



The Influence of Psychological Ownership on Knowledge-Sharing Behaviors: the Moderating Effect of Affective Commitment

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Abstract

Knowledge sharing has been recognized as a vital process in managing intellectual capital and, when cultivated efficiently, generates a manifold of organizational advantages. Previous literature examining the impact of psychological ownership on knowledge sharing has yielded contradictory findings, with some studies suggesting feelings of ownership facilitate knowledge sharing, others indicate such feelings may inhibit it. This paper explores the nature of the relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge sharing by expanding on previous research and investigating affective commitment as a moderator of the relationship. The research adopted a cross-sectional design, where participants ($n=86$), recruited through social networks, completed an online questionnaire. Results indicate a significant positive relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge sharing but an insignificant moderating effect of affective commitment. Additionally, an exploratory analysis was conducted to investigate affective commitment as a mediator as opposed to a moderator, generating significant results and indicating that the positive relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge sharing is fully mediated by affective commitment.

Keywords: Psychological Ownership, Knowledge Sharing, Affective commitment

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The Influence of Psychological Ownership on Knowledge-Sharing Behaviors: the Moderating Effect of Affective Commitment

In the 21st century, human capital has emerged as a critical strategic asset within organizations due to rapid advancements in information technology (Han et al., 2010; Hameed et al., 2019). Arguably, within organizations, these advancements have increased the value of intangible assets, such as employees' knowledge and skills, over tangible assets like equipment, making knowledge a crucial element for organizational survival (Drucker, 1993; Han et al., 2010; Asrar-UI-Haq & Anwar, 2016; Hameed et al., 2019). Consequently, knowledge management, a practice concerned with strategy and tactics to manage human-centered assets, has emerged as an area of interest within academia in conjunction with organizational practices (Brooking, 1997; McAdam & McCreedy, 2000). Knowledge management entails several processes, and the process of knowledge sharing has been recognized as the most vital (Asrar-UI-Haq & Anwar, 2016).

Knowledge sharing is defined as a process where individuals send or receive knowledge from others, thereby enhancing understanding and promoting access to information (Han et al., 2010; Li et al., 2015; Hameed et al., 2019). Ultimately, knowledge resides within individuals as employees create, recognize, archive, access, apply, and share knowledge as they carry out their obligations within an organization (Boock et al., 2005). Thus, knowledge movement depends on individual employees and their knowledge-sharing behaviors (Boock et al., 2005; Asrar-UI-Haq & Anwar, 2016). Previous studies have identified many factors affecting knowledge-sharing behaviors, from personal characteristics, such as demographics, to organizational characteristics, such as team norms, with most research focusing specifically on personality traits and trust (Han et al., 2010; Asrar-UI-Haq & Anwar, 2016). This paper will explore an antecedent to knowledge-

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sharing behaviors, namely, psychological ownership: the psychologically experienced phenomenon where an individual develops possessive feelings, precisely the feeling of ownership, towards material (e.g., employees' desk) or immaterial (e.g., knowledge) targets (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Han et al., 2010; Batool et al., 2022). Current literature on the impact of psychological ownership on knowledge-sharing behaviors has produced contradicting results; that is, some research concludes that psychological ownership promotes knowledge sharing, whereas others claim that feelings of ownership serve as a barrier (Wang et al., 2019; Batool et al., 2022). These contradictions highlight that individual and situational factors further influence the effects of psychological ownership on employee knowledge-sharing behaviors.

Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) have theorized that psychological ownership consists partly of emotional attachment to the organization, further describing it as an attitude encompassing both affective and cognitive elements. Consequently, affective commitment encompasses similarities to psychological ownership; both concepts involve a deep sense of belonging and a personal investment in the organization's success. Affective commitment, defined as employees' emotional attachment, identification and involvement with the organization, has been previously linked to both psychological ownership and knowledge sharing (Han et al., 2010; Matzler et al., 2011). Hence this paper will explore if higher levels of affective commitment strengthen the positive influence of psychological ownership on knowledge-sharing behaviors. Additionally, this paper will apply the social exchange theory to build the theoretical framework as to why such feelings may reinforce knowledge sharing behaviors. This paper aims to answer the research question: Does psychological ownership influence knowledge-sharing behaviors and is this relationship moderated by affective commitment?

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This paper will extend and contribute to knowledge management literature by augmenting the understanding of the individual-level attributes of psychological ownership and affective commitment to an imperative process of knowledge management, namely, knowledge sharing. Empirically, this paper will contribute to knowledge management in the human resource field by further emphasizing that effective knowledge-sharing behaviors are a prerequisite for innovation and organizational development. Consequently, this is a behavior that organizations should accentuate, develop, and encourage, which may be accomplished through cultivating psychological ownership. Furthermore, these positive outcomes may be intensified by developing employees' affective commitment towards the organization (Li et al., 2015).

Theoretical Foundation

Knowledge Sharing

In a knowledge-based view of organizations, knowledge itself is the foundation for organizations to develop skills and competencies (McAdam & McCreedy, 2000; Bock et al., 2005; Li et al., 2015). Knowledge is created through individually acquired knowledge as well as the exchange of existing knowledge amongst employees, hence the importance of sharing information (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002; Li et al., 2015). Knowledge sharing, described as the process where individuals send or receive knowledge from others, has been labeled as a prerequisite to converting thoughts, ideas, and concepts into products and services (Matzler et al., 2011).

McAdam and McCreedy (2000) highlight three distinguished domains that organizations profit from when knowledge management is fostered, and knowledge sharing is exercised. In terms of improved innovation, broadening the concept of knowledge construction within the organization is the most effective way to obtain new knowledge (McAdam & McCreedy, 2000).

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Regarding efficiency, ensuring that knowledge is spread throughout the organization rather than imprisoned in specific sectors is integral (McAdam & McCreedy, 2000). Lastly, managing knowledge can leverage intangible assets, specifically intellectual capital, increasing the skills and competencies of employees across a range of disciplines; researching how to augment knowledge sharing is of utmost importance for organizations (McAdam & McCreedy, 2000).

When knowledge is not efficiently shared, the chances of knowledge gaps increase, which leads to disadvantages for the organization (Bock et al., 2005). Despite knowledge sharing being undoubtedly favorable for organizations, it has the capability of evoking conflicts of interest amongst the individuals involved (Matzler et al., 2011). Additionally, research has stated that knowledge sharing is often an unnatural process as individuals believe their knowledge is more valuable and important to themselves (Hameed et al., 2019). Knowledge hiding is the intentional act of withholding information when requested by avoiding answering questions or providing deceptive data; these acts lead to unfavorable work behaviors, resulting in reduced organizational effectiveness (Batoool et al., 2022).

Organizations must adopt the appropriate mechanisms to enhance and facilitate knowledge sharing and avert knowledge hiding, cultivating the growth of knowledge and benefiting the organization in multiple domains (Han et al., 2010). Psychological ownership has been shown as an antecedent of both knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding, making it an interesting antecedent to investigate (Li et al., 2015; wang et al., 2019; Batoool et al., 2022).

Psychological Ownership

The sense of possession has been identified as the foundation to psychological ownership, the psychological experience of developing feelings of possession towards tangible or intangible objects, as individuals tend to equate feelings of possession with ownership (Van

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Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Hameed et al., 2019). Encompassing both affective and cognitive elements, it is notable that the outcomes of psychological ownership are not only manifested in the mind but are also reflected in behaviors, as the cognitive and emotional connection to the target of ownership affects conduct and perceptions (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Hameed et al., 2019). Feelings of psychological ownership emerge when employees can identify with the job, expend their efforts, energy, and time on the job, and have control over their job (Pierce et al., 2001; Batool et al., 2022). Additionally, psychological ownership manifests in individuals as a result of meeting three basic needs; efficacy, place, and self-identity; with organizational settings providing an environment where these needs can be fulfilled, hence feelings of ownership can be developed towards organizations (Pierce et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2022).

Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) have highlighted that the possessive nature of psychological ownership differentiates it from other work-related attitudes while simultaneously assisting in the understanding of employee attitudes. Literature on the psychology of possession concerning ownership has highlighted three fundamental outcomes that arise from feelings of ownership related explicitly to attitudes, self-concept and sense of responsibility. Firstly, individuals feel positive about their targets of ownership, encouraging positive attitudes towards the target (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Secondly, feelings of ownership cause individuals to link their ownership target to their self-concept, thus causing individuals to relate these possessions as part of their extended selves (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Finally, feelings of ownership generate a sense of responsibility for the target, enhancing feelings of control over the target, which can lead to limiting the access of others to the target (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Therefore, when employees develop feelings of ownership towards their organization, would they be more inclined to perform the beneficial behavior of knowledge sharing due to their increased sense of

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responsibility and positive attitudes, or would they be more inclined to withhold knowledge due to pronounced feelings of possession?

Psychological Ownership and Knowledge Sharing

Literature concerning the effects of psychological ownership on knowledge-sharing behaviors pertains to the fact that psychological ownership may enhance knowledge sharing; however, psychological ownership may also limit such behaviors (Batoool et al., 2022). Despite contradicting results, literature proposes various arguments as to why psychological ownership would encourage knowledge sharing. Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) highlighted that higher levels of psychological ownership of the organization stimulate an altruistic spirit, which previous research has shown to be an important antecedent for extra-role behaviors such as knowledge sharing (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Employees high in psychological ownership are self-motivated to partake in positive work behaviors, including teamwork for problem-solving and learning, and embracing organizational morals and ideas, attitudes that promote knowledge sharing (Batoool et al., 2022). Additionally, researchers such as Constant and colleagues (1994) and Pirkkalainen and colleagues (2018) have concluded that psychological ownership does increase knowledge sharing tendencies.

The social exchange theory proposes that individuals make decisions on whether to exchange resources, material or immaterial, with others based on a perceived cost and benefit analysis (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Yan et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022). Essentially, an individual's behavior is contingent on the rewarding outcome of the exchange (Emerson, 1976; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The social exchange theory can be applied to expand the viewpoint of knowledge sharing in terms of knowledge exchange, where the exchange of information is conducive to a cost-and-benefit analysis (Jinyang, 2015). With feelings of

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ownership enhancing employees' perception of the organization as a part of their extended self, combined with a pronounced sense of responsibility, the exchange of knowledge may be perceived as beneficial to employees who feel ownership towards their organization (Zhang et al., 2020). Hence, despite prior contradictory research results on the impact of psychological ownership on knowledge sharing behaviors, we hypothesize:

H1. Psychological ownership is positively related to knowledge sharing behaviors.

As previous literature reports such contradictory findings on the effect of psychological ownership on knowledge sharing, it suggests that individual and situational factors might influence the relationship. Therefore, this paper will investigate if affective commitment influences the aforementioned relationship.

Affective Commitment

Defined as an individual's identification, involvement, and emotional attachment to an organization, affective commitment serves as an indicator of an employee's appreciation for their job and at the same time their intention to remain in that job (Li et al., 2015). Literature on affective commitment has found that developing positive emotions towards the organization increases intentions to perform extra-role behaviors and has concluded that affective commitment is positively related to knowledge sharing (Van Den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004; Li et al., 2015). From a social exchange theory perspective, we can presume that the increased identification to the organization as a result of affective commitment would turn rewarding behaviors to the organization into rewarding behaviors to the self, increasing the performance of beneficial behaviors such as knowledge sharing. Hence, we hypothesize:

H2. Knowledge sharing is positively associated with affective commitment.

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Furthermore, studies investigating psychological ownership and affective commitment have found a positive relationship between them (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Han et al., 2010; Li et al., 2015). Previous literature highlights that for individuals to treat an organization as psychologically belonging to themselves, they have accumulated a certain level of emotional attachment to the organization (Li et al., 2015). Both psychological ownership and affective commitment have been shown to increase personal feelings of identification and involvement with organizations (Han et al., 2010; Li et al., 2015). Additionally, psychological ownership encompasses emotional attachment, the main component of affective commitment; accordingly, we hypothesize:

H3. Psychological ownership is positively associated with affective commitment.

Furthermore, studies suggest that affective commitment may be the component that inhibits the negative aspects of psychological ownership related to its possessive nature on knowledge sharing behaviors (Wright & Kehoe, 2008; Li et al., 2015). Batool and colleagues (2022) highlight that, at one end, psychological ownership fosters ownership bond towards the organization, enhancing proactivity. Conversely, employees with strong feelings of ownership may also develop possessive tendencies, resulting in counterproductive work behaviors. Possessiveness may inhibit the transfer of knowledge across an individual's personal boundaries. However, when individuals have emotional investment towards the organization, these boundaries become more ambiguous and individuals diminish their personal control over the knowledge, increasing the likelihood of effortless sharing knowledge (Wright & Kehoe, 2008; Li et al., 2015). Additionally, from a social exchange theory perspective, we can consider that high levels of psychological ownership combined with the increased identification with the self, resulting from higher levels of affective commitment, would facilitate knowledge sharing due to

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such actions being seen as beneficial to the self. On the contrary, a pronounced possessive nature and need for control, resulting from high psychological ownership and low affective commitment, would discourage knowledge sharing as this would be seen as a cost rather than a benefit for the individual. We therefore hypothesize:

H4. The positive relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge sharing is moderated by affective commitment, with higher levels of affective commitment strengthening this relationship.

Methods

Design and Procedure

The research was approved by the Ethical Committee of Psychology at the University of Groningen preliminary to data collection as a part of a collaborative project between two students. The study adopted a cross-sectional design and was conducted through an online questionnaire, where participants' responses were recorded via Qualtrics, a web-based data collection tool. Additionally, this research was conducted in two languages: English and Dutch. The target population for this research was the working population, specifically people who had been employed at an organization for at least six months. Participation was voluntary, and completion of the survey did not entail compensation. Participants were recruited mainly through online social media platforms namely, WhatsApp, Instagram, and e-mail. A curated recruitment post was shared on relevant groups and personally sent to individuals within the researchers' networks. Additionally, convenience sampling was used to augment the recruitment strategy as participants were encouraged to forward the recruitment post to their colleagues and friends.

The questionnaire was accessible through the recruitment post used to gather participants via hyperlink. Once the hyperlink to the survey was accessed, participants were met with general information about the research and what their participation entailed. This included a brief

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description of the research topic, the estimated duration of participation, and reaffirming that participation is voluntary; hence, they may stop completing the survey if they ought to.

Additionally, it was communicated that participation was anonymous and the way in which their data would be handled and stored.

Participants were then asked to give their consent to participate in this research.

Subsequently, they were administered the survey. Firstly, participants answered questions on demographic information, such as age, gender and nationality. Participants were then asked about their employment, including the longevity of their current employment and the length of time they have worked in their field. Following this, participants completed the psychological ownership scale, the knowledge sharing scale, and the affective commitment scale. Lastly, participants were asked to verify their consent, permitting the use of their data in our research, followed by a thank you message.

Sample

A power analysis estimate was calculated with the software G*Power to determine the sample size needed to detect a small effect size with an α of 0.05 and β of 0.8. The estimated sample size was 270 participants, which was not met. The complete sample consisted of 136 participants. Data from 50 participants were excluded due to either incomplete survey responses or not meeting the requirement of being employed at their current organization for at least six months. Additionally, the survey encompassed two attention checks, where many participants failed to answer correctly. A descriptive statistics analysis was conducted focusing on the mean and standard deviation of the data with the inclusion of participants who failed the attention check compared to the exclusion of participants who failed the attention check. We concluded that means and deviations did not differ significantly between the participants who failed the

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attention check and the ones that did not; hence, these participants were not excluded, leading to a final sample of 86 participants.

The final sample consisted of workers between the ages of 18 and 66 ($M = 37.9$, $SD = 16.4$) who held their positions at their current organization for an average of 7.9 years ($SD = 9.4$). Approximately 52.3% of the sample was female ($n = 45$), followed by 46.5% male ($n = 40$), and 1.2% other ($n = 1$). The sample was predominantly Dutch ($n = 72$), with the remaining participants being of other nationalities ($n = 14$).

Measures

Psychological Ownership

The Psychological Ownership scale developed by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) was used to measure participants' feelings of ownership towards their organization of employment. The scale comprises seven items, in which participants were asked to what extent they agree with statements such as “This is MY organization” and “I feel a very high degree of personal ownership for this organization”. This was measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). After re-coding reversed items, the average of the scores was calculated, where a higher score equates to more pronounced feelings of psychological ownership towards the organization. Our study results report good reliability for psychological ownership, with a Cronbach's alpha value of $\alpha = .88$.

Knowledge Sharing

The Knowledge Sharing scale developed by Nham et al. (2020) was used to measure participants' inclination to share knowledge in the context of the workplace. The scale encompasses nine items, where participants were asked to indicate to what extent statements such as “I often share information, knowledge, skill, and experience to my colleagues” and

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“When I need new knowledge and information, I will ask others” applied to them. This was measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher average scores on this scale indicate more prominent knowledge sharing behaviors of participants within their organizations. The study results report a good reliability for the knowledge sharing scale with a Cronbach’s alpha value of $\alpha = .82$.

Affective Commitment

The affective commitment of participants towards their organizations was measured using the Affective Commitment scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). The scale constitutes seven items, where participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agree to statements such as “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me” and “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization”. Originally, measured on a 7-point Likert scale, this study adapted this measure to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Following the re-coding of reversed items, the average scores were calculated, with higher scores representing higher affective commitment towards the organization. Our study results report good reliability for affective commitment, with a Cronbach’s alpha value of $\alpha = .88$.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software (version 25). Prior to conducting the moderated regression analysis, descriptive statistics were computed. Table 1 highlights the descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation, and correlations, used to summarize the characteristics of the final sample.

Table 1.

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Descriptive Statistics

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	1	2	3
1 Psychological Ownership	86	2.80	.83		.31**	.74**
2 Knowledge Sharing	86	5.52	.77			.40**
3 Affective Commitment	86	3.21	.86			
Valid N (listwise)	86					

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 1, claiming that psychological ownership is positively associated with knowledge sharing was supported ($r = .31, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2, claiming that knowledge sharing is positively associated with affective commitment, was supported ($r = .40, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 3, claiming that psychological ownership is positively associated with affective commitment was supported ($r = .74, p < .001$).

Moderation Analysis

To investigate the positive relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge sharing as well as the moderating effect of affective commitment, a moderation analysis was conducted using the program PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013) on SPSS. Preliminary to the moderation analysis the necessary assumptions check was carried out. To test the assumption of normality of residuals, a normal predicted probability (P-P) plot was administered. The graph illustrates normal distribution with slight deviations; hence due to a small sample size, we can assume normality. A scatter plot of predicted values against residuals was performed to test the assumption of homoscedasticity. The scatter plot illustrates that residuals were evenly spread thus; we can assume homoscedasticity. Finally, we checked for the multicollinearity assumption

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through the variance inflation factor (VIF), with a VIF value below 10 ($VIF = 1.00$), we can assume the absence of multicollinearity. These results also indicate that the assumption of linearity has been met, therefore, the moderation analysis was carried out. Table 2 illustrates the model summary, and Table 3 illustrates the results of the moderation analysis.

Table 2.*Model Summary*

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	p
.40	.16	.51	1.52	3.00	82.00	.001

Table 3.*Moderation Analysis*

Model	Coeff	SE	t	p
Constant	4.68	.74	6.28	.00
PO	-.12	.34	-.35	.72
AC	.23	.24	.98	.32
PO x AC	.04	.08	.49	.62

Note. PO = Psychological Ownership, AC = Affective commitment, KS = Knowledge Sharing

Hypothesis 4, stating that the positive relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge sharing is moderated by affective commitment, with higher levels of affective commitment strengthening this relationship was insignificant ($p = .62$), thus is rejected.

Exploratory analysis

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Due to the predicted moderation effect of affective commitment being insignificant despite significant correlations between all variables, principally the strong positive correlation between psychological ownership and affective commitment ($r = .74, p < .001$), an exploratory analysis was carried out. This was done to investigate possible indirect effects of psychological ownership influencing knowledge sharing through affective commitment. Accordingly, a mediation analysis was performed. The results are illustrated in Table 4 (refer to Appendix 4).

The total effect of psychological ownership on knowledge sharing was significant [Effect = .29, 95% C.I. (.10, .48), $p = .00$], indicating that psychological ownership has a significant effect on knowledge sharing. The direct effect of psychological ownership on knowledge sharing was insignificant [Effect = .03, 95% C.I. (-.24, .30), $p = .81$]. Hence, when affective commitment was controlled for, the effect of psychological ownership on knowledge sharing was insignificant. Finally, the indirect effect of psychological ownership on knowledge sharing through affective commitment was significant [Effect = .25, 95% C.I. (.04, .45)]. This highlights psychological ownership affects knowledge sharing indirectly through affective commitment; therefore this relationship is fully mediated by affective commitment.

Discussion

The objective of the present study was to explore the relationship between feelings of psychological ownership and knowledge-sharing behaviors, additionally affective commitment was investigated as a moderator of this relationship. This research yielded significant results supporting the main effect of psychological ownership having a positive effect on knowledge-sharing behaviors. Nonetheless, affective commitment was not a significant moderator of the aforementioned relationship. Additionally, an exploratory analysis was conducted testing

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affective commitment as a mediator, indicating that the positive influence of psychological ownership on knowledge sharing is fully mediated by affective commitment.

Hypothesis 1 claiming that psychological ownership is positively associated with knowledge sharing, hypothesis 2 claiming that knowledge sharing is positively associated with affective commitment, and hypothesis 3 claiming that psychological ownership is positively associated with affective commitment, were all supported by significant research results. Hypothesis 4 stating that the positive relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge sharing is moderated by affective commitment, with higher levels of affective commitment strengthening this relationship was not observed and, therefore, not supported. Additionally, the mediation analysis performed as a part of the exploratory analysis yielded significant results, indicating that affective commitment fully mediates the relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge sharing.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of the hypothesis 1 are consistent with previous research findings suggesting that the development of psychological ownership towards an organization increases employees' positive feelings about their workplace, self-identification to the workplace, and responsibility towards their workplace, factors that encourage citizenship behaviors such as knowledge sharing (Constant et al., 1994; Podsakoff et al., 2000; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Pirkkalainen et al. 2018). Additionally, this is consistent from a social exchange theory perspective, as results support the idea that the sense of ownership promotes exchanges perceived as beneficial towards the organization. With the sharing of knowledge being a vital factor for organizational success,

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knowledge exchange may be considered a profitable action for an individual high in psychological ownership (Yan et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022).

The findings of hypothesis 2 align with published literature previously establishing the positive relation between knowledge sharing and affective commitment (Van Den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004; Li et al., 2015). This implies that when employees cultivate positive emotions and exhibit the desire to remain in their organization, they are more inclined to perform behaviors that are beneficial for the organization (Van Den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004; Li et al., 2015). Likewise, this may contribute to the social exchange theory, supporting the idea that stronger emotional connections and intentions to remain in the organization enhance extra-role attitudes amongst employees. In this perspective, extra role behaviors are seen as a beneficial exchange, aiding their intentions to remain in the organization. The findings of hypothesis 3 are consistent with literature that have previously hypothesized that psychological ownership is positively associated with affective commitment (Li et al., 2015). Additionally, the strong positive correlation between these variables may be explained through their composition. Psychological ownership is a phenomenon described to encompass both affective and cognitive elements, thus both variables are composed of a shared emotional component: affect (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004).

Although no study investigating specifically the moderating effect of affective commitment in the positive relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge sharing has been identified, the insignificant result for the aforementioned relationship goes against the theoretical framework developed for this research. The theoretical framework for the anticipated moderation was developed on the premise that psychological ownership can influence both knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding (Batool et al., 2022). Given that

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psychological ownership encompasses both affective and possessive elements, it was hypothesized that higher levels of affective commitment in employees would amplify the positive influences of psychological ownership. This includes responsibility for the target and self-identification with the target of ownership, which fosters positive work attitudes (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Complemented by the social exchange theory, in such cases, employees would be more inclined to share knowledge, perceiving the exchange of resources as beneficial for the organization hence beneficial for the self (Wang et al., 2022). Conversely, employees with low affective commitment would perhaps exhibit a pronounced possessive nature of ownership and connection to the self that amplifies the sense of control and protection, discouraging knowledge sharing. Thus, affective commitment was anticipated to influence the strength of the influence of psychological ownership on knowledge sharing. This study's results do not support the idea of affective commitment as a moderator, however, the exploratory mediation analysis revealed that the relationship between psychological ownership and knowledge-sharing behaviors are fully mediated by affective commitment.

These findings suggest that the feeling of ownership, which accentuates recognition of a target as a part of the self, and positive attitudes and responsibility towards the target, augment affective commitment (Han et al., 2010; Li et al., 2015). This in turn, increases citizenship behaviors such as knowledge sharing. Additionally, the mediating effect of affective commitment may be explained through altruism. Previous literature states that feelings of ownership result in an altruistic spirit, and employees with a high sense of altruism are more inclined to share knowledge (Pierce et al., 2001; Han et al., 2010; Li et al., 2015). Psychological ownership enhances an altruistic spirit through affective commitment, thereby indicating a mediation effect (Han et al., 2010). Furthermore, from a social exchange theory standpoint,

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results suggest that increased affective commitment towards an organization would then constitute positive behaviors towards the organization as equivalent to positive attitudes towards the self, hence promoting behaviors such as knowledge sharing since they benefit organizations.

Limitations and Future Directions

A collection of limitations, both theoretical and methodological, must be considered when interpreting the results of this research.

Design and Methods

The present study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, where participants were gathered via social media and convenience sampling. The means as well as strategy of sample collection increases the chances of gathering a sample that is not representative of the working population, limiting the generalizability of findings. Future research may adopt an alternative sampling method such as purposive sampling, where they sample from the targeted population of employed individuals.

Furthermore, online questionnaires are prone to various biases that must be considered. Firstly, this study was prone to sampling bias, where only people reached through these platforms were able to access the survey. Future studies may prevent this by adopting a different sampling method such as purposive sampling. Additionally, this research was prone to social desirability bias, entailing answering questions in a way they perceive to be correct. Future research may choose an alternative method of data collection, such as combining supervisor ratings with self-ratings. The Acquiescence bias, where individuals select answers for the purpose of completing the survey and not answering truthfully must also be considered in this study. This bias may be reduced in future studies by using varied response scales and including attention checks. In the present study, many participants failed to answer the attention checks

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designed to ensure thoughtful participation. A reason other than lack of engagement for this occurrence may have been the translation of the survey from English to Dutch. The decision to not exclude these participants was made based on a statistical analysis of deviations, and despite deviations being considered too insignificant to impact results it remains a limiting factor to this research. In case participants were filling out the survey inattentively, results may not reflect the true relationships investigated. Finally, single source bias entails that responses may be influenced by personal biases and don't reflect authentic behaviors which can be reduced by adopting supervisor ratings. Additionally, utilizing a single source in data collection limits the exploration of causal associations, which in future research may be addressed by adopting a longitudinal design.

Participants

The sample was composed predominantly of Dutch nationals, referred to as a WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic). Hence the sample does not represent the global population and the lack of diversity has the capability of concealing important effects. To overcome this, future researchers may choose to additionally target underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities and individuals from different socioeconomic representations. Additionally, the mean age of the sample was 38 years, suggesting the sample was predominantly composed of an older generation of employees. Discrepancies of age in workplace attitudes may lead to results that are not generalizable to the working population as a whole. The estimated sample size of 270 participants was not met, leading to this study having low power and increasing difficulties of establishing a true effect. Moreover, the small sample size of 86 participants limits representativeness and increases chances of overfitting data. Future

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research should consider investing time in recruiting a large enough sample to increase sample diversity, enhance statistical power and augment generalizability.

Theoretical

Both psychological ownership and knowledge are variables that can be dissected into smaller components. Previous literature has described the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge to be significant, where explicit knowledge is shared more easily (Matzler et al., 2011). Additionally, feelings of ownership may be directed towards certain components of the organization and not the organization as a whole. For instance, an individual may have high job-based psychological ownership and no psychological ownership towards their organization (Batool et al., 2022). Hence, the materials used in this research measured a broad aspect of knowledge and ownership. It should be noted that the potential specification of knowledge and ownership may lead to different results and accordingly, different conclusions and implications. Furthermore, the process of knowledge sharing can be divided into knowledge donating and knowledge collecting. Van Den Hooff and De Ridder (2004) emphasized the importance of this distinction noting it should receive more attention in theories about knowledge sharing. Future studies may choose to investigate specific components of knowledge sharing and psychological ownership, increasing accuracy of results and interpretations.

Practical Implications

This study was underpowered, accordingly the following are suggestions that would need further research to be provided as evidence. The results of this study may inspire the field of knowledge management within organizations to enhance the process of knowledge sharing, as it highlights the benefits to organizational effectiveness and competitive advantage. In line with the results, adopting practices that enhance the affective commitment of employees towards the

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organization would be an intelligent proceeding, as it has the potential to promote knowledge-sharing behaviors effectively (Van Den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004). Furthermore, perceptions of ownership may encourage positive behaviors in the workplace (Pirkkalainen et al., 2018).

Additionally, organizations should apply principles from the social exchange theory to encourage pro-organizational behaviors (Yan et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022). Finally, this study emphasizes the advantages for organizations in adopting knowledge management practices that facilitate the process of knowledge sharing (McAdam & McCreedy, 2000).

Conclusion

To conclude, the present study provides evidence that the effects of psychological ownership on knowledge-sharing behaviors is fully mediated by affective commitment. Nevertheless, this research emphasizes the affective nature of psychological ownership, posing inquiries regarding which individual difference variables amplify the possessive nature of psychological ownership and what the resulting outcomes might entail.

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Appendix 1
Psychological Ownership Scale (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004)

7 items, 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Psychological ownership Instructions : Think about the home , boat or cabin that you own or co - own with someone , and the experiences and feelings associated with the statement ' THIS IS MY (OUR) HOUSE ! ' The following questions deal with the ' sense of ownership ' that you feel for the organization that you work for . Indicate the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with the following statements .

- 1- This is MY organization
- 2- I sense that this organization is OUR company
- 3- I feel a very high degree of personal ownership for this organization
- 4- I sense that this is MY company
- 5- This is OUR company
- 6- Most of the people that work for this organization feel as though they own the company
- 7- It is hard for me to think about this organization as MINE *

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Appendix 2
Knowledge Sharing Scale (Nham et al., 2020)

9 items, 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

- 1- When I have learned new skills or acquired new information , I tell my colleagues about it
- 2- When my colleagues have learned new skills or acquired new information , they tell me about it
- 3- Knowledge sharing among colleagues is considered normal in my company
- 4- I often share information , knowledge , skill and experience to my colleagues
- 5- I tend to collect information and skills from my colleagues
- 6- Colleagues in my company share knowledge and skills with me when I ask them to
- 7- I ask my colleagues to teach me about their experience and expertise
- 8- People in my organization frequently share existing reports and official documents with members of my organization
- 9- When I need new knowledge and information , I will ask others

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Appendix 3
Affective Commitment Scale (Allen and Meyer, 1990)

6 items, 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

- 1- I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization
- 2- I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own
- 3- I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization*
- 4- This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me
- 5- I enjoy discussing about my organization with people outside it
- 6- I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization *
- 7- I feel like 'part of the family' at my organization

Appendix 4

Table 4.

Exploratory Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	Direct Effects			Indirect Effects				Total Effects			
	Coefficient	T	p	Coefficient	SE	p	Bootstrap 95% C.I. L	U	Coefficient	T	p
PO>AC>KS	.03	.23	.81	.25	.10		.04	.45	.29	3.05	.00

Note. PO = Psychological Ownership, AC = Affective commitment, KS = Knowledge Sharing