

Name of the Research Scholar: Shehla Malik

Name of the Supervisor: Prof. (Dr.) Amirul Hasan Ansari

Name of the Centre/Department: Centre for Management Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia,
New Delhi - 110025

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A Study of Moderating Role of Leadership Styles

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing is the focal process by which employees exchange their knowledge, ideas and experience resulting in increased individual knowledge which in turn enhances creativity and innovation in organisations. In the context of IT and services industry, the new upcoming fields like internet of things (IoT), machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) bring a lot of opportunities and at the same time challenges that can only be navigated by innovative solutions. In fact, the growth of IT and services industry is based on differentiated products and services for which innovation needs to be a high priority agenda.

This research has attempted to fill the void in the extant literature on knowledge sharing by examining the role played by individual as well as group level variables that influence knowledge sharing among organisational members. Drawing from different streams of research, this study developed a research model from the integrative review on emotional intelligence (Wong and Law, 2002), knowledge sharing (Reychav and Weisberg, 2010) and transformational and transactional leadership styles (Bass and Avolio, 1992). The purpose of this research is as follows: First, the direct effects of emotional intelligence (and its components) on both types of knowledge sharing i.e. tacit and explicit were tested. Second, the indirect effects of two leadership styles, namely, transformational leadership and transactional leadership components were tested on the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing (tacit and explicit). Lastly, the moderation effects of professional characteristics, such as, job position and organisational tenure were tested on the relationship between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing types i.e. tacit and explicit.

The research model was empirically examined by collecting primary data using a field survey of 395 employees working with IT and services industry in India. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) by deploying 21st version of SPSS and AMOS. Out of 21 hypothesised relationships, 13 were supported. The results of data analysis revealed that emotional intelligence has significant direct effect on both types of knowledge sharing i.e. tacit and explicit. The findings indicated that emotional intelligence accounted for 64 percent of variance in tacit knowledge sharing and 34 percent variance in explicit knowledge sharing. Thus, emotional intelligence acted as a strong predictor of knowledge sharing for employees working with IT and services companies in India. In fact, a larger variance caused by emotional intelligence on tacit knowledge sharing than explicit knowledge sharing was an interesting finding. Additionally, this research adds to the current literature by pinpointing which dimension of emotional intelligence most strongly relates to both tacit and explicit forms of knowledge sharing: “use of emotion”. In fact, all four emotional intelligence components, namely, “self-emotion appraisal, others’ emotion appraisal, use of emotion and regulation of emotion” significantly predicted tacit knowledge sharing. However, self-emotion appraisal and regulation of emotion did not provide significant statistical support to predict explicit knowledge sharing. The moderating role of leadership styles was a novel aspect to this study and the results revealed that transformational leadership moderated the linkage between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing (both tacit and explicit) whereas transactional leadership components did not act as moderators. Moreover, job position and organisational tenure acted as moderators between emotional intelligence and tacit knowledge sharing. However, moderation effect of these professional characteristics was not found on explicit knowledge sharing.

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the study discussed theoretical and practical implications for knowledge sharing in organisational context. Prior research on knowledge sharing is extended by the results of this study by highlighting the important determinants of knowledge sharing. The integrated research model deepens our collective understanding of factors existing at individual and group level that encourage knowledge sharing among organisational members. Apart from contributing to theory, the results of the study also provide insights for practitioners. Organisations could make use of the insights to develop an environment that is contributory towards knowledge sharing. Hence, further studies in this field are encouraged to corroborate and expand upon the findings of this research.