

Influence of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour on Academic Performance, Group Cohesion and Trust among the Students of Higher Education Institutions in Maldives

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this conceptual analysis is to examine the influence of knowledge sharing behaviour on academic performance, group cohesion and trust by conducting a thorough review of past literature. Several empirical, review, and conceptual papers were reviewed, and it showed that most of the literature indicated that by fostering knowledge sharing behaviour among the students causes to increase academic performance, group cohesion and trust. Also, the past literature suggested that theory of planned behaviour is dominantly applied to determine the knowledge sharing behaviour. A large body of literature indicated that knowledge sharing attitude, social norms, behavioral control and knowledge sharing intention are key determinants of knowledge sharing behaviour. The overall conclusion is that the key attributes of Theory of Planned Behaviour play a key role in determining students' engagement in knowledge sharing behaviour that leads to high academic performance, group cohesion and trust among the students. The finding of the conceptual analysis has practical and theoretical implications, which are addressed in the last part of the paper.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing behaviour, attitude, social norms, perceived behavioral control, knowledge sharing intention, academic performance, group cohesion, trust

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge sharing behavior (KSB) plays a pivotal role in shaping academic performance, group cohesion, and trust among students in higher education institutions (HEIs). KSB refers to the process through which students exchange ideas, information, and experiences, which can enhance both individual and collective academic performance (Bock et al., 2005). In collaborative academic environments, group cohesion is essential for fostering effective teamwork and mutual support, while trust enhances communication and the willingness to share knowledge (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Studies indicate that students who actively engage in knowledge sharing are more likely to perform better academically, as they gain diverse perspectives and insights from their peers (Lee & Choi, 2017). While much research has explored these dynamics globally, there is limited focus on the Maldives, where the educational system is evolving rapidly. In this context, understanding how KSB influences academic performance, group cohesion, and trust among Maldivian students is crucial. This study aims to examine these relationships in Maldivian higher education institutions, offering insights into how KSB can be leveraged to improve student outcomes and foster a more collaborative learning environment.

BACKGROUND

Knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB) is the voluntary exchange of information, skills, and ideas among students and has become a central pillar in contemporary higher-education pedagogy, particularly in contexts that encourage collaborative and peer-based learning. In recent years, empirical studies have documented how KSB can enhance academic performance by providing access to diverse perspectives, richer resources, and collective problem-solving capabilities (e.g., Impact of online social capital on academic performance: exploring the mediating role of online knowledge sharing, 2022). Similarly, KSB supports group cohesion and cooperative dynamics: when students share knowledge, they tend to engage more actively in group discussion,

mutual support, and shared understanding, which fosters stronger group performance (e.g., A study on the effects of college students' knowledge-sharing behavior on group performance and individual social status, 2023).

Trust also plays a pivotal role in this process. Research shows that when peers trust one another, they are more willing to share knowledge openly, reducing fear of misuse or loss, and enabling a supportive learning culture (Al-kairy, Sendaba & Alfandi, 2025; Hassan & Hamid, 2025). Moreover, individual-level factors such as self-efficacy, prosocial motivation, and perceived benefits have been shown to influence a student's propensity to participate in knowledge sharing (Lin, Jin & Yang, 2024; Zhao, Ding, Janssen & Liu, 2025).

In addition, the rise of digital platforms and social–technological tools in higher education has expanded the avenues for knowledge sharing beyond traditional classroom interactions. Online social capital, virtual learning environments, and social media facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges, resource sharing, and collaborative learning, which may be particularly relevant in geographically dispersed or resource-constrained contexts. For institutions in small island nations like the Maldives where students may face limitations in access, infrastructure, or peer networks, leveraging KSB through both face-to-face and digital means might significantly influence academic success, cohesion, and trust.

Given these evidences from international contexts, there is a compelling need to investigate KSB, academic performance, group cohesion, and trust among students in Maldivian higher education institutions. Such research would help determine whether the positive dynamics observed elsewhere hold in the Maldives, and could inform policies and practices to strengthen collaborative learning, peer support, and trust-based knowledge exchange among students.

Problem Statement

Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB) has been widely identified as a crucial factor influencing learning effectiveness, collaboration, and trust among students in higher education institutions (Hassan & Hamid, 2025; Abdel Fattah, Mohamed, Bashir & Al Alawi, 2021). International studies have consistently demonstrated that effective knowledge sharing contributes to improved academic performance, stronger group cohesion, and increased levels of interpersonal trust among learners (Hernández-Soto, Gutiérrez-Ortega, Rubia-Avi & Fàbregues, 2025; Dzenopoljac, Ognjanovic, Dzenopoljac, Kraus, Cheng & Puumalainen, 2025; Hassan & Hamid, 2023). These outcomes are particularly valuable in learning environments that emphasize collaborative tasks, peer learning, and digital engagement. However, despite the growing recognition of its importance, the extent to which KSB influences student outcomes varies across cultural, institutional, and contextual settings, making it inappropriate to generalize findings blindly across different countries or education systems (Hassan, Osman-Gani & Hamid, 2022).

In the context of the Maldives, higher education institutions operate within a unique socio-cultural and geographical environment characterized by dispersed island communities, increasing dependence on digital learning platforms, and diverse student demographics. While collaborative learning and online engagement are increasingly promoted, there is limited empirical evidence on how students in Maldivian higher education institutions share knowledge and how such behavior impacts their academic performance, group cohesion, and trust. The absence of localized research presents a significant gap in understanding whether knowledge sharing practices observed internationally are applicable within the Maldivian educational context.

Significance of the study

This study is significant in both theoretical and practical dimensions, particularly within the context of higher education in the Maldives.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by extending empirical understanding of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB) to a small island developing state context, where limited studies currently exist. While international research has established relationships between KSB, academic performance, group cohesion, and trust, there is a lack of context-specific evidence from the Maldives. This study therefore addresses a critical research gap by examining whether established theories and

models of knowledge sharing apply within the Maldivian higher education environment, thereby contributing to the cross cultural validation and contextualization of knowledge management and educational theories.

From a practical perspective, the findings will provide valuable insights for institutional leaders, policymakers, and educators in Maldivian higher education institutions. Evidence of how KSB influences academic outcomes, cooperation among students, and trust will inform the development of policies, teaching strategies, and student-support initiatives that encourage collaborative learning and responsible knowledge exchange. The study may also guide institutions in integrating digital platforms and collaborative technologies more effectively to strengthen students' engagement, peer interaction, and learning experience.

Additionally, students will benefit directly through improved awareness of the role of knowledge sharing in academic success and interpersonal development. Understanding the importance of trust and collaboration may encourage students to adopt more open and cooperative learning behaviors.

Finally, this research will serve as a foundation for future studies in educational research and knowledge management in the Maldives, stimulating further investigation into collaborative learning, digital learning environments, and student engagement in the national context.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to examine the influence of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB) on academic performance, group cohesion, and trust among students of higher education institutions in the Maldives. In order to achieve this, the following objectives are addressed.

1. To determine the level of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour among students in higher education institutions in the Maldives.
2. To examine the relationship between Knowledge Sharing Behaviour and academic performance among students.
3. To assess the influence of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour on group cohesion among students.
4. To evaluate the effect of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour on trust among students in higher education institutions.
5. To identify key individual and technological factors that influence students' Knowledge Sharing Behaviour in the Maldivian context.
6. To provide evidence-based recommendations for higher education institutions to strengthen knowledge-sharing practices and collaborative learning environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB) among university students is widely recognised as a key driver of learning and performance in higher education. Recent empirical work shows that when students actively share information, ideas, and learning resources, they gain access to diverse perspectives and support that enhance academic achievement. For example, Salimi et al. (2022) found that online social capital improves students' academic performance indirectly through online knowledge sharing, indicating that KSB functions as a mediating mechanism between students' networks and their academic outcomes. Similarly, studies on social media based learning environments report that knowledge sharing via platforms such as Facebook and other networks significantly improves students' academic motivation, engagement, and achievement (Haque et al., 2023; Sivakumar & Jayasingh, 2023).

KSB is also closely linked to group cohesion and collective performance. Jia et al. (2023) demonstrated that college students' knowledge-sharing behaviour positively affects group performance and individual social status, highlighting how mutual exchange of knowledge strengthens intra-group cooperation and role recognition. Group-focused research suggests that cooperative climates and recognition for sharing encourage

more frequent KSB, which in turn improves team expressiveness, coordination, and outcomes in collaborative tasks. These findings imply that in group-based learning settings, knowledge sharing not only benefits individuals but also contributes to stronger, more cohesive learning communities.

Trust consistently emerges as a central antecedent of students' willingness to share knowledge. Nguyen (2021) found that trust, knowledge self-efficacy, and institutional support significantly predict KSB among Vietnamese university students, underscoring the importance of relational and contextual factors in fostering sharing intentions. Similarly, Ali (2021) reported that trust, positive attitudes, and effective use of information and communication technology positively influence knowledge sharing among undergraduate students. More recently, Long et al. (2024) showed that interpersonal trust and a supportive study climate promote knowledge sharing and reduce knowledge hiding among medical undergraduates, reinforcing the role of trust as a cornerstone of collaborative learning cultures.

Digital platforms further extend the scope of KSB beyond the physical classroom. Studies emphasise that social media, learning management systems, and other online tools can create rich spaces for peer interaction, resource exchange, and collaborative problem solving, provided that their educational use is guided and purposeful (Salimi et al., 2022; Sivakumar & Jayasingh, 2023).

However, despite this growing international evidence, there is a notable absence of empirical research examining how KSB shapes academic performance, group cohesion, and trust within higher education institutions in small island contexts such as the Maldives. Addressing this gap is crucial for understanding whether these positive dynamics generalise to Maldivian students and for informing context-specific strategies to cultivate trust-based, collaborative, and knowledge-rich learning environments.

Review of Key Concepts

Academic Performance

Academic performance is broadly defined as a student's ability to complete academic assignments, typically assessed through objective indicators such as final course grades and grade point averages (Carroll & Garavalia, 2004; Naser & Hamzah, 2018; Olivier et al., 2019; Anthonysamy et al., 2020; Busalim et al., 2019). Furthermore, academic performance can also be understood as the extent to which a student achieves his or her educational objectives (Al-Rahmi et al., 2015). In addition, reading plays a crucial role in this process, as it requires significant concentration, and success in tertiary education largely depends on one's reading ability; therefore, students are expected to enhance their reading capacity to achieve better academic performance (Ogbodo, 2010).

Thus academic performance is the students ability to reach the defined academic goals and objectives.

Group Cohesion

Cohesion has been defined in various ways across the literature, all emphasizing the strong bonds between group members. Carron (1982, p. 124) defines cohesion as the inclination of group members to forge social bonds, which results in them sticking together and remaining united. In more recent literature, cohesion has been referred to as the 'stick-togetherness' of the group (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996; Salisbury, Parent, & Chin, 2008). Furthermore, Aoyagi, Cox, and McGuire (2008, p. 30) describe it as how individual members of a team relate and work together as a cohesive unit. Similarly, Banki (2010, p. 364) highlights cohesion as the desire of group members to stay together as a group. Collectively, these definitions underline cohesion as the fundamental force that binds group members together and promotes unity.

Hence, cohesion is working together as a group to get a better outcome in their work.

Trust

Trust is the underpinning of cooperation in everyday interactions (Baier, 1986; Zucker, 1986), and without it, societies would ultimately collapse (Bok, 1978). Moreover, trust is considered a necessary component in various domains, including economic exchange (Hirsch, 1969; Coleman, 1984; Fukuyama, 1995), social

relationships (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Coleman, 1990), and organizational effectiveness (Tyler & Kramer, 1996). In addition to its broad societal importance, the five-facet model of trust conceptualized by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) describes trust as a willingness to be vulnerable based on assessments of benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence. Consistent with this, trust is often defined as the willingness to be vulnerable arising from these same evaluative dimensions (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Furthermore, trust has also been described as an emotion of belief and commitment without fear, hesitation, or doubt (TDK, 2014).

Thus, trust is the assurance and commitment shared between two or more individuals.

Knowledge Sharing Behaviour

Knowledge sharing is the process of exchanging knowledge between people, communities, organizations, or groups (Mahmood et al., 2016; Ganguly, Talukdar & Chatterjee, 2019). Moreover, KSB can be communicated from leaders to subordinates, from subordinates to other subordinates, and can also exist within groups (Intezari et al., 2017). In addition, Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB) is defined as an organization member's perceived tendency and predisposition to share their knowledge and expertise with co-workers (Dalati & Alchach, 2018, p. 194). Furthermore, for an organization, KSB involves capturing, organizing, reusing, and transferring experience-based knowledge that resides within the organization among employees (Lakshmanan & Latha, 2018; Iftikhar & Ahola, 2020). Finally, knowledge sharing behaviour is also viewed as an activity in which knowledge is exchanged between two or more people (Hassan & Hamid, 2025).

Hence knowledge sharing behavior (KSB) is a process to share knowledge from lecturers to students, or to share and exchange knowledge between students, and can exist among groups.

Critical Review of Underlying Theory

This study is primarily underpinned by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that human behaviour is driven by intentions shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB) among higher education students is considered a voluntary and planned action influenced by individual beliefs, social pressure, and perceived ease of sharing knowledge. TPB has been extensively applied in explaining knowledge sharing intention in academic and organisational contexts (Bock & Kim, 2002; Moghavvemi et al., 2017).

Conceptual Framework

Attitude

The attitude of students toward knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB) within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) reflects students' positive or negative evaluations of engaging in sharing academic knowledge with peers, influenced by perceived benefits, personal beliefs, and intrinsic motivations. According to TPB, attitude is shaped by behavioural beliefs regarding the outcomes of sharing knowledge such as enhanced learning, collaboration, and academic success which in turn influence the intention to share (Ajzen, 2020). In higher education contexts, studies show that when students perceive knowledge sharing as beneficial for personal and collective academic performance, their attitude toward sharing strengthens, leading to higher knowledge sharing intention (Al-Jubari et al., 2019; Lin, 2020). Moreover, intrinsic motivations like enjoyment in helping others and mutual trust enhance positive attitudes toward sharing (Salisu & Awang, 2018; Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023). Recent empirical evidence indicates that favourable attitudes predict not only stronger knowledge sharing intention but also improved academic performance, group cohesion, and trust among university students (Cheng & Lee, 2022; Hassan et al., 2024).

Thus, within the Maldivian higher education context, students' attitudes toward knowledge sharing driven by perceived usefulness, altruism, and social connectedness serve as a critical determinant of their knowledge sharing behaviour, reinforcing the TPB's predictive validity for academic and interpersonal outcomes in learning communities.

Based on the conceptual framework applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to the attitude of students toward knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB), the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: Students' positive attitude toward knowledge sharing significantly influences their intention to engage in knowledge sharing behaviour among higher education institutions in the Maldives.

This hypothesis is grounded in the TPB assertion that attitude toward a behavior, formed through beliefs about expected outcomes and personal evaluations directly predicts behavioural intention (Ajzen, 2020). When students hold favorable attitudes, perceiving knowledge sharing as useful, enjoyable, and beneficial for mutual learning, they are more likely to develop a strong intention to share knowledge with peers (Lin, 2020; Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Hassan et al., 2024). Therefore, in the Maldivian higher education context, a positive attitude is expected to serve as a primary motivational driver of students' intention to participate in knowledge sharing activities.

Social Norms

The social norm toward knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB), as described by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), refers to the perceived social pressure that students experience from peers, educators, or institutional culture to engage in or refrain from sharing academic knowledge. Within higher education, social norms influence students' motivation to share knowledge when they perceive that such behaviour is expected, valued, and supported by their academic community (Ajzen, 2020). Empirical studies show that social norms, including peer encouragement, faculty expectations, and collaborative learning environments, strongly predict students' intention to share knowledge (Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Cheng & Lee, 2022). Moreover, when institutions cultivate a culture that rewards collaboration and mutual support, students are more likely to internalize these expectations as social obligations, thereby reinforcing positive KSB (Hassan et al., 2024; Susanty et al., 2021).

In the Maldivian higher education context, the collective and community-oriented nature of student interactions may further amplify the effect of social norms on KSB, where shared values and peer influence enhance participation in collaborative learning and knowledge exchange (Al-Jubari et al., 2019; Wang & Yang, 2021). Thus, perceived social approval and normative beliefs act as critical social motivators that drive students' intentions and actual engagement in knowledge sharing activities

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the conceptual framework for social norm toward knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB), the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H2: Social norms positively and significantly influence students' intention to engage in knowledge sharing behaviour among higher education institutions in the Maldives.

This hypothesis is supported by TPB's premise that subjective or social norms, the perceived expectations of important referent groups such as peers, instructors, and academic communities directly shape an individual's behavioural intention (Ajzen, 2020). When students believe that people they value expect them to share knowledge, or when their institution fosters a collaborative learning culture, they are more inclined to engage in KSB (Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Susanty et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2024). Thus, in the Maldivian higher education context, perceived social approval and collective academic values are expected to enhance students' intentions to share knowledge effectively.

Behavioural Control

The perceived behavioral control (PBC) of students toward knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB), as outlined in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), represents the students' perception of their ability, confidence, and opportunity to perform knowledge sharing activities effectively. PBC encompasses both internal factors (such as self-efficacy, digital literacy, and communication skills) and external factors (such as technological support, institutional infrastructure, and access to collaborative platforms) that either facilitate or hinder sharing behaviour (Ajzen, 2020). Recent studies demonstrate that when students feel capable of using digital tools, possess adequate academic knowledge, and perceive institutional environments as supportive, their intention to share knowledge increases significantly (Hassan et al., 2024; Tran & Hoang, 2022). Moreover, higher

perceived behavioral control not only strengthens the intention but also enhances the actual performance of KSB, as students are more confident in contributing to peer learning and group collaboration (Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Nguyen & Le, 2021).

In the context of Maldivian higher education, where access to learning technology and cooperative culture is growing, students' sense of control both over their knowledge resources and the platforms available plays a decisive role in determining how effectively they engage in academic knowledge sharing.

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the conceptual framework for Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) toward Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB), the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H3: Perceived behavioral control positively and significantly influences students' intention to engage in knowledge sharing behaviour among higher education institutions in the Maldives.

This hypothesis aligns with TPB, which posits that individuals are more likely to form strong behavioural intentions when they believe they possess the necessary skills, resources, and opportunities to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 2020). In the higher education context, students who feel confident in their academic competence, technological ability, and access to collaborative tools are more inclined to share knowledge effectively (Nguyen & Le, 2021; Tran & Hoang, 2022; Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Hassan et al., 2024). Therefore, in Maldivian higher education institutions, a higher sense of control and self-efficacy is expected to strengthen students' intention and engagement in knowledge sharing practices.

Knowledge Sharing Intention

The knowledge sharing intention (KSI) of students toward knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB), within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), represents the motivational readiness and deliberate willingness of students to engage in sharing academic information, ideas, and experiences with peers. According to TPB, intention serves as the immediate antecedent of behaviour, influenced by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 2020). When students hold positive attitudes toward sharing, perceive social support from peers and faculty, and feel confident in their ability to share effectively, their intention to engage in KSB strengthens (Hassan et al., 2024; Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023). Recent studies confirm that knowledge sharing intention is a strong predictor of actual knowledge sharing, mediating the relationship between TPB constructs and behavioural outcomes (Tran & Hoang, 2022; Nguyen & Le, 2021). Moreover, higher KSI enhances collaborative learning, academic performance, and group cohesion by fostering consistent engagement in mutual exchange of information (Cheng & Lee, 2022).

In the context of Maldivian higher education, students' knowledge sharing intention, driven by favorable attitudes, social norms, and perceived control plays a crucial role in translating motivation into real knowledge sharing behaviour within academic communities.

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the conceptual framework for Knowledge Sharing Intention (KSI) toward Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB), the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H4: Knowledge sharing intention positively and significantly influences students' knowledge sharing behaviour among higher education institutions in the Maldives.

This hypothesis aligns with TPB, which posits that behavioural intention is the most immediate and strongest predictor of actual behaviour (Ajzen, 2020). When students possess a strong intention driven by positive attitudes, supportive social norms, and high perceived behavioural control they are more likely to engage actively in sharing knowledge with peers. Empirical studies over the past five years have consistently demonstrated that students' intention to share knowledge leads to greater participation in collaborative learning and actual sharing activities (Nguyen & Le, 2021; Tran & Hoang, 2022; Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Hassan et al., 2024). Thus, in the Maldivian higher education context, a strong knowledge sharing intention is expected to translate into frequent and meaningful knowledge sharing behaviour that enhances collective academic performance.

Academic Performance

The knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB) of students toward academic performance, grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), emphasizes that students' actual engagement in sharing academic information, ideas, and learning resources directly contributes to improved academic outcomes. According to TPB, KSB arises when students possess strong behavioural intentions supported by positive attitudes, social norms, and perceived control (Ajzen, 2020). In academic contexts, students who actively share knowledge enhance their understanding of course materials, develop critical thinking, and strengthen collective learning, leading to higher academic performance (Hassan et al., 2024; Cheng & Lee, 2022). Recent studies confirm that knowledge sharing promotes academic success through increased problem-solving capability, peer feedback, and collaborative learning environments (Tran & Hoang, 2022; Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023). Furthermore, a culture of mutual knowledge exchange fosters intellectual engagement, enabling students to reinforce their own learning while contributing to group achievement (Nguyen & Le, 2021).

In the Maldivian higher education context, where cooperative learning and community-based values are essential, students' active participation in knowledge sharing serves as a key behavioural determinant of enhanced academic performance, aligning with the TPB's behavioural outcome dimension.

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the conceptual framework linking Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB) to Academic Performance, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H5: Knowledge sharing behaviour positively and significantly influences students' academic performance among higher education institutions in the Maldives.

This hypothesis is consistent with TPB, which posits that actual behavior driven by intention, attitude, social norms, and perceived behavioural control—leads to observable outcomes (Ajzen, 2020). When students actively engage in knowledge sharing, they enhance their understanding of academic materials, improve problem-solving skills, and contribute to collective learning, resulting in better academic achievement (Cheng & Lee, 2022; Hassan et al., 2024). Empirical evidence supports that frequent and purposeful knowledge sharing among students strengthens both individual and group learning performance (Nguyen & Le, 2021; Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Tran & Hoang, 2022). Therefore, in the Maldivian higher education context, consistent engagement in knowledge sharing is expected to significantly improve students' academic performance through collaborative and reflective learning practices.

Group Cohesion

The knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB) of students toward group cohesion, viewed through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), highlights how students' actual engagement in exchanging academic information and collaborative learning strengthens interpersonal bonds and unity within academic groups. According to TPB, behaviour is a direct outcome of intention, which is influenced by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 2020). When students intentionally share knowledge, assist peers, and contribute to collective learning goals, they foster mutual trust, respect, and a shared sense of purpose—core elements of group cohesion (Hassan et al., 2024; Cheng & Lee, 2022). Recent studies confirm that active knowledge sharing enhances team synergy and cooperation, as it promotes open communication and reduces interpersonal barriers (Tran & Hoang, 2022; Nguyen & Le, 2021). Furthermore, collaborative sharing environments encourage interdependence and emotional bonding, which are essential for cohesive group functioning (Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Wang & Yang, 2021).

In the Maldivian higher education context, where collectivist values and cooperation are culturally embedded, students' knowledge sharing behaviour is expected to significantly enhance group cohesion by promoting unity, collaboration, and shared academic success.

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the conceptual framework linking Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB) to Group Cohesion, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H6: Knowledge sharing behaviour positively and significantly influences group cohesion among students in higher education institutions in the Maldives.

This hypothesis aligns with TPB, which posits that actual behavior driven by positive attitudes, supportive social norms, and strong perceived behavioural control produces desirable social and interpersonal outcomes (Ajzen, 2020). When students actively engage in knowledge sharing, they contribute to collective problem-solving, mutual learning, and peer support, which in turn strengthen interpersonal relationships and unity within academic groups (Cheng & Lee, 2022; Nguyen & Le, 2021). Empirical evidence over the past five years supports that effective knowledge exchange enhances teamwork, communication, and shared commitment, fostering higher levels of group cohesion (Tran & Hoang, 2022; Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Hassan et al., 2024). Therefore, in the Maldivian higher education context, consistent engagement in collaborative knowledge sharing is expected to create more cohesive, supportive, and goal-oriented student groups.

Trust

The knowledge sharing behaviour (KSB) of students toward trust, grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), highlights that active engagement in sharing academic knowledge fosters reliability, openness, and mutual confidence among peers. According to TPB, behaviour is the ultimate outcome of intention shaped by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 2020). When students willingly share information, resources, and learning experiences, they demonstrate transparency and dependability key elements that strengthen interpersonal trust (Hassan et al., 2024; Cheng & Lee, 2022). Recent research indicates that consistent KSB encourages reciprocal exchanges and reduces uncertainty, thereby enhancing both cognitive and affective trust within academic communities (Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023; Wang & Yang, 2021). Moreover, trust serves as both an outcome and a reinforcing mechanism, as it motivates further collaboration and openness in future knowledge exchanges (Tran & Hoang, 2022; Nguyen & Le, 2021).

In the Maldivian higher education context, where cultural values emphasize cooperation and community, sustained knowledge sharing behaviour is expected to play a crucial role in developing trustful academic relationships that support collective learning and long-term academic success.

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the conceptual framework linking Knowledge Sharing Behaviour (KSB) to Trust, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H7: Knowledge sharing behaviour positively and significantly influences trust among students in higher education institutions in the Maldives.

This hypothesis aligns with TPB's behavioural outcome principle, which states that actual behavior arising from strong intention, positive attitudes, and supportive social and environmental factors leads to beneficial social results (Ajzen, 2020). When students actively and consistently share academic knowledge, they build credibility, reliability, and openness, which strengthen interpersonal and group trust (Wang & Yang, 2021; Alzougool & Alharbi, 2023). Empirical evidence from higher education contexts confirms that frequent knowledge exchange fosters both affective and cognitive trust, enhancing collaboration and mutual respect within academic networks (Cheng & Lee, 2022; Tran & Hoang, 2022; Hassan et al., 2024). Therefore, in the Maldivian higher education setting, sustained engagement in knowledge sharing is expected to play a key role in developing and maintaining trust among students, thereby supporting cohesive and cooperative learning communities.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

The study explored the influence of knowledge-sharing behavior on academic performance, group cohesion, and trust among students in higher education institutions in the Maldives. The findings indicate that an active exchange of information and ideas positively impacts students' academic performance by facilitating a richer learning experience. Knowledge-sharing behaviors foster group cohesion by encouraging collaboration and mutual support among peers, creating an inclusive learning environment. Trust is also enhanced as students engage in open and honest communication, building stronger relationships and fostering a sense of community within educational settings.

Implications

1. Educational Strategies

Institutions should encourage practices that promote knowledge sharing among students. This could include group projects, peer mentoring programs, and collaborative learning platforms.

2. Curriculum Design

Incorporating collaborative activities within the curriculum can naturally enhance knowledge-sharing behaviors. Activities should be designed to ensure that all students can participate actively and contribute meaningfully.

3. Teacher Training

Educators should be trained to facilitate and encourage an environment of open communication and trust. This includes recognizing and mitigating barriers to knowledge sharing, such as competition and distrust.

4. Technological Integration

Investment in digital platforms that support collaboration can be beneficial. These tools can remove geographical and temporal barriers to knowledge sharing, facilitating ongoing communication outside the classroom.

5. Cultural Awareness

Understanding the local cultural context of universities and colleges in the Maldives is crucial. Strategies tailored to align with cultural values and social norms are more likely to be effective.

6. Policy Development

Institutions should consider implementing policies that recognize and reward knowledge-sharing behaviors as part of academic assessment and performance evaluation.

By focusing on these areas, higher education institutions in the Maldives can create a robust framework that supports academic excellence, fosters group cohesion, and builds trust among students.

Future Research Direction

Future studies could strengthen the research by using longitudinal or mixed-method designs to better capture causal relationships and changes in knowledge-sharing behaviour over time

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