and individual knowledge, with social knowledge being developed through collective activities and individual knowledge being developed by individuals.

Within the literature, however, the two forms of knowledge most frequently discussed are tacit and explicit knowledge. Polanyi introduced the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge in the 1960s, and the distinction subsequently became central to Nonaka and Takeuchi's perspective on organizational knowledge creation. A further category is coded knowledge, which refers to knowledge shared among academics in electronic or written formats. Examples of electronically shared knowledge include lecture slides, videos, and pictures, while written forms include tutorials, working papers, and reports.
Similarly, Saad and Haron (2013) identified three categories of knowledge that academics can

exchange: coded, social, and institutional knowledge. Institutional knowledge relates to key university activities such as research, expertise, and policies, whereas social knowledge concerns shared cultures, beliefs, values, ethics, and norms.

However, the two widely recognized forms of knowledge shared among lecturers in higher education institutions are tacit and explicit knowledge, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of Knowledge Shared among Lecturers in Universities in Kano State

S/N	Tacit Knowledge	Explicit Knowledge
1	Skills in teaching techniques	Manual for student orientation and use of the library
2	Experience in conference attendance	Research publications
3	Know-how on how to write an article	Technical reports
4	Expertise in web design	Circular letters
5	Information on how to deal with intuition	Books and bulletins
6	Innovations in knowledge adaptation	Innovations in knowledge-sharing strategies
7	New work-sharing processes	Newly learned work processes
8	Expert suggestions	Expert suggestions
9	Problems encountered and solutions	Problems encountered and solutions

Source: Literature review, 2026.

The literature reviewed indicates that knowledge in organisations generally exists in tacit and explicit forms. Awad and Ghaziri (2011) suggested that explicit knowledge can be retrieved and accessed more easily and can therefore be reused in decision-making processes than tacit knowledge. However, the existing literature does not adequately establish which forms of knowledge are predominantly shared by lecturers in higher education institutions in Kano State. The present study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the types of knowledge shared among lecturers in universities in Kano State, Nigeria.

Inhibitors of Knowledge Sharing among Lecturers in Higher Education Institutions knowledge sharing are not always successful, particularly among lecturers in universities, because various factors may inhibit the exchange of knowledge. Individual, technological, and organizational factors are considered important in facilitating or constraining knowledge-sharing practices in universities. When these factors are not adequately addressed, they may hamper effective knowledge sharing.

Knowledge sharing is beneficial to lecturers and higher education institutions generally. However, it is necessary to understand why individuals and institutions may not always consider knowledge sharing a priority. Several studies have examined barriers that hinder knowledge-sharing activities (Riege, 2005). These barriers have commonly been categorized into individual, organizational, and technological factors (Sohai & Daud, 2009).

Individual Challenges

Knowledge sharing is directly related to human behaviour. Because individuals differ in their attitudes, experiences, motivations, and perceptions, several individual factors can hinder knowledge sharing. In knowledge-sharing situations, an individual may serve either as a knowledge provider or as a knowledge recipient. Individual barriers can be broadly classified as conscious and unconscious barriers.

Conscious individual barriers occur when an individual deliberately becomes unwilling to share knowledge for particular reasons. Unconscious barriers occur when an individual fails to share knowledge because they are unaware that another person needs the knowledge or do not know how to share it effectively.

Self-interest or Personal Interest

One of the major barriers to knowledge sharing is personal interest, which may sometimes manifest as selfishness. In academia, excessive self-interest can impede the progress of individuals, colleagues, students, and the institution. An individual may understand the benefits of knowledge sharing but nevertheless be reluctant to participate in the process. Excessive self-interest may cause individuals to focus primarily on personal benefits rather than collective institutional objectives, thereby negatively affecting organizational performance.

Fear of Losing Power or Control

In higher education institutions, some lecturers, particularly those in managerial positions, may fear losing their positions or influence if they share their knowledge. From the "knowledge is power" perspective, some individuals may perceive knowledge sharing with colleagues or subordinates as a potential loss of power or control.

Fear of Ideas or Knowledge Being Used without Attribution

Another potential barrier to knowledge sharing is the perception that ideas or knowledge shared with colleagues may be used without proper recognition or attribution. Consequently, some lecturers may withhold their knowledge. Such behaviour may limit the collective development and utilization of knowledge within the institution.

Knowledge Hoarding

Khalil and Shea (2012) indicated that individuals' unwillingness to share knowledge constitutes a significant barrier to knowledge sharing. Knowledge hoarding may be regarded as a natural human tendency in some circumstances. Wendling, Oliveira, and Macada (2013) noted that individuals may hoard knowledge because they perceive that sharing it could contribute to the development of others.

Personal Relationships

Relationships among members, particularly those belonging to different teams or units, can influence knowledge-sharing practices. Wendling, Oliveira, and Macada (2013) noted that interpersonal relationships may constitute either a facilitator or a barrier to knowledge sharing. Rangamiztousi and Tse Kian (2012) further indicated that members need cooperative relationships in order to share knowledge effectively with their colleagues.

Motivation to Share Knowledge

Lack of motivation is another significant barrier to knowledge sharing. Velmurugan, Narayanasamy, and Rasiah (2010) observed that motivating individuals to participate in knowledge-sharing activities can be challenging. Appropriate incentives and recognition may therefore be necessary to encourage individuals to share knowledge.

Organizational Challenges

Investment or Financial Support

Financial constraints can affect knowledge-sharing activities among lecturers. Jeenger and Kant (2013) indicated that knowledge-sharing practices facilitated by ICTs are necessary for lecturers because effective knowledge sharing may be difficult without adequate technological infrastructure and financial support.

Goals and Strategy

Jeenger and Kant (2013) argued that knowledge-sharing activities that are not aligned with organizational or academic processes may constitute a challenge. Knowledge-sharing activities should therefore be linked to the objectives of lecturers and the broader goals of the institution in order to enhance organizational performance and competitiveness.

Organisational Structure

Wendling, Oliveira, and Macada (2013) indicated that the way organisations are structured can constitute a barrier to effective knowledge sharing. Organizational structures are not always easy to change in the short or medium term, particularly where they involve established institutional arrangements and reporting relationships.

Communication

Communication is central to the process of sharing knowledge between individuals. Lindsey (2011) described a knowledge-sharing transaction as a form of communication involving the transfer of knowledge from one individual or group to another. Effective communication is therefore essential for facilitating knowledge exchange among lecturers.

Management Support

Lack of managerial direction and leadership can limit knowledge-sharing practices. Management is therefore one of the critical elements for successful knowledge sharing. Jeenger and Kant (2013) argued that management should actively participate by providing support and taking appropriate measures to facilitate effective knowledge sharing.

Technological Challenges

Knowledge sharing increasingly occurs online and virtually through ICTs. Consequently, technological factors can also constitute barriers to effective knowledge sharing. Many knowledge-sharing activities depend on reliable ICT infrastructure. Velmurugan, Narayanasamy, and Rasiah (2010) noted that ICTs can also constitute a challenge when inadequate infrastructure restricts the use and sharing of knowledge among lecturers.

Technology is an important factor contributing to globalization and societal advancement. Contemporary technological developments have made many activities easier and more convenient. However, in some institutional settings, these opportunities remain underutilized because of inadequate infrastructure, limited access, or insufficient technical capacity.

Types of Knowledge Shared by Lecturers in the Universities, the respondents were asked to indicate the types of knowledge shared among lecturers in the universities under study. Their responses are presented and discussed in Table 1.2.

Table 2: Types of Knowledge Shared among Lecturers in the Universities

Types of Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Tacit Knowledge		
Skills in teaching techniques	307	95.0%
Experience in conference attendance	297	92.0%
Know-how on how to write an article	294	91.0%
Expertise in web design	279	86.4%
Information on how to deal with intuition	269	83.3%
Innovations in knowledge adaptation	262	81.1%
New work-sharing processes	259	80.2%
Expert suggestions	254	78.6%
Problems encountered and solutions	239	26.0%
Other tacit knowledge	230	71.2%
Explicit Knowledge		
Expert suggestions	310	96.0%
Problems encountered and solutions	300	92.9%
Newly learned work processes	288	89.2%
Innovations in knowledge-sharing strategies	279	86.4%
Research publications	274	84.8%
Technical reports	274	84.8%
Circular letters	272	84.2%
Books and bulletins	253	78.3%
Manual for student orientation and use of the library	209	64.7%

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that lecturers shared different forms of both tacit and explicit knowledge in the universities under study. The findings show that tacit knowledge was shared through various forms, including skills in teaching techniques, experience gained from conference attendance, know-how on how to write scholarly articles, expertise in web design, knowledge of how to deal with intuition, innovations in knowledge adaptation, new work-sharing processes, expert suggestions, and knowledge relating to problems encountered and their solutions.

The findings further indicate that explicit knowledge was shared through expert suggestions; knowledge of problems encountered and their solutions, newly learned work processes, innovations in knowledge-sharing strategies, research publications, technical reports, circular letters, books and bulletins, and manuals for student orientation and library use.

The results therefore demonstrate that lecturers in the universities under study engaged in the sharing of both tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge was mainly shared through personal experience, skills, expertise, innovations, and practical knowledge, while explicit knowledge was

shared through documented and codified forms such as publications, reports, circulars, books, bulletins, and manuals.

The findings suggest that knowledge sharing among lecturers is not restricted to formal documentation. Rather, lecturers also exchange knowledge derived from their experiences, expertise, skills, and practical engagement with academic activities. This indicates the coexistence and complementary nature of tacit and explicit knowledge within the academic environment.

Inhibitors of Knowledge-Sharing Practices in the Universities

Respondents were also asked to identify factors that inhibit knowledge-sharing practices in the universities. Their responses are presented in Table 1.3.

Table 3: Inhibitors of Knowledge-Sharing Practices in the Universities

Inhibitors	Yes, Frequency	Yes, %	No, Frequency	No, %
Inadequate management support	147	45.5%	176	54.5%
Problems with organizational culture	98	30.3%	225	69.7%
Loss of knowledge from staff through defection and retirement	94	29.1%	229	70.9%
Lack of synergy among knowledge-creating practitioners	93	28.8%	229	70.9%
Lack of trust	119	36.8%	204	63.2%
Poor leadership	106	32.8%	217	67.2%
Lack of encouragement for creativity and innovation	128	39.6%	195	60.4%
Lack of incentives, motivation and rewards	138	42.7%	185	57.3%
Improper planning, design, coordination and evaluation	109	33.7%	323	100%

Table 3 shows the factors identified by respondents as inhibitors of knowledge-sharing practices in the universities. Inadequate management support was identified by 147 (45.5%) respondents. This was followed by lack of incentives, motivation and rewards, identified by 138 (42.7%) respondents, and lack of encouragement for creativity and innovation, identified by 128 (39.6%) respondents.

Lack of trust was identified by 119 (36.8%) respondents, while improper planning, design, coordination and evaluation was identified by 109 (33.7%). Similarly, 106 (32.8%) respondents identified poor leadership as a barrier to knowledge sharing. Problems associated with organizational culture were reported by 98 (30.3%) respondents, while loss of knowledge resulting from staff defection and retirement was identified by 94 (29.1%) respondents. Lack of synergy among knowledge-creating practitioners was identified by 93 (28.8%) respondents. Finally, 29 (9.0%) respondents identified other factors as inhibitors of knowledge sharing.

Overall, the findings indicate that inadequate management support and lack of incentives, motivation and rewards were among the most prominent inhibitors of knowledge-sharing practices. This suggests that institutional support, effective leadership, appropriate motivation, and recognition of knowledge-sharing efforts are important for strengthening knowledge-sharing practices among lecturers.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that lecturers in the universities under study shared both tacit and explicit knowledge. The forms of tacit knowledge shared included teaching skills, experiences gained

from conference attendance, knowledge of article writing, web-design expertise, knowledge derived from intuition, innovations in knowledge adaptation, new work-sharing processes, expert suggestions, and knowledge of problems encountered and their solutions.

Similarly, the findings showed that explicit knowledge was shared through expert suggestions, problems encountered and their solutions, newly learned work processes, innovations in knowledge-sharing strategies, research publications, technical reports, circular letters, books and bulletins, and manuals for student orientation and library use.
The extensive sharing of both forms of knowledge suggests that lecturers rely on a combination of personal experience and documented knowledge in carrying out their academic activities. Tacit knowledge enables lecturers to transfer practical skills, expertise, experiences, and problem-solving strategies to their colleagues, while explicit knowledge facilitates the documentation, preservation, retrieval, and dissemination of information.

The findings further revealed several factors that inhibit knowledge sharing among lecturers. These include inadequate management support, lack of incentives, motivation and rewards, lack of encouragement for creativity and innovation, lack of trust, improper planning and coordination, poor leadership, organizational culture, loss of knowledge through staff defection and retirement, and lack of synergy among knowledge-creating practitioners.

The prominence of inadequate management support suggests that institutional leadership plays an important role in establishing an environment conducive to knowledge sharing. Where management does not provide adequate support, lecturers may have limited motivation or opportunities to share their knowledge.

Similarly, lack of incentives, motivation and rewards may discourage lecturers from investing time and effort in knowledge-sharing activities. Knowledge sharing often requires individuals to devote time to mentoring colleagues, participating in academic discussions, documenting experiences, attending professional activities, and sharing expertise. Appropriate recognition and incentives may therefore encourage lecturers to participate more actively in such activities.

The finding relating to lack of trust also suggests that interpersonal relationships are important to knowledge-sharing practices. Lecturers may be reluctant to share their knowledge when they do not trust colleagues or when they fear that their ideas may be misrepresented or used without proper recognition.
Poor leadership, inadequate planning and coordination, and organizational culture may similarly restrict opportunities for knowledge exchange. Universities therefore need to develop institutional structures and practices that encourage collaboration, communication, trust, innovation, and knowledge sharing.

The findings further indicate that staff movement, defection, and retirement can result in the loss of valuable institutional knowledge. This underscores the importance of documenting and preserving both tacit and explicit knowledge before experienced lecturers leave the institution. Effective knowledge-retention mechanisms can help universities preserve institutional memory and ensure continuity of academic activities.

Conclusion

This study examined tacit and explicit knowledge sharing among lecturers in universities in Kano State. The study specifically examined the types of knowledge shared by lecturers and the inhibitors associated with knowledge-sharing practices.

The findings established that lecturers shared different forms of both tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge was shared through teaching skills, professional experiences, expertise, innovations, practical knowledge, expert suggestions, and knowledge of problems and their solutions. Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, was shared through research publications, technical reports, circular letters, books, bulletins, manuals,

newly learned work processes, and documented knowledge-sharing strategies.

The study also established that several factors inhibited knowledge sharing among lecturers. These included inadequate management support, lack of incentives, motivation and rewards, lack of encouragement for creativity and innovation, lack of trust, improper planning and coordination, poor leadership, problems with organizational culture, loss of knowledge through staff defection and retirement, and lack of synergy among knowledge-creating practitioners.

The study therefore concludes that effective knowledge sharing among lecturers requires an institutional environment that promotes trust, collaboration, leadership support, motivation, recognition, creativity, innovation, and appropriate mechanisms for capturing and preserving knowledge. Strengthening these areas could improve the sharing and utilization of knowledge and consequently enhance academic activities in universities in Kano State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. University management should establish clear policies and institutional mechanisms that encourage lecturers to share knowledge and expertise with their colleagues.
2. Lecturers who actively contribute to knowledge-sharing activities should be appropriately recognized through awards, commendations, professional development opportunities, or other institutional incentives.
3. Management should create an enabling environment in which lecturers are encouraged to exchange innovative ideas, teaching strategies, research experiences, and solutions to academic problems.
4. Academic departments and faculties should organise seminars, workshops, communities of practice, mentoring activities, and other collaborative programmes that promote interpersonal interaction and knowledge exchange.
5. Academic leaders should demonstrate commitment to knowledge-sharing activities and ensure that knowledge-sharing initiatives are properly planned, coordinated, implemented, and evaluated.
6. Institutions should develop systematic approaches for capturing and preserving valuable knowledge possessed by lecturers, particularly before staff members retire, resign, transfer, or leave the institution.
7. Knowledge sharing should be incorporated into institutional practices and academic activities so that lecturers perceive it as an essential component of teaching, research, community service, and institutional development.

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