



Knowledge sharing among employees of publicly owned book publishing firms in Nigeria

Dr. ADEKANNBI Janet O. - First and Corresponding Author

Africa Regional Centre for Information Science, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Email: janet.adekannbi@gmail.com,

Mailing address: P.O. Box 9936, U.I. Post Office, Ibadan, Nigeria,

Telephone: +234 8033610774.

Mr. OJO Peter Olutayo – Second Author

Africa Regional Centre for Information Science, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Email: petertayo@yahoo.co.uk

Telephone: +234 8035365475

Received: 16th of October, 2021

Accepted 19th of November, 2021

Date of Publication: December, 2021

Abstract

Knowledge sharing is crucial to the success of any organization as it is needed for knowledge creation, organizational learning and performance. This is especially the case with book publishing firms where their outputs are repositories of knowledge. However, a lack of technical expertise in the publishing industry has been reported in literature which might not be unconnected with knowledgeable workers in the sector leaving, retiring or passing on with their knowledge. Moreover, little is known about knowledge sharing among employees in this industry. Hence, in order to explore and understand this behaviour, descriptive survey design was adopted to investigate knowledge sharing among employees of publicly owned book publishing firms in Nigeria. Purposive sampling was used in selecting three publicly owned book publishing firms namely, Heinemann Publishers Plc, University Press Plc and Learn Africa Plc. Using both purposive and snowballing sampling techniques, 15 employees were selected from each firm. Data was collected through face-to-face interview, digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically. Employees viewed knowledge sharing as a norm in the publishing industry since the process of book production requires team work; and knowledge sharing with subordinates reduces the burden of work on managers. Majority of the respondents would not share knowledge with colleagues from other publishing firms due to loss of competitive advantage and employee loyalty. Reciprocal benefit was the major motivating factor for knowledge sharing while others included enjoyment in helping others as well as personal and organizational reputation enhancement. Fear of loss of power, perceived pride, and competition were reported as challenges to knowledge sharing. Limiting inter-organizational knowledge sharing can restrict organizational learning and innovation which could have a negative impact on the industry's performance overtime. Leadership styles that support and encourage knowledge sharing should be promoted in this industry.

Keywords: book publishers, attitude, motivation, knowledge sharing, reciprocal benefit, Nigeria

Background to the study

Building sustainable competitive advantage by an organization largely depends not only on the knowledge and competencies of its workers (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005), but also on duplicating such core competencies across members of the organization through knowledge sharing (Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2019). Knowledge sharing is the process through which knowledge held by an individual is shared with others in a form that can be understood and used as well as contribute to the development of others and enhance the work process (Ipe, 2003). Such knowledge can be tacit (know-how, expertise and experience) or explicit (documents, templates and reports) (Nonaka, 1994). Organizations continue to realize that knowledge sharing is crucial to knowledge creation, organizational learning and performance (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). This realization is unarguably the case among book publishers.

The book publishing industry consists of knowledge workers who are intensively engaged in different knowledge activities. It is worthy of note that when an author writes a book, knowledge is shared. Also, books remain a primary means of communicating knowledge (Altbach, 1997). Therefore, knowledge sharing is critical to a publishing industry's success as it promotes faster knowledge dissemination to different sectors of an organization where such knowledge is needed. However, as shown to be the case with other

sectors, knowledge sharing among employees is not automatic as often times, individuals in an organization fear that sharing their knowledge will lead to loss of knowledge power (Davenport & Prusak, 1998), a belief that has led to the failure of many knowledge management efforts in organizations irrespective of how well they have been designed (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

Earlier studies have noted that attitude is a significant predictor of knowledge sharing (Areekkuzhiyil, 2019; Bircham-Connolly, Corner & Bowden, 2005; Bock & Kim, 2002; Connelly, 2000; Fullwood, Rowley & Delbridge, 2013). Attitude towards knowledge sharing is the degree of an individual's positive or negative feelings towards knowledge sharing (Chennamaneni, 2006). The influence of attitude towards knowledge sharing or knowledge sharing intentions and behaviour has been extensively studied using the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TRA states that behaviour of an individual is determined by intention, while intention can be influenced by attitude and subjective norms. Moreover, studies have reported on both intra and inter-organizational knowledge sharing, noting that the latter is important to achieving operational, strategic and economic performance especially in knowledge-intensive sectors such as the publishing industry (Al-Busaidi, 2020; Al-Jabri & Al-Busaidi, 2020). The influence of certain factors on attitude towards knowledge sharing has also been actively discussed and these include rewards, reciprocal benefits, organizational culture, trust and knowledge self-efficacy (Bu & Koh, 2019; Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005; Ipe, 2003; Kankanhalli, Tan & Wei, 2005; Liu, Liang, Rajagopalan, Sambamurthy & Wu, 2011). Added to these are findings from studies that have shown that pride, secrecy, perceived fear of loss of knowledge power and unwillingness of others to learn new things can pose as barriers to knowledge sharing among employees (Adekannbi & Oladeinde, 2020). Interestingly, many of these issues have been investigated in different environments including academic (Abdur-rafiu & Opesade, 2015, Adekannbi & Oladeinde, 2020; Fullwood, Rowley & Delbridge, 2013; Ohioorenaya & Eboreime, 2014), business organizations other than publishing firms (Bamgboje-Ayodele & Ellis, 2015; Lin, 2007; Olatokun & Elueze, 2012) and public service (Olatokun & Nwafor, 2012; Omotayo & Babalola, 2016). However, little is known about knowledge sharing among employees in the book publishing industry.

In Nigeria, book publishing is one of the oldest businesses in the nation's history with the first printing press established in 1846 by Rev. Hope Waddell at Calabar. The printing press was initially set up to print bibles but later progressed to producing arithmetic books. Later, Henry Townsend established another press known as Church of Missionary Society (CMS) in Abeokuta. This press was set up to print '*Iwe Iroyin*,' (a dialect newspaper), the first newspaper in Nigeria and has subsequently published thousands of other books (Adewale, 2014). However, the establishment of University College Ibadan in 1948 marked the beginning of a robust scholarly book publishing industry.

In 1952, the University Press was established as the first scholarly publishing house in West Africa. Subsequently, other leading publishers from the United Kingdom took steps to be part of the promising academia and scholarship that University College Ibadan was bound to represent. Hence, Oxford University Press, Longman, Macmillan, Heinemann and Evans, all set up offices in Ibadan, making Ibadan the pioneer city of publishing in the country, and this likely explains the large percentage of publishing firms in South West Nigeria. However, the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree which mandates the indigenisation of foreign businesses in Nigeria was promulgated in 1972. This decree which

affected all the foreign book publishing firms stipulated that Nigerian nationals must have at least 60% equity participation in the book publishing companies. Hence, foreign equity participation was reduced to 40% or less in all the foreign book publishing companies, while some also changed their names (e.g. University Press Plc formerly Oxford University Press) (Oyewo. & Tomomowo-Ayodele, 2018).

Nigeria has perhaps the largest number of book publishing firms than any African country and according to Adewale (2014), having existed for almost two centuries, it is expected that the book publishing industry should be able to compete internationally with other publishers and be a key source of revenue for government at all levels, in addition to providing economic empowerment to Nigerians. This has however not been the case as Nigerian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) report of 2019 revealed that revenue from Publishing Services for 2018 (Q1 - Q4) was 19.7 billion Naira (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019) which is considered very low considering the long history of publishing in Nigeria. A likely reason for this situation is the lack of technical expertise in the publishing industry as reported in literature (Oyeyinka, Aganbi & Atewolara-Odul, 2016) and this might not be unconnected with knowledgeable workers in the sector leaving, retiring or passing on with their knowledge base which was not shared in any form. Leonard and Barton (2014) noted that when experts and highly skilled employees leave organizations, they take away years of experience-based knowledge which they have acquired on the job and much of which is undocumented and irreplaceable. This could threaten an organization's ability to sustain competitive advantage if the problem is not addressed. Knowledge sharing could therefore act as a veritable tool to preserving the knowledge base of the publishing sector with the aim of enhancing continuous growth and development. However, empirical studies on knowledge sharing in the publishing industry is lacking as little is known about the attitude of employees of the publishing industry towards knowledge sharing. However, this study explores knowledge sharing attitude of employees in the Nigerian publishing industry with focus on publicly owned book publishing firms in Nigeria using the following research questions that guided the study:

- i. What is the employees' attitude towards sharing of knowledge among themselves as employees in the same firm?
- ii. What is the employees' attitude towards knowledge sharing with employees in other book publishing firms?
- iii. What are the factors that influence knowledge sharing among employees of publicly owned book publishing firms in Nigeria?
- iv. What are the barriers to sharing of knowledge among employees?

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: The next section explains the research methodology. This is subsequently followed by research findings, discussion and implications of findings. Finally, conclusion and recommendations are presented.

Research methodology

The study utilized the descriptive survey design using the qualitative approach, in order to accurately capture the participants' opinions and beliefs on knowledge sharing. The population of study comprised all employees of publicly owned book publishing firms. Publicly owned book publishing firms are book publishing firms whose ownership is

dispersed among the general public in form of shares and the shareholders have claim to part of the firms' assets and profits. Using purposive sampling, Heinemann (HEBN) Publishers Plc, Learn Africa Plc (LAP) and University Press Plc (UPPLC) were selected for this study. The choice of these firms was based on their well-structured employees' functions.

HEBN Publishers Plc, was initially set up in 1962 as a sales outlet for Heinemann Educational Books, UK until it was eventually incorporated in 1969 and became a publicly owned company in 2006. Its head office is located at Ibadan and other ten branches spread across the nation. Learn Africa Plc (formerly Longman Nigeria Plc) began operations in 1961 and became a publicly owned firm when its shares were listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange on July 23, 1996. Learn Africa Plc has its head office in Lagos and 20 other branches nationwide. University Press PLC (UPL), acclaimed as the nation's foremost publishers, was founded in 1949 as Oxford University Press Nigeria and listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange on 14th August, 1978. It has its head offices in Ibadan and Lagos with 19 offices across the nation.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting individuals in the organizations who are especially knowledgeable and experienced in the book publishing industry. These individuals were at managerial positions and mostly departmental heads. Using snowball sampling, these individuals introduced the researchers to other participants who were considered relevant to this study. A total of 45 participants (15 from each firm) from three key departments, namely- Editorial; Sales and Marketing; and Distribution and Warehouse were selected for the study. Based on the principle of saturation, this sample size was considered adequate. Saturation in qualitative research is the point at which additional participants in a study do not provide any further useful insights (Latham, 2013). According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), saturation is often achieved with 12 participants in homogeneous groups.

Data was collected using the interview. The interview schedule which was developed from empirical literature was divided into two sections. Section A collected data on the demographic characteristics of the employees and these included age, sex, educational level, years of experience, designation and department. Section B provided information on the employees' attitude towards knowledge sharing with employees in same and different firms, factors influencing knowledge sharing as well as barriers to sharing knowledge. To establish the instrument's reliability, five employees who were not included in the main study were initially interviewed. This led to the removal and rearrangement of questions in order to achieve logical flow. Participants' consents were sought before data collection and they were duly informed that withdrawal from the study could be done at any time. Confidentiality of information given was also assured. Interviews were conducted in English language and recorded using a digital voice recorder. Data collected were transcribed into text and analysed thematically. Recurrent themes were identified and these were shown as direct quotations from the transcribed texts.

Research findings

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

	HEBN		LAP		UPPLC		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Gender								
Female	3	20.0	3	20.0	4	26.7	10	22.2
Male	12	80.0	12	80.0	11	73.3	35	77.8
Total	15	100.0	15	100.0	15	100.0	45	100.0
Age in Years								
30-39	6	40.0	12	80.0	6	40.0	24	53.3
40-49	6	40.0	3	20.0	7	46.7	16	35.6
50 and above	3	20.0	-	-	2	13.3	5	11.1
Total	15	100.0	15	100.0	15	100.0	45	100.0
Educational Status								
First Degree	11	73.3	5	33.3	7	46.7	23	51.1
Higher Degree	4	26.7	10	76.3	8	53.3	22	48.9
Total	15	100.0	15	100.0	15	100.0	45	100.0
Years of Experience								
0 - 5	2	13.3	5	33.3	1	6.7	8	17.8
6 -10	5	33.3	7	46.7	8	53.3	20	44.4
11 - 15	4	26.7	2	13.3	2	13.3	8	17.8
Above 15	4	26.7	1	6.7	4	26.7	9	20.0
Total	15	100.0	15	100.0	15	100.0	45	100.0
Staff Level								
Senior	11	73.3	13	86.7	12	80.0	36	80.0
Management	4	26.7	2	13.3	3	20.0	9	20.0
Total	15	100.0	15	100.0	15	100.0	45	100.0
Department								
Editorial	5	33.3	5	33.3	5	33.3	15	33.3
Marketing	5	33.3	5	33.3	5	33.3	15	33.3
Distribution	5	33.3	5	33.3	5	33.3	15	33.3
Total	15	100.0	15	100.0	15	100.0	45	100.0

As shown in Table 1, most of the respondents were males (77.8%). This was similarly observed across the three organizations: HEBN (80.0%), LAP (80.0%) and UPPLC (73.3%). Generally (53.3%), most of the respondents were between 30 – 39 years of age, however in

HEBN there was an equal representation of both respondents between 30 – 39 years and 40 – 49 years (40.0% each), whereas most of the respondents from UPPLC (46.7%) were 40 – 49 years. First degree was the highest level of education for many of the respondents (51.1%). This however varied with LAP and UPPLC where majority of the respondents acquired higher degrees (76.3% and 53.3% respectively). In addition, most of the respondents were experienced in the industry with 44.4% in the category of employees with 6 – 10 years working experience. In each organization, at least more than 70% of the respondents were senior staff.

Employees' attitude towards knowledge sharing with colleagues in the same firm

Data collected from interviews revealed a positive attitude towards knowledge sharing by many of the respondents. They believed that sharing their knowledge was a normal thing to do as shown below:

Definitely yes. There is no point if you have knowledge and you want to keep it within you, it doesn't make sense. I think it makes sense more when you have knowledge and you are able to impart it to others (30-39 years, Male).

I believe I acquired the knowledge from my superiors and whatever I know I should share it with my subordinates for free flow of work (30-39 years, Male).

Yes, working in the production department as a graphic designer, you don't have a choice than to share your knowledge with your colleagues because if you don't share knowledge with your colleagues you will not have better understanding of what you know and since what we do is basically visuals, by the time you design and people see it, they will be asking you how you have achieved it. You have to share with them and any contribution from them will be worked on (40-49 years, Male).

Findings showed that a key reason employees in these firms engaged in knowledge sharing was the peculiarity of their industry. Employees of book publishing firms believed that their work as publishers generally calls for team work, hence, knowledge sharing was considered a norm as it enabled them to learn more.

Of course, you know our task requires team work. There is no way it can be done successfully without input from everybody and in the process, we share knowledge (50 years and above, Male).

Everything you do in publishing company is group work. You cannot stand on your own. That is why we have different departments. We have production, editorial, marketing and others. We all work as a group and we share knowledge within and across departments (30-49 years, Male).

The reason why I share knowledge with my colleagues is because of the team spirit, so that when we work together we can share our experience, something

that I don't even know I may get that knowledge or idea from another person and also it can even help me to expand my writing skills (30-39 years, Male).

It is very important, it is a synergy, we rub minds together. In the course of sharing knowledge, we learn more. It helps in our work in the Editorial department, on every first Friday, we sit down to discuss issues and everybody contributes. At times, we share knowledge with marketing department because our jobs are related (40-49 years, Female).

Generally, respondents reported sharing knowledge with their subordinates. They stated that sharing their knowledge with subordinates reduced the burden of work on them as managers and promoted continuity in the organization as these subordinates were able to take up responsibilities in the absence of their superiors.

Yes, in order not to overburden ourselves, we have to share the knowledge otherwise the work will be too cumbersome and time at one's disposal is limited. If one does not share knowledge, we will find out that so many responsibilities will be carried over and some responsibilities need to be attended to immediately, if not it will also affect other responsibilities and one's performance (30-39 years, Male).

I do that so that in case when I am not around, they too will have the opportunity to carry out what I have been doing. So that when I am not available, there will be no need of 'there is something on ground we need your attention, you have to come to the office'. Therefore, when I am doing something that they do not have the experience of, I will call them so that when they come across such when I am not around they too can do it. (30-39 years, Female)

Definitely, because in one way or the other, I don't want to be the island of knowledge. So, you must share. That is what they call a managerial role. In every establishment, you must share your knowledge with your subordinates so that even though you are not available, in one way or the other, they might be able to perform their functions and duties extensively (40-49 years, Male)

Some employees opined that knowledge sharing with their superiors was a norm as sometimes these superiors also looked up to their subordinates for knowledge, while some employees also expressed that sharing knowledge with these superiors helped them to understand their work better as subordinates.

Yes, very well. I have done that many times especially when it comes to my field. For instance, when it has to do with writing correspondence outside the country, my superiors consult me and I share knowledge by saying, do it this way. (30-39 years, Female)

Yes I do, sometimes when I am doing something with my boss and we are having difficulties, I normally sit down and think about it. Later, I go back to him and say Sir! Let us do it this way. I share my knowledge with him (30-39 years, Male).

There is nobody that has monopoly of knowledge and that is why in our company both subordinates and bosses welcome knowledge. So when we have an idea or knowledge of something that the boss is not aware of we do share it with them. (40-49 years, Male)

Yes, we do, the reason why we do that is when you are talking about superior, you are talking about the years of experience. Most of them have used 19 years, 20 years and the rest but you have just used probably 5 or 10 years. (30-39 years, Male)

However some expressed that knowledge sharing with superiors was done occasionally when there were difficulties. Few employees complained that superiors did not always use the knowledge shared with them, while those who used it never gave credit to their subordinates for knowledge shared.

Uhm!!! It's just once in a while when we are having difficulties, I don't share my knowledge except we are experiencing difficulties. (30-39 years, Male).

That is occasionally. Not always. This is because there are some bosses that do not want to go down to the level of asking their subordinates but if they call me I will (30-39 years, Female).

Well, we share knowledge with them in form of suggestions, and why we need to do that is because as for me I am a new person in this section, and I have the technical knowledge but my boss does not have this technical knowledge. So I need to tell him the needed information in form of suggestion so that it will not look as if someone is dictating to him. (30-39 years, Male).

Of course it is okay on the job, though sometimes after the knowledge is transferred it's not necessarily implemented and in most cases when it is, a superior takes the credit (30-39 years, Male).

Employees' attitude towards knowledge sharing with colleagues in other firms

Data collected showed that the attitude of respondents towards knowledge sharing with colleagues outside their firms can be understood from four categories, namely: those who believed that sharing their knowledge was healthy; those who limited knowledge sharing to colleagues who were close acquaintances; those that shared knowledge only during official industry meetings and seminars; and those who believed that knowledge sharing led to loss of competitive advantage.

Very few respondents expressed that they would share their knowledge with colleagues in other firms. These respondents believed that no one has the monopoly of

knowledge and sharing their knowledge with colleagues from other firms was healthy and promoted interchange of knowledge.

Yes. Sometimes, it is possible. Every progressive minded person will do that. You see, nobody is an island of knowledge. You need to get knowledge from here and there to improve your own. If you do not share, it will be extremely difficult to know when things are not even working well because, if you share knowledge with other people, find out what is going on in their organizations, you will be able to discover where you are not doing well and improve on it or where you are doing things that are not supposed to be done (40-49 years, Male).

Yes, I do share knowledge with them because I feel it is in the process of sharing knowledge, by discussing with them you can gain more knowledge from them. I learn from them and they learn from me (50 years and above, Male).

Yes, we share knowledge with them in terms of asking them, how is the marketing going, which book is in vogue? I pick up their books and ask them how they produce them, this can help us fix what is missing in our own books. I have many people in other publishing firms, I ask them how they use some particular font size, colour and so on. (30-39 years, Female).

However, some other respondents expressed that they would only share their knowledge with those who were close acquaintances.

At times an employee from another company that is your friend or you attended the same school, you get to meet to discuss. Perhaps you tell him/her that you are having a problem in your office and he/she tells you this is how you will resolve it. So when you come across them you share knowledge (40-49 years, Male).

Yes, but there is no formal avenue for that as far as my job is concerned, but off the job when I meet with acquaintances in other publishing firms at recreational points, we compare how the job is done in each firm, the remuneration and so on (30-39 years, Male).

Many of the respondents also reported engaging in knowledge sharing only when they attended formal meetings, seminars and trainings of employees in the industry. These were usually organized by the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA), the umbrella body for employees of book publishing firms in Nigeria. At such meetings, knowledge is shared about issues that are of mutual benefit such as fighting piracy.

Yes, especially when we meet at the training ground. We normally attend NPA (Nigerian Publishers Association) training. There, we have opportunities to

meet with employees of other publishing firms like administrators, editors, marketers, and so we share knowledge (30-39 years, Male).

That comes into place when we go for training and see each other after the training or maybe in the course of the training when questions are asked. Some of them may not have the idea and since you know it, you can share it because we are all learning (40-49 years, Male).

That one is difficult because I have never seen meeting like that where they share knowledge. But the place where I believe they meet is Nigerian Publishers Association. That is where they share knowledge and discuss like this issue of piracy. But when there is contract, everyone does his own to outwit competitors but they share knowledge on how to fight piracy (40-49 years, Male).

Findings from this study however showed that most of the respondents did not believe that they should freely share their knowledge with colleagues in other firms. Some respondents reported that they would share only general knowledge with employees of other firms.

We do, but not into details, we share a kind of surface knowledge, taking into consideration that the trick of your business should not be shared with your competitors considering that every business wants to get ahead of its competitors. Just like Coca Cola, you have to keep your secret ingredients (40-49 years, Male)

Well it depends on what kind of knowledge, since we are in the same industry and the kind of knowledge is just gist chat, talk about our book, how they are doing and how they are selling I think that is all, we don't say something sensitive (30-39 years, Female).

I will say Yes and I will say No. The reasons why I will say Yes is that at times we do talk, but then you are being careful because you will not want them to know your style because each and every publishing firm have their own style. You will not want to tell the person what is really going on because they can use it to outwit you. We talk, but when we talk it is just peripheral, it is just surface gist or discussion (40-49 years, Male)

We do share knowledge but to a limited extent. Information that we know is of common benefit to the publishing firms like government information that need to be attended to can be shared among other publishing firms (30-39 years, Male)

Others believed that knowledge sharing might lead to their organization losing competitive advantage.

That area is somehow because each publishing house has its own style. I cannot just be sharing our own professional expertise with employees of other publishing firms because we are competitors in the same market. Some of these things you are asking me is like leaking the company's legacy (30-39 years, Male).

They are my competitors why will I share my knowledge with them? No, actually the best thing is to collect that knowledge from them. I don't share my knowledge with colleagues from other publishing firms because remember I am here to do a job so if I share my knowledge that means they will now bring out products that will compete with what we have in the market (30-39 years, Male).

Perceived loss of employee loyalty is another reason some respondents would not engage in knowledge sharing with colleagues in other firms.

Ah! It's against the code of ethics here because we have different competitors so it is wrong for me to share information about this company with another competitor. Besides, I am still an employee here and I cannot share the information with another publishing firm (30-39 years, Male).

I feel since we are competitors, my boss might not be happy to see me sharing my organizational knowledge with a competitor or a sister company. They may feel you are revealing the information which could be very confidential to them. They may even think you are trying to move to another company. So in order to stay safe, I rather keep to myself (30-39 years, Male).

Factors influencing knowledge sharing with colleagues

Reciprocal benefits constituted the major factor motivating employees in this study to engage in knowledge sharing as many of the employees believed that knowledge sharing provided an opportunity for them to know more.

To acquire more knowledge you have to share your knowledge. You will think you are giving, but in the process you discover that, you just explained something and at the end you too will learn more (30-39 years, Male).

Basically, when you share knowledge, you gain from the people too. By sharing knowledge, you are also learning more from people. If you know something and you are not ready to share with other people it means your knowledge is a waste (30-39 years, Female).

Others reported altruistic reasons as motivation for knowledge sharing. They believed that when they shared their knowledge, it made them happy as the knowledge shared might be just what the beneficiary needed to succeed.

Basically, I am happy to help and seeing my colleagues succeeding based on the knowledge I shared with them (30-39 years, Male).

Yes, you will be happy, because you know that you are teaching someone something and the person is being brought out from the darkness (30-39 years, Female).

Knowledge sharing makes me happy. In the process of sharing knowledge you will discover that a lot more light is shed on the knowledge you claim to have by the time you share it people will contribute from other perspectives and everybody is better for it (40-49 years, Male).

Yes a lot. I believe when knowledge is shared, it impacts individuals as it might be just what you shared that they need to excel, so when the knowledge is not shared it is of no great value especially when you are not in the position to properly utilise it (30-39 years, Male).

Moreover, when knowledge was shared with their superiors, employees reported that they got feedbacks from them and this was an opportunity for them to acquire more knowledge.

What motivates me to share my knowledge is that I want to know more because the more I share it, the more I know. When I share with people that are more experienced than I am, they will comment and they will state their own fact and one way or the other, they will correct me where necessary (30-39 years, Male).

Closely related to reciprocal benefits is the fact that many of the respondents reported that they engaged in knowledge sharing to reduce the pressure they faced on the job. In other words, when they shared their knowledge especially with their subordinates, it made it possible for these ones to take up tasks in the absence of their superiors.

What motivates me to share my knowledge is that I do not want to overburden myself, so it is important that a superior trains somebody (30-39 years, Male).

The major factor motivating me to share my knowledge is that it makes the job continue, because if I am not around or on leave, somebody should be able to perform my duties and that requires that I share my knowledge (40-49 years, Male).

If you pass knowledge to a group and everybody is okay, you have less issues on what to correct because the knowledge you have acquired that is useful, you can pass it to them for them also to be upgraded (40-49 years, Male).

For some respondents however, personal and organizational reputation motivated them to share knowledge. These respondents believed that sharing their knowledge improved

their productivity as a team and enhanced their reputation. Others also reported that knowledge sharing could position their organization for more growth and ultimately lead to enhancement of their organizational reputation.

It is because we want the best in our work. We do not want management to see our department as one that does not handle its task competently and professionally. We do not want them to see us as people who handle their work with levity. We want them to see the best in us. We share knowledge in such a way that it will take the company to a greater height (40-49 years, Male).

The fact that I want my company to be the best in the publishing industry and if I don't share my knowledge how will my company grow, how will my company succeed in the market? I also share my knowledge with my staff because I want them to be the best in the market (30-39 years, Female).

Challenges to knowledge sharing

Respondents identified some challenges to knowledge sharing and these included: fear of loss of power, perceived pride, as well as fear of competition. According to the participants, some employees who were knowledgeable hesitated to share their knowledge due to fear of power loss.

At times it could be selfish interest, maybe you don't want somebody to reach where you are. That is a problem that normally occurs when it comes to sharing of knowledge (30-39 years, Male)

Others expressed the challenge of colleagues who misunderstood them and perceived them as arrogant when they engaged in knowledge sharing.

Because by the time you share, there could be a kind of misconception or misinterpretation. People may misinterpret you (40-49 years, Male).

Number one is the consciousness of people to think that it is pride when you know. You must have that constraint in mind so you don't make mistakes. So if you want to, you must be able to know the class of people you are talking to or else you will be mistaken to be a proud person whereas it is simply because you have something to offer (30-39 years, Male).

Moreover, even after knowledge was shared some participants expressed that the knowledge receiver might not understand or use the knowledge shared.

...but one area of challenge is that the person you share knowledge with may not be ready to take over that challenge and so one may find it difficult to share knowledge on constant basis (30-39 years, Male).

Yes, I have seen a situation whereby you want to share knowledge with someone but the person may not comprehend it. If you try to teach them, they will still continue with what they wanted to do. Another thing is the willingness to learn, some people are not willing to learn (30-39 years, Female).

Regarding knowledge sharing with employees of other publishing firms, most of the participants expressed that fear of competition prevented them from sharing knowledge with these ones. This was expressed by almost all the participants.

There should be limitations in sharing knowledge because people might use it against you, especially business competitors (30-39 years, Male).

You know in publishing, people are sceptical about sharing knowledge because the knowledge you share could be an advantage for a competitor to gain an upper hand in the market, so people are really sceptical (30-39 years, Male).

Company policies sometimes prevent you from giving out certain information. Also, you cannot predict your competitors, let's say you give out a honest knowledge, before you know it your competitor comes up with something that gives him a competitive edge over you and before you realise your mistake, a lot of harm has been done (50 years and above, Male).

Discussion of findings

A total of 45 respondents participated in this study which investigated knowledge sharing among employees of publicly owned book publishing firms in Nigeria. Findings revealed that majority of the employees believed that knowledge sharing is a norm for the publishing industry. One reason that stands out as expressed by the employees is that the publishing industry is peculiar in the sense that every section of the organization is involved in book publishing from the beginning to the end of the process. Hence, employees work as a team and this necessitates knowledge sharing. This agrees with previous studies that have shown that the probability of employees engaging in knowledge sharing is increased when they work as teams, as teamwork makes interaction inescapable (Chuang, Jackson & Jiang, 2016; Taormina, 2009). Ahmed, Shahzad, Aslam, Bajwa and Bahoo (2016) also corroborated this finding in a study among 189 managerial-level employees of manufacturing and services organizations in Pakistan. The authors reported a positive influence of teamwork on knowledge donation and collection.

In the current study, knowledge sharing cut across all levels, including superiors and subordinates. Findings showed that a major reason these employees would share their knowledge with subordinates is the need to reduce the burden of work on them as managers. They believed that when they share their knowledge with subordinates, organizational functions can be performed by these subordinates in the absence of the managers. The employees also reported different views on knowledge sharing with superiors. While some generally believed that they should share their knowledge with their superiors considering the fact that the superiors have more experience on the job and are in a position to give needed

corrections, others expressed that they would only share their knowledge if solicited. This observation is not surprising as earlier studies have supported this finding and reported on the influence of power relationships on knowledge sharing behaviours of employees. Often times, this power relationships are manifested in organizational hierarchy, where employees' knowledge sharing behaviour differs when knowledge is shared with co-workers, superiors and subordinates (Garicano & Wu, 2012; Kuo & Young, 2008). Hence, this finding from the current study suggests that while knowledge sharing between these employees and their subordinates is direct, knowledge sharing between them and their superiors is largely indirect. In line with findings from this current study, Law and Du-Babcock (2017) observed the differences in knowledge sharing behaviours in a study involving 11 mid-level employees in small and medium enterprises in Hong Kong. The authors noted that knowledge sharing behaviours varied with the employees' target audiences, as their choice of behaviour differed with peers, subordinates and superiors.

By extension, the influence of power relationships on knowledge sharing behaviour was also observed in the attitude of the employees towards knowledge sharing with employees in other firms. Findings from this study showed that only very few employees would freely share their knowledge with employees in other firms, whereas most of them would only share general knowledge. The effect of inter-organizational knowledge sharing has been viewed from both positive and negative perspectives. On the positive note, it has been shown to bring about benefits which include development of new ideas and increase in firms' innovative performance (Alexy, George & Salter, 2013; Ritala, Olander, Michailova & Husted, 2015). On the other hand, inter-organizational knowledge sharing when excessively carried out can have negative effects on the innovative performance and overall performance of an organization especially if such knowledge is not protected (Dahlander & Gann, 2010; Frishammar, Ericsson & Patel, 2015; Hernandez, Sanders & Tuschke, 2015). Findings from the current study showed that the employees are very conscious of the side effects of sharing their knowledge with employees of other firms and this suggests that the need to maintain their organization's competitive advantage seems to far outweigh any potential benefits of inter-organizational knowledge sharing.

Reciprocal and altruistic benefits, personal and organizational reputation as well as the need to be relieved of job stress were key factors influencing knowledge sharing by employees in this study. Studies have corroborated the influence of reciprocal and altruistic benefits on knowledge sharing among employees in various organizations. Many of these studies have shown that perceived reciprocity produces feelings of mutual indebtedness and has a favourable effect on attitude towards knowledge sharing (Li, 2010; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Similarly, employees who derive enjoyment in helping others are naturally motivated to engage in knowledge sharing (Jeon, Kim & Koh, 2011; Zhang, 2011). Killingsworth, Xue and Liu (2016) also carried out a study among 115 university students in China, Peru and USA. The study reported that reciprocal benefits and enjoyment in helping others were positively related to attitude towards knowledge sharing. These studies support findings from the current study which observed that many of the employees were motivated to share their knowledge because they believed that it makes it possible for them to learn more from their colleagues.

The need to improve both personal and organizational reputation motivated some employees to engage in knowledge sharing. The association between knowledge sharing and reputation has been noted in literature as many of these studies reported the positive

influence of reputation enhancement on knowledge sharing (Chennamaneni, 2006; Lin, Lai & Yang, 2016). Yan, Wang, Chen and Zhang (2016) reported the positive impact of reputation enhancement on knowledge sharing by users of well-known online health communities in China. Many of the employees were also motivated to share their knowledge especially with subordinates in order to reduce their work stress as knowledge sharing makes it possible for them to delegate. According to Liberman and Boehe (2011), delegation facilitates power transfer from managers to their subordinates and this ultimately improves the quality and speed of carrying out organizational tasks. Conversely, when managers cling to power and do not delegate, they end up doing most of the work (Wang & Poutziouris, 2010).

Participants noted fear of loss of power, perceived pride, as well as fear of competition as challenges to knowledge sharing. Studies have shown that people who regard their knowledge as their power have the tendency to hoard their knowledge (Chong & Besharati, 2014) as such ones fear that sharing their knowledge makes others perform better than them (Kumaravel & Vikkiran, 2018). However, the fact that only very few of the participants cited this challenge shows that it is not a very serious challenge to knowledge sharing in the book publishing industry. The most probable reason is the peculiarity of the industry which sees knowledge sharing as a natural culture as often times employees work as teams and when this occurs interaction is bound to take place (Chuang, Jackson, & Jiang, 2016).

Managerial and policy implications

This study has contributed to the understanding of knowledge sharing practices in the publishing industry, an industry which appears to have been largely neglected in knowledge management research. The study shows poor inter-organizational knowledge sharing in the publishing industry and this has implications for book publishers. The publishing industry is a knowledge-intensive sector and organizations in this sector are expected to grow not just through intra-organizational knowledge but most especially through inter-organizational knowledge sharing. Granted, organizations desire to maintain competitive advantage, however, the need for this cannot continue to outweigh the benefits of inter-organizational knowledge sharing. Managers in the publishing industry should realise that limiting inter-organizational knowledge sharing is tantamount to limiting organizational learning and innovation and this could have a negative impact on the industry's performance overtime. Also, this result from the current study has revealed the role Nigerian Publishers Association can play in creating an enabling environment for its members and ensuring healthy interactions that encourage willingness to engage in inter-organizational knowledge sharing. Moreover, globalization has compelled organizations to depend on effective knowledge management strategies to improve performance and internally generated knowledge will not be sufficient to achieve this. Hence, in this knowledge economy, book publishers should note that inter-organizational knowledge sharing may serve to enrich their technology, culture and organizational structure as there is so much organizations can learn from one another.

Conclusion and recommendation

This study has shown that employees of book publishing firms generally have positive attitude towards knowledge sharing. It also revealed that while knowledge sharing with

colleagues in the same firm was freely carried out, it was largely influenced by power relationships such that knowledge sharing behaviours differed when knowledge was shared among peers, subordinates and superiors. Inter-organizational knowledge sharing was also reported to be very low among employees. Factors influencing knowledge sharing included reciprocal and altruistic benefits, personal and organizational reputation as well as the need to be relieved of job stress. Fear of loss of power, perceived pride, and fear of competition were some challenges to knowledge sharing reported in this study. This study recommends the promotion of leadership styles that encourage healthy interpersonal relationships that support and enhance knowledge sharing between subordinates and their superiors, as this eventually contributes to the growth of employees as well as the organization.

References

- Abdur-Rafiu, M. A., & Opesade, A.O. (2015). Knowledge sharing behaviour of academics in The Polytechnic Ibadan. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)* <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1287/>
- Adekannbi, J.O., & Oladeinde, A.A. (2020). Determinants of knowledge sharing behaviour of information and communication technology personnel in selected Nigerian tertiary institutions. *International Journal of Psychology and Cognitive Science*, 6(1), 1 – 14.
- Adewale, A. (2014). History of printing and publishing in Nigeria. [Web log post]. <https://www.goodbooksafrica.com/2014/03/history-of-printing-and-publishing-in.html>.
- Ahmed, F., Shahzad, K., Aslam, H., Bajwa, S. U., & Bahoo, R. (2016). The role of collaborative culture in knowledge sharing and creativity among employees. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences (PJCSS)*, 10(2), 335-358.
- Al-Busaidi, K. A. (2020). Inter-organizational knowledge sharing system in the health sector: Physicians' perspective. In *Virtual and Mobile Healthcare: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice* (pp. 351-368). IGI Global.
- Al-Jabri, H., & Al-Busaidi, K. A. (2020). Enriching SME learning and innovation through inter-organizational knowledge transfer. *International Journal of Knowledge Management (IJKM)*, 16(3), 17-32.
- Alexy, O., George, G., & Salter, A.J., (2013). Cui bono? The selective revealing of knowledge and its implications for innovative activity. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(2), 270-291.
- Altbach, P. (1997). *Book Publishing*. In Courier, Y. (ed). World Information Report. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Paris, France.
- Arekkuzhiyil, S. (2019). Attitude towards knowledge sharing among undergraduate students in Kerala. *Edutracks*, 18(7), 25-31.
- Bamgboje-Ayodele, A., & Ellis, L. (2015). Knowledge management and the Nigerian culture – A round peg in a square hole? *The African Journal of Information Systems*, 7(1), 1-

20. Retrieved from: <http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1260&context=ajis>
- Bartol, K.M., & Srivastava, A. (2002). Encouraging knowledge sharing: The role of organizational reward systems. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 9(1), 64-77.
- Bircham-Connolly, H. J., Corner, J., & Bowden, S. (2005). An empirical study of the impact of question structure on recipient attitude during knowledge sharing. *The Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management*, 32(1), 1-10.
- Bock, G.W., & Kim, Y.G. (2002). Breaking the myths of rewards: An exploratory study of attitudes about knowledge sharing. *Information Resource Management Journal*, 15(2), 14-21.
- Bu, S., & Koh, J. (2019). Factors influencing knowledge sharing activities and community activation efforts in social Q&A community: Focused on ZHI HU. *Journal of Information Technology Services*, 18(3), 95-115
- Cabrera, E. F., & Cabrera, A. (2005). Fostering knowledge sharing through people management practices. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16, 720-735.
- Chennamaneni, A. (2006). Determinants of knowledge sharing behaviors: Developing and testing an integrated theoretical model. PhD. Thesis. Faculty of the Graduate School. University of Texas Arlington. xvi + 132pp.
- Chong, C. W., & Besharati, J. (2014). Challenges of knowledge sharing in the petrochemical industry. *Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal*, 6(2), 171-187
- Chuang, C. H., Jackson, S. E., & Jiang, Y. (2016). Can knowledge-intensive teamwork be managed? Examining the roles of HRM systems, leadership, and tacit knowledge. *Journal of Management*, 42(2), 524-554.
- Connelly, C. E. (2000). Predictors of knowledge sharing in organizations. M.Sc. Project. School of Business. Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.
- Dahlander, L., & Gann, D.M. (2010). How open is innovation? *Research Policy*, 39(6), 699–709.
- Davenport, T., & Prusak L (1998). Working knowledge. Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley
- Frishammar, J., Ericsson, K., & Patel, P.C. (2015). The dark side of knowledge transfer: Exploring knowledge leakage in joint R&D projects. *Technovation*, 41, 75-88.
- Fullwood, R., Rowley, J., & Delbridge, R. (2013). Knowledge sharing amongst academics in UK universities. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 17(1), 123-136.
- Garicano, L., & Wu, Y. (2012). Knowledge, communication, and organizational capabilities. *Organization Science*, 23(5), 1382-1397.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Hernandez, E., Sanders, W.M.G., & Tuschke, A. (2015). Network defense: Pruning, grafting, and closing to prevent leakage of strategic knowledge to rivals. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(4), 1233–1260.

- Ipe, M. (2003). Knowledge sharing in organizations: A conceptual framework. *Human Resource Development Review*, 2(4), 337-359.
- Jeon, S., Kim, Y., & Koh, J. (2011). An integrative model for knowledge sharing in communities-of-practice. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 15(2), 251-269.
- Kankanhalli, A., Tan, B.C.Y., & Wei, K.K. (2005). Contributing knowledge to electronic knowledge repositories: An empirical investigation. *MIS Quarterly*, 29 (1), 113-143.
- Killingsworth, B., Xue, Y., & Liu, Y. (2016). Factors influencing knowledge sharing among global virtual teams. *Team Performance Management*, 22(5-6), 284-300.
- Kumaravel, V., & Vikkiran, P. (2018). The challenges of knowledge sharing practices in higher educational institutions in Namakkal District of Tamilnadu: A Kendall approach. *Journal of Contemporary Research in Management*, 13(3), 1-15
- Kuo, F.-Y., & Young, M.-L. (2008). A study of the intention-action gap in knowledge sharing practices. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 59(8), 1224-1237.
- Latham J. R. (2013). A framework for leading the transformation to performance excellence part I: CEO perspectives on forces, facilitators, and strategic leadership systems. *Quality Management Journal*, 20(2), 12-33.
- Law, K. K., & Du-Babcock, B. (2017). How hierarchal positions affect employees' knowledge sharing behaviors? An exploratory study. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 17(5). Retrieved from <https://articegateway.com/index.php/JOP/article/view/1658>
- Leonard, D., & Barton, M. (2014). Knowledge and the management of creativity and innovation. *The Oxford Handbook of Innovation Management*, 121-138.
- Li, W. (2010). Virtual knowledge sharing in a cross-cultural context. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 14(1), 38-50.
- Liberman, L., & Boehe, M. D. (2011). Worldwide willingness to delegate and country labor quality. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(17), 3477-3495
- Lin C.-P. (2007). To share or not to share: Modeling tacit knowledge sharing, its mediators and antecedents. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 70(4), 411-428
- Lin, T. C., Lai, M. C., & Yang, S. W. (2016). Factors influencing physicians' knowledge sharing on web medical forums. *Health Informatics Journal*, 22(3), 594-607.
- Liu, C., Liang, T., Rajagopalan, B., Sambamurthy, V., & Wu, J. (2011). Knowledge sharing as Social Exchange: Evidence from A meta-analysis. *Pacific Asia Journal of The Association for Information Systems*, 3(4), 21-47.
- McDermott, R., & O'Dell, C. (2001). Overcoming cultural barriers to sharing knowledge. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 5(1), 76-85.
- National Bureau of Statistics (2019). Nigerian Gross Domestic Product Report. 3rd Quarter 2019 https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/GDP_Report_Q3_2019.pdf
- Nonaka, I. (1994). A dynamic theory of organizational knowledge creation. *Organization Science*, 5(1), 14-37.
- Ohiorenoya, J. O., & Eboreime, O. F. (2014). Knowledge management practices and performance in Nigerian universities. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(16), 400-416.
- Olatokun, W.M., & Elueze, N.I. (2012). Analysing lawyers' attitude towards knowledge sharing. *South Africa Journal of Information Management*, 14(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajim.v14i1.507>

- Olatokun, W. M., & Nwafor, C.I. (2012). The effect of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on knowledge sharing intentions of civil servants in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. *Information Development*, 28 (3), 216-234. doi: 10.1177/0266666912438567
- Omotayo, F.O., & Babalola, S. O. (2016). Factors influencing knowledge sharing among information and communication technology artisans in Nigeria. *Journal of Systems and Information Technology*, 18(2), 148 –169
- Ouakouak, M. L., & Ouedraogo, N. (2019). Fostering knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization: The impact of organizational commitment and trust. *Business Process Management Journal*, 25(4), 757-779
- Oyewo, R. O., & Tomomowo-Ayodele, S. O. (2018). Impact of indigenous publishing on educational development in Nigeria: A case study of selected publishers in Ibadan. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1803/>
- Oyeyinka O.T., Aganbi V., & Atewolara-Odul, O.A. (2016). Problems of book publishing industry in Nigeria. *Journal of Research and Development*, 2(10). http://www.arabianjbm.com/pdfs/RD_VOL_2_10/1.pdf.
- Ritala, P., Olander, H., Michailova, S., & Husted, K. (2015). Knowledge sharing, knowledge leaking and relative innovation performance: An empirical study, *Technovation*, 35, 22–31.
- Subramaniam, M., & Youndt, M. A. (2005). The influence of intellectual capital on the types of innovative capabilities. *Academy of Management journal*, 48(3), 450-463.
- Taormina, R. J. (2009). Organizational socialization: the missing link between employee needs and organizational culture. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 24(7), 650-676.
- Wang, Y., & Poutziouris, P. (2010). Leadership styles, management systems and growth: Empirical evidence from UK owner-managed SMEs. *Journal of Enterprising Culture*, 18(3), 331-354.
- Wasko, M. M., & Faraj, S. (2005). Why should I share? Examining social capital and knowledge contribution in electronic networks of practice. *MIS Quarterly*, 29(1), 35-57.
- Yan, Z., Wang, T., Chen, Y., & Zhang, H. (2016). Knowledge sharing in online health communities: A social exchange theory perspective. *Information & Management*, 53(5), 643-653.
- Zhang, X. (2011). Cultural influences on explicit and implicit knowledge sharing behavior in virtual teams. *International Journal of Computer Science & Information Technology*, 3(4), 29-44.