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Knowledge Sharing Behaviour of Post Graduate Students of Management in Northern India.

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Abstract

Knowledge is a combination of experience, values, contextual information and expert insight that help evaluate and incorporate new experience and information. For an educational institute, more so a higher educational institute, Knowledge is the core and knowledge sharing is essence of its very existence.

Literature study on the subject of Knowledge Management by Gold, Malhotra, Segar (Gold, Malhotra & Segars, 2001); Lee and Choi (Lee H & Choi B, 2003); Alavi & Tiwana (Alavi M & Tiwana A, 2005) as applicable to industrial organizations in the advanced countries has proven the influence of technical infrastructure, organization culture, organization structure and staff skills on the Knowledge Management Capabilities of the organization.

In higher educational institutes, in spite of there being no monetary benefits, it is observed that students do share knowledge among themselves in hostel rooms, canteen, corridors, library or free periods etc.

Purpose of this research is to study of the impact of some of the key factors like human values, interpersonal trust, language & communication, norms and beliefs on the knowledge sharing among the Post Graduate Students of Management.

Keywords: Knowledge, Knowledge Management, Knowledge Conversion, Knowledge Application, Knowledge Sharing, Culture, Human Behaviour, Higher Education, Information, Data.

1. Introduction

With the emergence of knowledge economy and the advent of technologies that transfer data at the speed of light, knowledge became a precious commodity and gave rise to a new field of Knowledge Management. The process of knowledge management depends on several factors like Technology, Work Culture, Organization Structure, Knowledge Acquisition Process, Knowledge Sharing Process and Knowledge Protection Process. Amongst all these factors, Knowledge Sharing

is the most commonly discussed activity in the process of Knowledge Management. (Ford, D., 2001).

Knowledge Sharing is a very intricate and complex phenomenon because Knowledge not only exists in documents and repositories, but it becomes embedded in people's minds overtime and it is demonstrated through their actions and behaviours. As knowledge is regarded to be a valuable resource in any profession, it is human nature to feel insecure in sharing knowledge at the work place. There is a natural tendency in every individual to hoard knowledge and consequently there is no motivation to share it with others unless the individual is convinced, rewarded or recognised properly (Chua, A, 2005).

2. Knowledge Sharing

According to (Jasimuddin, S. M., 2005), stored knowledge is useless if it is not transferred for further use within the organization. According to (Schwartz; Divitini, M. & Brashethvik, 2000), knowledge sharing constitutes retrieval of the relevant knowledge at the right time. According to (Mamta Busry & Jayanti Ranjan, 2011)**,** knowledge sharing refers to the transfer and deployment of knowledge to the points of use – people, practices, technology, products and services - through training, education and automated knowledge based systems.

In many a business organizations, knowledge sharing leads to profit generation (Cheng, M. Y., Ho, J. S. Y., & Lau, P. M., 2009). Mangers used to pay incentives to encourage employees to share their knowledge so as to improve the group's performance (Choi, B., Poon, S. K., & Davis, J. G., 2008).

But, what about universities? Universities are non-profit organization and considered to be mother source of New Knowledge Generation. Unlike an organization, in an educational institute, there are no monetary rewards for students to share knowledge among themselves, yet students do share knowledge among themselves.

2.1 Knowledge sharing among student community

Higher Educational Institutes are centred around knowledge. Almost all activities related to a Higher Educational Institute are directed towards generation, preservation, diffusion and sharing of knowledge. Teachers, students, researchers are all working towards this goal supported by other supporting staff.

According to Mikulecky and Mikulecka, (Mikulecky and Mikulecka, 1999), by its nature, Higher Educational Institute environment is suitable for the application of knowledge management principles and methods The reasons include

- universities usually possess modern information infrastructure,
- knowledge sharing with others is natural for lecturers, and
- the desire of students is to acquire knowledge from accessible sources as fast as possible.

According to Metaxiotis and Psarras, (Metaxiotis & John Psarras, 2006), there are three major missions of universities and all three are Knowledge Management centric :

- Teaching – to prepare students to become successful lifelong learners,
- Research – to expand the frontiers of human knowledge and to promote
- Creativity, and
- Service – to participate in outreach activities that serve the local, national, and
- international communities.

Knowledge Generation and thereby Knowledge Sharing is an essential activity of a university especially among post graduate students who are considered to be mature and preparing themselves to take up their careers where their acquired knowledge shall be put to test.

According to Davenport and Prusak (Davenport, T. H. & Prusak, L., 1998), knowledge sharing is a new alteration in human behaviour and factors like organization cultural values, interpersonal trust, communication channels of knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, reputation, maturity, humility, helping nature, play a key role in behaviour of an individual and thereby his/her knowledge sharing behaviour. Assuming all other factors to be constant, this research aims at investigating the role of Human Values, Interpersonal Trust, Language/Communication and Norms/Beliefs on the knowledge sharing behaviour of post graduate students of management.

3 Development of Hypothesis

Based on the literature study as illustrated above, it is obvious individual values has bearing on Knowledge Sharing behaviour of an individual. In a higher educational institute which drives its strength from knowledge sharing, it is even more significant.

Knowledge sharing by faculty to students in a class room or even outside the classroom is one aspect of knowledge transfer driven by reward, recognition and monetary benefit. However, our area of interest is knowledge sharing among students where there is no monetary reward. There is culture driven human factors beyond monetary rewards which can make students to share knowledge among themselves.

3.1 Human Values

Human Values is defined as acceptable behaviour within the society. Human values are passed by parents to their offspring soon after childbirth and are instilled throughout the children's upbringing. As they grow, children learn more values from their peers, religious leaders, teachers, friends and society at large. These attributes include caring & sharing; discipline; selflessness; fairness; justice for one another.

Human Value attributes like helping other, caring and sharing, selflessness among students in a classroom can lead to knowledge sharing especially among post graduate students who are mature by the time they are completing post-graduation.

Therefore, the following Hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 01:

Among postgraduate students there is a positive relationship between “Human Values” and their

"Knowledge Sharing Behaviour."

3.2 Interpersonal Trust

According to Politis (Politis, J. , 2003), inter personal trust is known as an individual or a group's expectancy in the reliability of the promise or actions of other individuals. Trust is essential for social interaction and the mutual exchange process, and plays a vital role in the knowledge sharing process (Pai, J. C., 2006). Trust is essential to knowledge sharing and numerous authors believe that people willingly exchange knowledge with each other when trust exists among them (Bakker, M, Leenders, R., Gabbay, S. Kratzer, J & Van Engelen, J. , 2006). According to (Rosendaal, B., 2009), an influential factor that affects knowledge sharing in organisation is the social climate and trust among team members with a strong support from management.
Therefore, the following Hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 02:
Among postgraduate students there is a positive relationship between "Interpersonal Trust" and their "Knowledge Sharing Behaviour."

3.3 Language/ Communication

Language / Communication is a human interaction through oral conversations and the use of body language while communicating. In a post graduate classroom where students come from various cultural backgrounds having different languages or even same culture with differences in terminology and inflexion, communication between students has an impact on their knowledge sharing behaviour.

Therefore, the following Hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 03:
Among postgraduate students there is a positive relationship between "Language / Communication" and their "Knowledge Sharing Behaviour."

3.4 Norms & Beliefs

Norms & Beliefs are the set of rules, set of beliefs, traditions, set of behavioural pattern that is considered to be normal within a culture. Certain aspects of one culture that is normal for them may be totally unacceptable to other culture. Passed from one generation to the next, cultural norms are the shared, sanctioned, and integrated systems of beliefs and practices that characterize a cultural group. These norms foster reliable guides for daily living and contribute to the well-being of the group. As prescriptions for correct and moral behaviour, cultural norms lend meaning and coherence to life, as well as the means to achieve a sense of integrity, safety and belonging. Thus, normative beliefs, together with related values and rituals, confer a sense of order and control upon individuals living within these norms.
Therefore, the following Hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 04:
Among postgraduate students there is a positive relationship between "Norms & Beliefs" and their "Knowledge Sharing Behaviour."

4 Research Model

To address the research issue, a research model as shown in Figure 1 is proposed. Using a research questionnaire, the impact of Human Values, Interpersonal Trust, Language /Communication and Norms/Beliefs on the knowledge sharing among post graduate students of management in northern India is analysed.

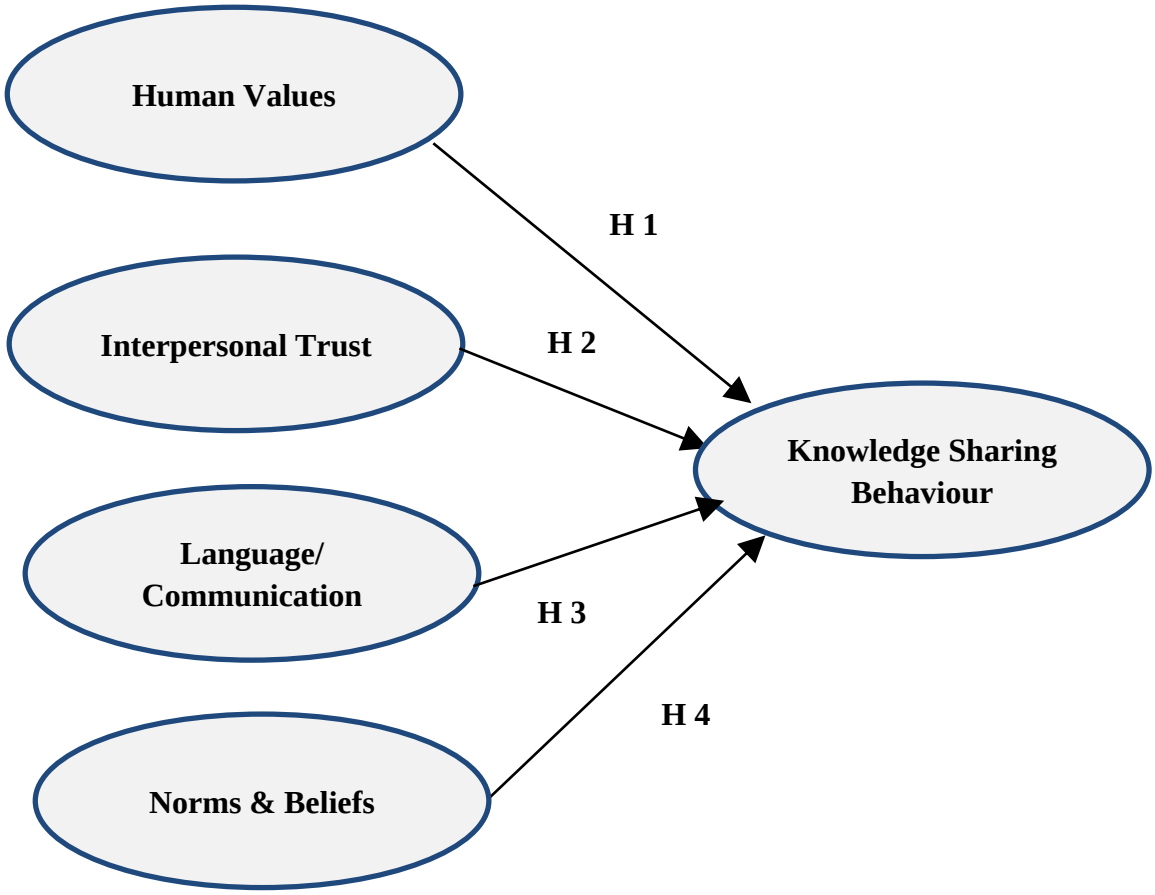

Figure 1 : Research Model of Knowledge Sharing Among Post Graduate Students

This research is intended to contribute in understanding the role and factors of knowledge sharing in a university environment so that knowledge sharing can be effectively promoted among student community.

4.1 Research Method and Data Collection

Research Questionnaire was used to collect data from the closed group of Post Graduate Management students of a class such that knowledge sharing between classmates can be assessed. Measurement items of the questionnaire as given in Table 1 below were adapted from previous research studies of similar nature (Wasko, M. M. L. & Faraj S., 2005); (Bock, G. W.; Zmud, R. W.; Kim, Y.G. & Lee, J. N., 2005) and (Lin, H. H., 2007).

Five point Likert-type scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree' is used for measurement purpose.

Human Values	
HV 01	I share my assignment/lecture notes with my classmates.
HV 02	Helping my classmates in their project work / assignments gives me satisfaction.
HV 03	I look forward to opportunities to share my knowledge with my classmates.
HV 04	It gives me pleasure if my classmates seek my help in studies.
HV 05	I have a Helping Nature.
Interpersonal Trust	
IT 01	In our class, most of our classmates are trustworthy to share correct knowledge.
IT 02	I share my knowledge with my classmates, even if this may result in their getting higher marks.
IT 03	In our class, students share knowledge with only those students, who share with them.
IT 04	I normally trust my class fellows.
Language / Communication	
LC 01	In our class, we only share knowledge with those who understand our language.
LC 02	Some of our classmates hesitate in talking as they cannot communicate effectively.
LC 03	I believe that group discussions in class enhance communication between classmates.
LC 04	I believe that language & communication is a tool for better understanding.
Norms & Beliefs	
NB 01	I believe that we should help out each other in studies by sharing knowledge.
NB 02	I frankly admit in case I do not know the topic that my classmate/s has asked me to share.
NB 03	I ensure that whatever knowledge I am sharing with my classmates is correct.
NB 04	It gives me a bad feeling if I am not able to share the knowledge when asked for.
Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	
KS 01	I ask my classmates for help, whenever I have difficulty in my studies.
KS 02	I discuss new ideas with my classmates during free periods or canteen visits.
KS 03	I enjoy studying in a group where problems can be shared and discussed.
KS 04	In our class, we discuss and share class notes among ourselves
KS 05	I believe that we must share knowledge for better society.

Table 1: Latent Variables & Their Measures from previous research studies (Wasko, M. M. L. & Faraj S., 2005); (Bock, G. W.; Zmud, R. W.; Kim, Y.G. & Lee, J. N., 2005) and (Lin, H. H., 2007).

4.2 Data Analysis and Results

Questionnaire containing 22 items to measure 5 constructs was administered to 120 post graduate students of management. Caution was taken to collect data from final year students as it is perceived that they would be better informed. On cleaning data, only 106 questionnaires were retained and used for data analysis.

4.3 Content Reliability and Validity

Cronback alpha is perhaps the most common indicator of reliability. Cronback alpha value of 0.70 and above is considered to be reliable. However, according to Hair et al (Hair, J.F.; Anderson, R.E.; Tatham, R.L. & Black, W.C., 2006), in case research is exploratory in nature, value less than 0.07 have been deemed acceptable.

Reliability indicates the internal consistency of the items. For a construct to be reliable, its items are internally consistent if and only if their inter-correlation is high (Hair, J.F.; Anderson, R.E.; Tatham, R.L. & Black, W.C., 2006).

Using SPSS for data analysis, Item-Total Correlation was studied and wherever, Item-Total Correlation is less than 0.5, Item was deleted and Corrected Item – Total Correlation generated. As given in Table 2, in certain cases, where Item-Total Correlation is slightly less than 0.5, it has been retained, if it does not improve overall reliability. As seen in Table 2, removal of item LC 04 in Language & Communication construct results in betterment of Cronbach alpha from 0.667 to 0.876. Hence Item LC 04 is removed.

4.4 Construct Validity

Construct validity is a measure of goodness of constructs to measure what they are purport to measure. If all the constructs, converge towards same measure it has convergent validity. It measures as to what extent each item in a construct correlates with other items of the construct. Construct validity is measured through Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity and Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

In other words, variances among various items of a construct is an indication towards construct validity. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is a measure of construct validity and a value of around 0.5 is considered god fitness. Using Smart PLS software, Table 3 was generated which shows value of AVE which is around 0.626 when averaged over 5 readings.

According to Chau (Chau P. Y. K., 1997), high Inter-Item Correlation within each construct indicates a high convergent validity.

4.5 Use of Smart PLS (Partial Least Square) for Modelling

Compared to Regression Analysis or first generation SEM (Structural Equation Modelling), PLS is a second generation modelling technique which gives:

- Relationship between latent variables and their measure,
- Relationship as to how the items/measures or indicators are related to latent variables,
- Weight relationships between indicators and variables.

Smart PLS software is used in this research to generate both, the measurement model and structural model. Measurement model ensured that only valid measures which meet Cronbach alpha and item-total correlation are used in the study while structural analysis is used to study relationship and its weightage. Apart from Cronbach alpha, reliability of each variable was assessed through Farnell and Larcker measure of Composite Reliability. Composite Reliability is preferred over Cronbach alpha because it offers a better estimate of variances shared by respective indicators.

	First Iteration			Second Iteration	
Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Item-total Correlation		Cronbach Alpha	Item-total Correlation
Human Value	0.817	HV 01	0.527	0.817	0.527
		HV 02	0.718		0.718
		HV 03	0.620		0.620
		HV 04	0.614		0.614
		HV 05	0.576		0.576
Interpersonal Trust	0.728	IT 01	0.634	0.829	0.697
		IT 02	0.755		0.819
		IT 03	0.523		0.566
		IT 04	0.229	Item Deleted	
Language & Communication	0.774	LC 01	0.597	0.876	0.651
		LC 02	0.777		0.812
		LC 03	0.788		0.830
		LC 04	0.202	Item Deleted	
Norms & Beliefs	0.800	NB 01	0.509	0.800	0.509
		NB 02	0.762		0.762
		NB 03	0.662		0.662
		NB 04	0.533		0.533
Knowledge Sharing	0.699	KS 01	0.558	0.700	0.585
		KS 02	0.661		0.485
		KS 03	0.406		0.439
		KS 04	0.463		0.433
		KS 05	0.051	Item Deleted	

Table 2: Study of Cronback alpha and Corrected Item –Total Correlation derived using SPSS.

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Human Value	**0.818**	**0.798**	**0.458**
Interpersonal Trust	**0.828**	**0.889**	**0.728**
Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	**0.699**	**0.793**	**0.496**
Language & Communication	**0.876**	**0.919**	**0.790**
Norms & Beliefs	**0.800**	**0.868**	**0.622**

Table 3 : Construct Reliability & Validity using Smart PLS

Loadings and Cross Loadings as depicted in Table 4 and Table 5, mostly exceed the recommended value of 0.6 signifying the validity of construct.

	Human Value	Interpersonal Trust	Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	Language & Communication	Norms & Beliefs
HV01	0.683				
HV02	0.938				
HV03	0.693				
HV04	0.413				
HV05	0.541				
IT01		0.777			
IT02		0.900			
IT03		0.877			
KS01			0.670		
KS02			0.746		
KS03			0.523		
KS04			0.840		
LC01				0.896	
LC02				0.885	
LC03				0.886	
NB01					0.742
NB02					0.855
NB03					0.772
NB04					0.781

Table 4 : Loadings using Smart PLS

5 Measurement Model

Smart PLS software was used for creating Measurement Model. Between Covariance based Structural Equation Modelling and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling, later is considered to be more robust and hence Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling has been used (Falk, R. F. ; Miller, N. B. , 1992).

In order to assess the Significance Level of path analysis and hypothesis, Partial Least Square Bootstrapping procedure was undertaken in Smart PLS with 500 re-samples. Composite Reliability and AVE as given in Table 3 shows goodness of measures. Recommended benchmark of Composite Reliability is 0.7 and above as given by Gefen et al (Gefen, D.; Detmar, S.; & Boudreau, M. C., 2000).

Similarly, recommended value of AVE is 0.5 and higher (Bagozzi, R.P. & Youjae, Y., 1988).

Loadings and Cross Loadings as depicted in Table 4 and Table 5, mostly exceed the recommended value of 0.6 (Chin, W. W.; Gopal, A. & Salisbury, W. D., 1997) signifying the validity.

	Human Value	Interpersonal Trust	Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	Language & Communication	Norms & Beliefs
HV01	0.683	0.299	0.098	0.155	0.232
HV02	0.938	0.207	0.195	0.277	0.354
HV03	0.693	0.105	0.112	0.311	0.429
HV04	0.413	0.162	-0.084	0.294	0.376
HV05	0.541	0.314	-0.002	0.246	0.217
IT01	0.302	0.777	0.100	0.184	0.189
IT02	0.253	0.900	0.187	0.199	0.180
IT03	0.116	0.877	0.242	0.127	0.222
KS01	0.220	0.049	0.670	0.175	0.136
KS02	0.155	0.252	0.746	-0.025	0.243
KS03	0.102	0.046	0.523	0.116	0.097
KS04	0.184	0.194	0.840	0.175	0.432
LC01	0.311	0.210	0.169	0.896	0.238
LC02	0.155	0.105	0.110	0.885	0.135
LC03	0.212	0.165	0.088	0.886	0.228
NB01	0.283	0.210	0.324	0.080	0.742
NB02	0.295	0.216	0.270	0.174	0.855
NB03	0.208	0.091	0.222	0.015	0.772
NB04	0.345	0.188	0.363	0.378	0.781

Table 5 : Cross Loadings using Smart PLS.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Human Value -> Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	0.073	0.010	0.246	0.297	0.767
Interpersonal Trust -> Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	0.129	0.138	0.092	1.399	0.162
Language & Communication -> Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	0.029	0.077	0.118	0.249	0.803
Norms & Beliefs -> Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	0.324	0.323	0.114	2.849	0.005
Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	0.176	0.263	0.068	2.602	0.010

Table 6: Path Co-efficient & T Value computed through bootstrapping procedure with 500 re-sample using Partial Least Square Structural Model of Smart PLS.

6 Structural Model

Structural Model has been generated using Smart PLS as shown in Figure 2. Partial Least Square Structural Model using Smart PLS mentioning Outer Loadings & t-value in brackets for Outer Model i.e. From measures to latent. For Inner Model i.e. from latent variable to variable, path co-efficient

with t-values in brackets is mentioned.

For dependent latent variable i.e. Knowledge Sharing Behaviour, R- Squared value as calculated by Smart PLS is 0.176. Because PLS does not require data to be normally distributed, R-squared value is calculated for dependent variable. R- squared value determines as to how well the model fits the hypothesized relationship. This is the squared multiple correlation for each dependent construct in the model. According to Cohen (Cohen, J., 1988), R^2 value of 0.26 is substantial; 0.13 is moderate and 0.02 is weak.

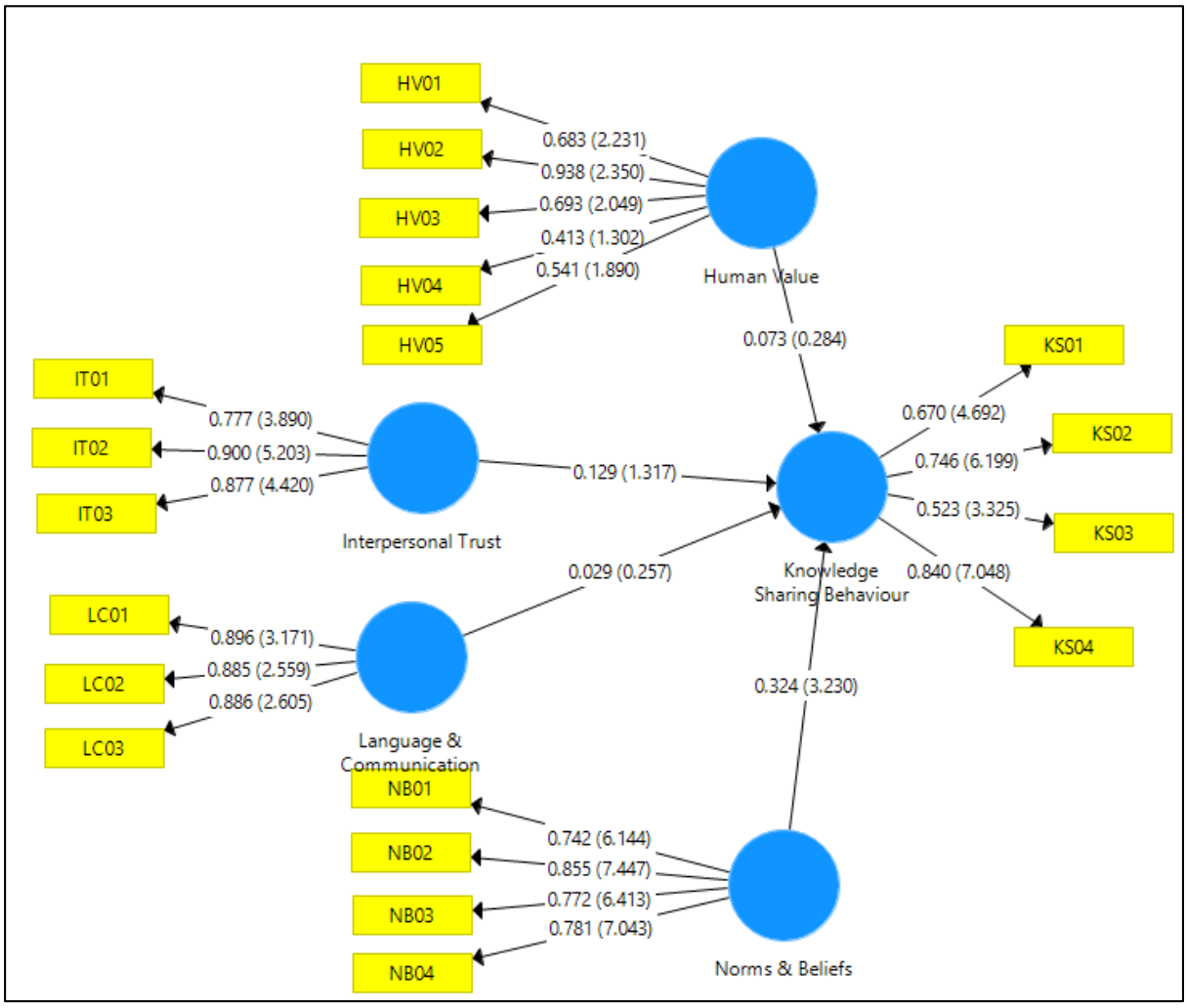

Figure 2 : Partial Least Square Structural Model using Smart PLS mentioning Outer Loadings & t-value in brackets for Outer Model i.e. From measures to latent. For Inner Model i.e. from latent variable to variable, path co-efficient with t-values in brackets is mentioned.

Table 7 is Path Co-efficient & t-value computed through bootstrapping procedure with 500 re-sample using Partial Least Square Structural Model of Smart PLS. According to Dr Gayatri Band, (Gayathri Band & Neera V Shah, 2014) critically acceptable t-value (Table Value) is above 1.65 at Significance Level of 10% (a=0.10, two sided test); above 1.96 at Significance Level of 5% (a=0.05, two sided test) and it is above 2.57 for 1% (a=.010, two sided test). According to Lohmoller, (Lohmoller, J., 1989) Path Co-efficient greater than 0.1 is acceptable.

As seen from Figure 2 and Table 7, relationship between Norms & Beliefs and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour is significant with Path Co-efficient of 0.324 and t-value of 2.602 (table value is 1.65 at a=.010). This indicates that 'Norms & Beliefs' have a direct positive influence on the Knowledge Sharing Behaviour among the post graduate students of management. Co-efficient of 0.324 indicates that 100 points change in 'Norms & Beliefs' will impact 32.4 points on Knowledge Sharing Behaviour. All the four measures of 'Norms & Beliefs' have high path co-efficient and high average t-value.

Relationship between Interpersonal Trust and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour is depicted with a path co-efficient of 0.129 and t- value of 1.317 (table value is 1.65 at a=.010). Since t-value of 1.317 is less than 1.65, it is deduced that Interpersonal Trust does not have a high positive influence on the Knowledge Sharing Behaviour.

Relationship between Human Values and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour has path co-efficient of 0.073 and t- value of 0.284 (table value is 1.65 at a=.010). Since t-value is much less than 1.65, it is deduced that Human Values does not have a high positive influence on the Knowledge Sharing Behaviour.

Construct	**Measures / Items**	**Beta Value**	**t-value**
Human Values	HV 01	0.683	2.231
	HV 02	0.938	2.350
	HV 03	0.693	2.049
	HV 04	0.413	1.302
	HV 05	0.541	1.890
Interpersonal Trust	IT 01	0.777	3.890
	IT 02	0.900	5.203
	IT 03	0.877	4.420
Language & Communication	LC 01	0.896	3.171
	LC 02	0.885	2.559
	LC 03	0.886	2.605
Norms & Beliefs	NB 01	0.742	6.144
	NB 02	0.855	7.447
	NB 03	0.772	6.413
	NB 04	0.781	7.043
Knowledge Sharing Behaviour	KS 01	0.670	4.692
	KS 02	0.746	6.199
	KS 03	0.523	3.325
	KS 04	0.840	7.048
Knowledge Sharing	Human Values	0.073	0.284
	Interpersonal Trust	0.129	1.317
	Language &	0.029	0.257
	Norms & Beliefs	0.324	3.230

Table 7: Generated using values from Figure 2 above.

Similarly, relationship between Language & Communication and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour has path co-efficient of 0.029 and t- value of 0.257 (table value is 1.65 at a=.010). Since t-value is much less than 1.65, it is deduced that Language & Communication does not have a high positive influence on the Knowledge Sharing Behaviour.

7 Conclusion

Based on the selection of Latent Variables and its Measures and hypothesis developed for this study, it is seen by applying the model to Smart PLS software that 'Norms and Beliefs' of a culture are the major contributor towards Knowledge Sharing Behaviour of Post Graduate students of management. Four measures of the Norms & Beliefs include belief that we should help out each other; admit in case we do not know rather than sharing incorrect knowledge and a concern for the fellow students.

All the other three latent variables selected for the study i.e. Human Values, Interpersonal Trust and Language/Communication has no direct bearing on Knowledge Sharing Behaviour of Post Graduate students of management in Northern India.

8 Limitations & Future Research

There are recognizable limitations of this research study. The first limitation is that due to resource constrains, the research has been conducted in Northern India only where only one culture predominates and therefore the study does not reflect multi-cultural traits.

Secondly, the study has been conducted among Post Graduate students of Management and therefore cannot be generalised.
Thirdly, the study has considered only four factors of culture i.e. Human Values, Interpersonal Trust, Language & Communication and Norms & Beliefs. There are many other factors like religious traits, community practices, etc. which have not been considered.
This research study opens up many a direction for future research especially in relation to Indian Culture as this is a preliminary research as for Indian Knowledge Management is concerned. Future research can consider all those factors of culture which have been left out in this study. Future research can study can consider all higher educational areas and can also be conducted in larger geographical areas.

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