

Influence of Social Capital Dimensions and Social Cognition on Individuals' Willingness to Share Knowledge

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the influence of social capital and social cognition on the willingness of employees at the National Museum of Iran to share knowledge.

Methodology: This applied research employed a descriptive-survey design. The statistical population comprised all employees of the National Museum of Iran in 2025. Using Cochran's formula and a simple random sampling method, 184 valid questionnaires were collected. Data were gathered through a composite questionnaire measuring the dimensions of social capital, social cognition, and knowledge sharing. The validity and reliability of the instrument were confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was conducted through Pearson correlation tests and structural equation modeling (SEM) using LISREL software.

Findings: The results showed that all three dimensions of social capital have a positive and significant effect on knowledge sharing. Similarly, the dimensions of social cognition—including social goals, self-efficacy, and attributions—exert a positive and significant influence on employees' willingness to share knowledge. In addition, the model fit indices indicated an acceptable and optimal fit for the proposed research model.

Conclusion: Social capital, by fostering communication networks and trust, and social cognition, by strengthening individual beliefs and social goals, jointly create a complementary foundation for knowledge sharing. Accordingly, managers of museums and cultural organizations can improve knowledge flow by reinforcing trust, enhancing employees' self-efficacy, cultivating shared goals, and managing employees' emotions.

Value: The contribution of this study lies in the simultaneous application of two theoretical perspectives—social capital and social cognition—which offers a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping employees' willingness to share knowledge.

Keywords: *Social capital, Social cognition, Knowledge sharing, National Museum of Iran*

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Extended Abstract

Introduction: Knowledge sharing is a fundamental component of knowledge management and a critical driver of organizational efficiency, innovation, and the development of intellectual capital. In cultural organizations such as museums, the importance of this process becomes even more pronounced. Much of the knowledge held by museum employees is tacit, experiential, and highly specialized, and its transfer is essential for preserving, developing, and transmitting cultural heritage. Despite this necessity, empirical evidence indicates that knowledge sharing in many organizations—including cultural institutions—often remains suboptimal, as employees may be inclined to retain their individual expertise rather than share it. Focusing on the National Museum of Iran, the present study seeks to identify the factors that enhance employees' willingness to share knowledge.

Within the theoretical literature, two major frameworks—social capital and social cognition—have been particularly influential in explaining knowledge-related behaviors. Social capital theory emphasizes how the structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions of interpersonal connections serve as a foundation for knowledge exchange. In contrast, Bandura's social cognition theory highlights the role of individual beliefs, social goals, and attributional tendencies in shaping behavioral intentions, including the willingness to share knowledge. Investigating these two perspectives together provides a more holistic understanding of the mechanisms through which knowledge-based behaviors emerge in cultural organizations. Given that museum work relies heavily on professional interactions, the exchange of historical and cultural expertise, and collaborative engagement among specialists, identifying the determinants of knowledge sharing holds substantial practical value. Such insights can inform policies related to human resource management, organizational learning, and the professional development of museum staff. Accordingly, the present study aims to analyze the influence of the dimensions of social capital and social cognition on employees' willingness to share knowledge in the National Museum of Iran.

Purpose: The primary objective of this study is to examine the effect of the dimensions of social capital and social cognition on the willingness of employees at the National Museum of Iran to share knowledge. To achieve this aim, the study investigates the role of three dimensions of social capital—structural, relational, and cognitive—and three components of social cognition—social goals, self-efficacy, and attributions—on two dimensions of knowledge sharing: knowledge donation and knowledge collection. This theoretical combination is relatively innovative within the knowledge management literature and offers a comprehensive framework for understanding knowledge-related behaviors in cultural and highly specialized organizational settings. Beyond its theoretical contribution, the study seeks to provide practical guidance for managers of cultural organizations, particularly those overseeing the National Museum of Iran. By identifying the factors that significantly influence knowledge sharing, managers can design targeted mechanisms to enhance knowledge flow across employees. The findings are expected to address existing gaps in the literature on knowledge management and organizational behavior while informing policy directions aimed at improving the effectiveness of knowledge sharing within cultural institutions.

Methodology: This study is applied in nature and employs a descriptive–survey research design. The statistical population consisted of 318 employees of the National



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Museum of Iran in 1404. Using Cochran's formula, a sample size of 184 participants was determined, and 184 valid questionnaires were collected for analysis. Data were gathered using a standard questionnaire comprising 31 items organized into three sections: social capital, social cognition, and knowledge sharing. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the validity of the constructs was examined through confirmatory factor analysis. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were first applied, followed by structural equation modeling (SEM) using LISREL software. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the factor loadings of all items exceeded the acceptable threshold, and the t-statistics for all items were greater than the critical value of 1.96, confirming convergent validity. The model fit indices demonstrated an acceptable level of model fit. Specifically, the RMSEA value was 0.042, the χ^2/df ratio was close to 2, and the GFI, AGFI, NFI, and NNFI indices were all above 0.90, indicating a satisfactory fit of the proposed model. In the structural model, the effects of the dimensions of social capital and social cognition on knowledge sharing were examined separately. The structural dimension of social capital showed a positive and significant effect on knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 3.31$), while the relational dimension also demonstrated a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 3.64$). Within the social cognition components, the attribution variable exhibited the strongest effect on knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.57$, $t = 7.71$). The detailed results of these analyses are presented in Table 1.



Table 1. Summary of the acceptance range and the obtained value of the model fitness indices

Index	$\frac{\chi^2}{df}$	SRMR	RMSEA	GIF	AGIF	NFI	NNFI	IFI	TLI
Acceptance range	1-5	0.05>	0.05>	0.09<	0.09<	0.09<	0.09<	0-1	0.09<
Calculated value	1.92	0.045	0.046	0.92	0.94	0.94	0.98	0.86	0.96

Findings: The findings derived from the structural model analysis in LISREL indicate that all research hypotheses were supported. Both the dimensions of social capital and the components of social cognition exert a positive and significant influence on knowledge sharing among employees of the National Museum of Iran. Specifically, the results show that the structural dimension of social capital positively affects knowledge-sharing behaviors ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 3.31$). This suggests that the organization's communication structure, interaction networks, and employees' access to formal and informal channels of information transfer play an important role in facilitating the exchange of knowledge. Among the dimensions of social capital, the relational dimension demonstrated the strongest effect on knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 3.64$). This highlights the importance of trust, mutual respect, and strong interpersonal ties in shaping knowledge flow within the museum. Given the specialized and collaborative nature of museum work—such as conservation, archaeology, restoration, and documentation—professional trust and sustained interaction naturally enhance the transfer of expertise and experience. The cognitive dimension of social capital was also confirmed, with a t-value exceeding the critical threshold of 1.96 and a statistically significant effect coefficient. This underscores the influence of shared professional language, common cultural and organizational goals, and a collective understanding of the importance of knowledge transfer in shaping employees' knowledge-sharing behaviors. In the domain of social cognition, the attribution component exhibited the strongest overall effect in the model ($\beta = 0.57$, $t = 7.71$). This finding indicates that employees who attribute individual and organizational achievements to collective effort and collaborative knowledge creation

are significantly more inclined to share their knowledge with others. Social goals were also found to be significant, suggesting that social motives, professional identity, and a sense of responsibility toward cultural heritage preservation serve as key drivers of knowledge sharing in museum settings. The structural model fit indices further support the validity of the proposed framework. The RMSEA value (0.042), along with GFI, AGFI, NFI, and NNFI values all exceeding 0.90, indicate a strong and acceptable model fit. Collectively, these findings confirm the central role of social capital and social cognition in promoting knowledge-sharing behaviors in cultural organizations such as the National Museum of Iran.

Overall, the findings indicate that within the National Museum of Iran, the combination of strong social ties and positive cognitive beliefs regarding the value of knowledge sharing has the greatest predictive power for employees' knowledge-sharing behavior. This result highlights the simultaneous importance of two key domains—organizational trust derived from social capital and motivational beliefs derived from social cognition—in fostering effective knowledge management within cultural organizations. The results suggest that when employees operate within a network characterized by trustful relationships, collaborative interactions, and shared professional understanding, and at the same time possess positive cognitive beliefs about the benefits and outcomes of knowledge sharing, their willingness to exchange knowledge significantly increases. Consequently, both interpersonal relational structures and individual cognitive motivations jointly shape knowledge-sharing practices in museum environments. The structural model of the research is presented in two formats: standard estimation coefficients and t-values, illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

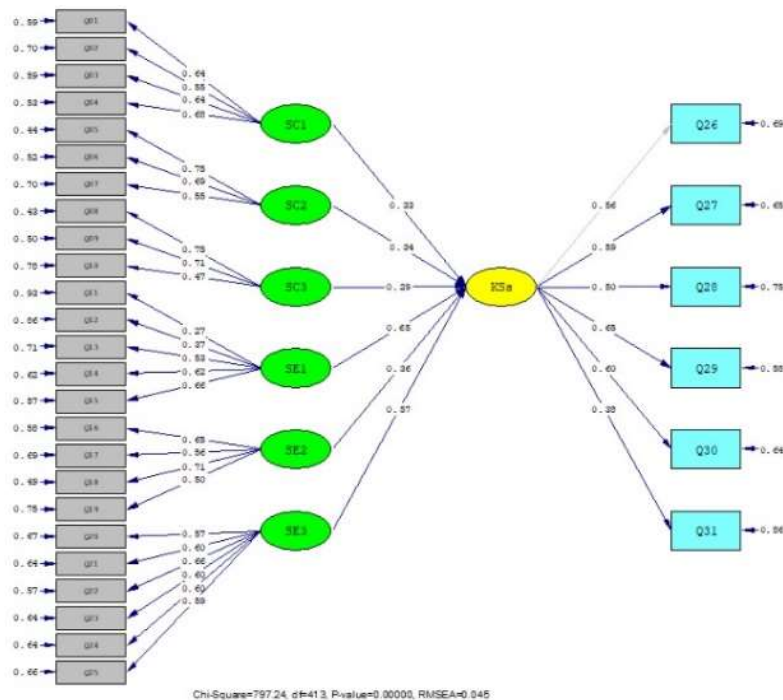


Figure 1. Structural model of the research (standard estimate)

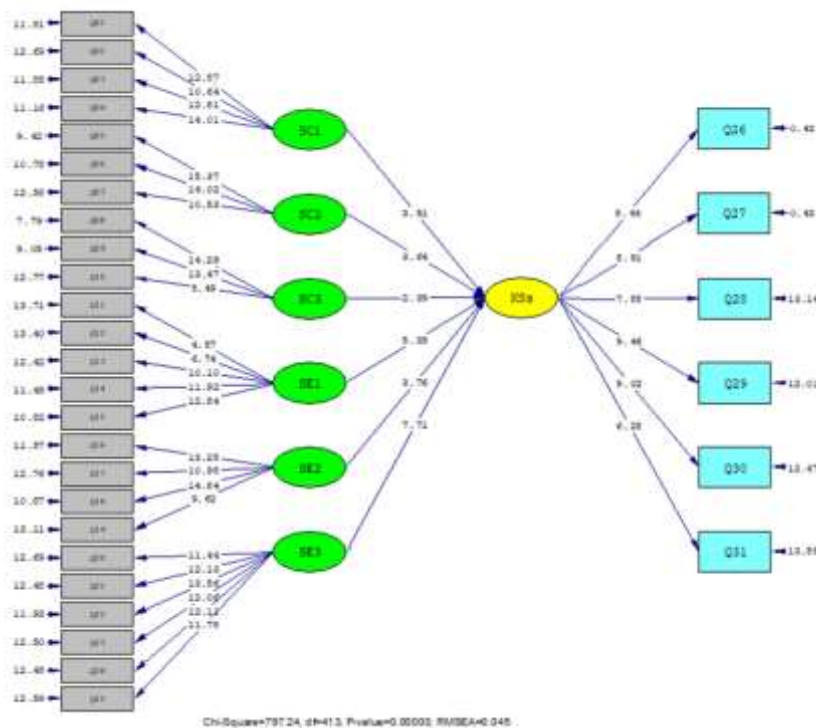


Figure 2. Structural model of the research (t-statistics)



Conclusion: This research has theoretical and practical value in several ways. Theoretically, combining the theories of social capital and social cognition to explain knowledge-sharing behavior in a cultural organizational context represents a relatively new approach that has received limited attention in the literature. The findings showed that neither of these theories alone can fully explain knowledge-sharing behavior; rather, the combination of social structure and individual psychological beliefs provides a more efficient explanatory model. From a practical perspective, the results offer useful insights for managers of museums and cultural institutions. For example, the study found that social goals and cognitive beliefs play an important role in encouraging knowledge sharing, suggesting that policymakers can prioritize initiatives aimed at developing organizational culture, strengthening professional accreditation, and promoting scientific participation. The findings also indicated that enhancing interpersonal relationships and fostering a climate of trust within the organization are key factors in facilitating knowledge transfer. This can inform strategies for designing social reward systems, teamwork structures, and internal learning networks.

The findings of this study are consistent with Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), who argued that social capital constitutes the foundation for the development of intellectual capital and the exchange of knowledge. The results are also aligned with studies such as Wang (2022) and Steinmo and Rasmussen (2018), which demonstrated that trust and relational networks play a critical role in sustaining knowledge-sharing behaviors. From a domestic perspective, the findings support those of Zarei et al. (2021), who concluded that social capital significantly enhances knowledge-sharing practices among Iranian librarians.

With regard to social cognition, the results are consistent with Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy and outcome expectations in shaping organizational behavior. Furthermore, the positive effects of social goals and attribution are in line with the findings of Shojaei et al.

(2018) and Koranteng and Wiafe (2019). Overall, this study confirms that integrating social capital and social cognition offers a comprehensive perspective on knowledge-sharing behavior. While social capital provides the structural and relational foundation for knowledge exchange, social cognition activates individual beliefs and motivations, indicating that these two frameworks operate as complementary rather than independent mechanisms.

Value: The study demonstrates that social capital and social cognition both significantly and complementarily influence employees' willingness to share knowledge. Social capital provides the structural, relational, and cognitive foundations for interaction, while social cognition strengthens individual motivation, self-efficacy, and positive outcome expectations related to knowledge sharing. This dual perspective contributes to the theoretical literature by integrating two complementary frameworks and also provides practical implications for managers of cultural organizations. The findings suggest that strengthening organizational trust, promoting shared goals and a common language, enhancing employees' self-efficacy, and effectively managing emotions can play important roles in improving knowledge flow within organizations. The originality of this research lies in the simultaneous application of social capital and social cognition frameworks within the specific cultural context of the National Museum of Iran. This integrated approach offers useful insights for future research in knowledge management and provides a practical framework for organizations seeking to develop and sustain a culture of knowledge sharing.



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