LINKING TACIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING TO EMPLOYEE INNOVATION WITH JOB THRIVING AS A MEDIATIONAL FACTOR: A PUBLIC SECTOR PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Tacit knowledge sharing affects different employee-related outcomes, including job thriving and employee innovation. However, in public organizations, the bureaucratic constraints on knowledge sharing make its link to job thriving and innovation seem tentative. Besides, the contextual factors affecting the link between tacit knowledge and employee innovation are not fully understood. Hence, this study empirically examines the link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation with job thriving as a mediator in a public organization in Delta State, Nigeria. Data from 169 mid-level staff at the Delta State Ministry of Health were collected and analyzed using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method to test the hypotheses. The study’s findings reveal that tacit knowledge sharing has a significant positive relationship with job thriving and employee innovation. Further, job thriving has a significant positive relationship with employee innovation, as well as mediating the significant positive relationship between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation. Importantly, practical implications for public organizations looking to improve tacit knowledge sharing, job thriving, and employee innovation emerge from these findings; principal among them is the need to foster a knowledge-sharing culture and supportive work environment.

Contribution/Originality: To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, this study is among the first to examine the mediational impact of job thriving in the link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation. The African public sector context further provides a unique research perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tacit knowledge, defined as knowledge from human memory built through observation, experience, and practice, is becoming an important resource for most organizations, and the quest to manage this resource is gaining recognition due to the challenging and uncertain contexts in which it operates. Public organizations are no exception as they similarly encourage tacit knowledge sharing for use in innovative work (Ononye, 2021; Yesil, 2014). Tacit knowledge sharing is the process of exchanging knowledge that has created a pattern of desired results from practice and experience. Tacit knowledge sharing aims to give explicit representation to knowledge via active externalization and expression of one’s knowledge (knowledge donation) and learning from the embodiment of others’ knowledge in action through its repeated application (knowledge collection). Knowledge sharing is critical to both knowledge creation and knowledge application, which are important processes in innovation (Castaneda & Cuellar, 2020). Ononye (2021) argues that innovation relies on the organizational capacity to create conditions that allow the sharing of the accessible aspects of tacit knowledge: discovery and creativity. Zhao, Jiang, Peng, and Hong (2020) put forward that
the innovation process starts with individual creativity; thus, a new idea is derived from the individual cognitive process and is transformed through creative conversations among employees. Therefore, it is highly probable that tacit knowledge sharing is essential to employee innovation (Kohansal, Alimoradi, & Bohloul, 2013; Meher & Mishra, 2021; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Yesil, Koska, & Buyukbese, 2013; Yesil, 2014). As such, employee innovation is the intentional transformation of tacit knowledge into practical opportunities and solutions for organizational and/or public benefit.

Studies (e.g., Mulgan, 2014; Ononye and Igwe, 2019; Ononye, 2021) have claimed that the bureaucratic configurations of most public organizations challenge the effective use of tacit insights due to their strong emphasis on explicit knowledge (i.e., knowledge codified and shared through documents). Nonetheless, the limited interactions and collaborations mean that public organizations do not have the organizational settings necessary for tacit knowledge sharing. A recent paper (Rusland, Jaifar, & Sumintono, 2020) has indicated that sharing created knowledge among employees is important because it fosters personal mastery via knowledge capture and action learning, especially when experienced employees leave the organization. However, bureaucratized organizational systems provide scant learning opportunities for sharing such experiential knowledge. The consequent decline in the exchange of tacit knowledge among employees may deteriorate the quality and quantity of knowledge available for innovative work. This may partly explain why employee innovation appears negligible in many public organizations. Thus, the link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation may seem unclear in such a context.

Job thriving, which is the joint experience of learning (i.e., developing one’s competence via acquiring and applying knowledge) and vitality (i.e., feeling enthusiastic, energized, and alive) at work, is cultivated by knowledge sharing. Spreitzer, Jane, Scott, and Adam (2003) contended that employees are expected to experience a higher level of job thriving when organizational practices, such as knowledge-sharing practices, are perceived to support their capabilities and behavior at work. However, this may be different in public organizations because the bureaucratic constraints impacting interactive conversations often negate the resources that enable employees to thrive at work. Despite the constrained work environment, studies (Kleine, Rudolph, & Zacher, 2019; Walumbwa, Muchiri, Misati, Wu, & Meiliani, 2018) have maintained that knowledge resources obtained from workplace interactions are an important antecedent factor for job thriving, suggesting that tacit knowledge sharing fosters job thriving. Likewise, job thriving relates to a number of positive outcomes for individuals and organizations, such as innovation. These statements suggest that job thriving influences innovation, as well as playing a mediational role in the nexus between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation. Whether this notion holds is yet to be empirically determined and confirmed, as the three constructs have not been integrated into a single study. Further, a recent paper (Elahi, Abid, Arya, & Farooqi, 2020) has stated that researchers have investigated the consequences of job thriving in an organizational setting, but the antecedent factor(s) influencing job thriving are not fully understood, nor has the topic been explored in a public sector context. Besides, there is more to discover about the contextual factors of tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation. This study makes several contributions to the knowledge management and public sector management domains. First, the study sheds light on the consequences of tacit knowledge sharing in the public sector context by demonstrating the role it plays in enhancing job thriving and employee innovation, whereas past research has focused mainly on the consequences of explicit knowledge sharing (Ononye, 2021; Rusland et al., 2020). Second, the study is among the first to examine the significance of tacit knowledge sharing and job thriving as determinants of employee innovation in a single study. Additionally, no previous study has considered the mediational impact of job thriving in the link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation. The public sector and African context further provide unique research perspectives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Knowledge sharing is a factor that encourages innovation. It is unlikely that innovation would occur in the absence of knowledge sharing (Castaneda & Cuellar, 2020). Knowledge sharing involves the exchange of tacit and/or
explicit knowledge via employee interactions. Explicit knowledge is codified knowledge that can easily be shared through documents, while tacit knowledge is personal and context-specific knowledge largely based on practical experience and reflections. It is believed that both forms of knowledge lead to an array of desirable individual and organizational outcomes. However, Tassabehji, Mishra, and Dominguez-Péry (2019) found that much of the knowledge-generating value in organizations is more tacit than explicit, suggesting that tacit knowledge sharing is indeed critical to innovative work. Tacit knowledge constitutes a greater proportion of organizational knowledge and includes subjective elements (perspectives, instincts, experience, ideas, etc.) that offer insights into the underlying motives of an individual’s approach to innovative tasks (Ononye, 2021). It is facilitated through formal and informal socialization processes (e.g., meetings, conferences, training programs, social networking, brainstorming sessions, observation, imitation, mentoring, and employee interactions), and encourages leveraging what employees know in order to creatively influence employee-related outcomes, such as innovation. Here, innovation is defined as the intentional generation, promotion, and application of a creative idea for the benefit of the organization and/or the public, and it is mainly shaped by learning in the tacit exchange process.

While studies have focused on explicit knowledge or knowledge in general, the significance of tacit knowledge is often overlooked in empirical research (Ganguly, Talukdar, & Chatterjee, 2019). Despite being an emerging research area, prior studies (Fayyaz, Chaudhry, & Fiaz, 2020; Ganguly et al., 2019; Tassabehji et al., 2019; Wang & Wang, 2012) have validated the positive link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation in private sector organizations, especially in non-African countries. Other scholars (Hussein, Singh, Farouk, & Sohal, 2016; Islam, Agarwal, & Ikeda, 2017) have presented conflicting results in similar organizational settings. While the results appear to be mixed, some studies (Bos-Nehles, Bondarouk, & Nijenhuis, 2017; McEvoy, Arisha, & Ragab, 2015; Ononye, 2021) contend that the relationship between knowledge sharing and employee innovation is debatable because the links established in private sector organizations may differ markedly from those in the public sector, given their contextual characteristics. This explains the argument of Ode & Ayavoo (2020) on the varied effects of knowledge sharing in different organizational settings due to the context-specificity of knowledge management practices. Thus, the current study will re-examine whether the findings obtained in private organizations apply to those in the public sector. The following hypothesis is put forward:

**H1: Tacit knowledge sharing is positively related to employee innovation.**

Job thriving occurs when employees jointly experience learning and vitality. Employees thrive in their job when they feel strong and active (vitality) and when they constantly develop their competencies (learning). When one of the key components is absent, the employee experiences a decline in job thriving. The benefit of treating them as a whole, rather than as separate constructs, is that more positive outcomes are achieved when both are present. Spreitzer et al.’s (2005) socially embedded model of thriving presumes that knowledge shared through connections and interactions enables thriving, which in turn leads to positive behavioral tendencies, changes, or outcomes at work. The experience of thriving does not occur in isolation from social interactions. As such, thriving is cultivated from socialization mechanisms and the knowledge resources accrued in a given social context (Xu, Loi, & Chow, 2019). This argument is strengthened by the results of several empirical studies. For instance, Carmeli and Spreitzer (2009) showed that the generativity rooted in connectivity (i.e., relationships encouraging idea generation and opportunity recognition) enables employees to learn from each other via knowledge sharing. Further, because connectivity represents relationships that are open to different yet new insights and influences, this generativity will develop employees’ vitality. Possibly, employees tend to experience vitality when they are part of a relationship that encourages them to constructively listen and react to shared ideas and information. Jiang, Hu, Wang, and Jiang (2019) mentioned that thriving at work is attenuated by knowledge hiding because it requires positive interactive communications to be facilitated and supported.

Xu et al. (2019) claimed that a high-quality work-based relationship provides the foundation for thriving as it enables employees to connect to a range of learning resources while feeling enthused about their given tasks and
assignments. Because tacit knowledge exchange is a critical aspect of work-based interactions, it is logical to assume that tacit knowledge as a relational resource would stimulate learning for competency development. Tasks involving knowledge sharing are interactive and collaborative by nature, allowing employees to gain knowledge from each other through observation, explanation, and inquiry, as mentioned by Brčić and Mihelič (2015). At the same time, tacit knowledge sharing provides the necessary support resources for employees to increase their motivation to engage in purposive actions. Shirom (2011) argued that the support type offered in interpersonal processes matters, and that instrumental (practical support involving advice and information sharing) rather than emotional support increases the likelihood of experiencing vitality at work. During tacit knowledge exchange, the opportunities to replenish energetic resources (e.g., new insights, experience, and perspectives) matching the requirements for task execution and completion could lead to higher levels of vitality at work. Given the foregoing, the study hypothesizes that:

**H2: Tacit knowledge sharing is positively related to job thriving.**

Job thriving enables employees to improve their functionality and adaptability at work (Liu, Xu, & Zhang, 2020). This improvement can be an important catalyst for organizational/employee-relevant work outcomes, one of which is employee innovation. Employee innovation is associated with behaviors leading to the application of new ideas at work. Arguably, employee innovation is stimulated by the learning process because it enables knowledge to be updated and complemented to allow work behavior appropriate to implementing change or improvements. Learning enables employees to achieve knowledge mastery, which in turn can strengthen innovation capabilities considerably (Awang, Mohd Sapie, Yusof Hussain, Ishak, & Md Yusof, 2019; Kleine et al., 2019). At the same time, employees must be enthusiastic and passionate about innovation for the process to be facilitated effectively. Kleine et al. (2019) claimed that a positive psychological state, like vitality, contributes to expansive cognitive thinking and problem-solving. To this end, it is expected that job thriving provides the impetus for the enhancement of employees’ creativity and cognitive capacity to solve problems. Prior empirical findings (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009; Kleine et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2020; Riaz, Xu, & Hussain, 2018; Riaz, Xu, & Hussain, 2019) have also validated the positive association between job thriving and employee innovation. Given these arguments, the following hypothesis is put forward:

**H3: Job thriving is positively related to employee innovation.**

Referring to hypotheses **H2 and H3,** job thriving is related to both tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation, suggesting that job thriving can function as a contextual factor in the link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation. Besides, Spreitzer et al.’s (2005) socially embedded model of thriving argues that tacit knowledge sharing leads to behaviors that induce job thriving, which in turn causes employees to achieve different work-related outcomes, like innovation. This argument may be understood as suggesting job thriving as an intervening factor in the relationship between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation. Thus, the following hypothesis is put forward:

**H4: Job thriving mediates tacit knowledge sharing’s positive relation to employee innovation.**

Given the above, the hypothetical statements (**H1 – H4**) indicating the linkages between tacit knowledge sharing, job thriving, and employee innovation are represented in the research model in Figure 1.
3. METHOD

The participants for this study were recruited from the Ministry of Health in Delta State, Nigeria. This organization plays a supervising role to other health agencies and parastatals, such as the Delta State Contributory Health Commission, the Delta State Primary Health Care Agency, the Hospital Management Board, the Delta State Traditional Medicine Board, the Drug Revolving Fund, and the School of Nursing/Midwifery. This organization was chosen because the numerous health crises and their attendant effects on the healthcare system and the public have presented many opportunities for employees to use their tacit knowledge to creatively solve problems through innovation (Ononye, 2021). Possibly, the constructs under investigation would manifest themselves accordingly in organizational work. The sample comprises mid-level staff from grade levels 13 to 15. Written approval was obtained from the Commissioner for Health before the application of the research instrument to the target respondents. The respondents were informed that participation in this research exercise was voluntary, and verbal consent for participation was obtained before the questionnaire was filled out. The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter and bio-data sheet. The research aims and confidentiality statement were clearly conveyed in the cover letter.

The survey was conducted in February 2022, with questionnaire administration and collection performed by the researcher. In total, 157 respondents were conveniently sampled across the different departments of the Ministry to ensure adequate coverage. The completion time for the questionnaire was about 6–7 minutes. Of the questionnaires returned, 154 were usable and 3 were unusable due to missing values, indicating a response rate of 98.1 percent. The demographic profile showed that 51.6 percent (81) of respondents are male and 48.4 percent (76) female. The age of the respondents ranged from 35 to 53 years. Of the 157 respondents, 66.2 percent (104) had a bachelor’s degree, 28.7 percent (45) had a post-graduate degree, and 5.1 percent (8) had a bachelor’s degree with professional certification. The mean work experience of the respondents was 14.9 years.

Regarding the instrument, the question items for all the constructs were taken from previously validated scales from several sources in the literature. Six items on tacit knowledge sharing were adapted from Ganguly et al. (2019) and Ononye (2021). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.793. Ten questions on job thriving were adopted from Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, and Garnett (2012). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.869. Four questions on innovation were taken from Ononye (2021). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.801. The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. The question items are provided in the Appendix.

The collected data were analyzed using the partial least squares (PLS) modeling method and SmartPLS 3.3.3 software. The use of this structural equation modeling (SEM) method has become increasingly popular in the management field because of its effectiveness in determining relationships between multiple latent constructs, as well as its suitability for mediational analysis. Further, it enables constructs to be modeled as either formative or reflective. The study followed the two-step analytical approach to PLS analysis proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Other related studies (Ononye, 2021; Riaz et al., 2018) have employed a similar approach. Further, the specific indirect test was used to determine the mediational effect.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before the analysis proper, preliminary tests were performed to determine the suitability of the dataset for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using SPSS 20.0. These tests included the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett’s test for sphericity (BTS). The KMOs for all constructs were > .60, and the Bartlett’s test scores were significant at p < 0.05, demonstrating the appropriateness of CFA. Subsequently, the study advanced to the two-step procedure of Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The first step was the measurement model estimation for validity and reliability. Table 1 summarizes the results of the measurement model. The resulting values were deemed acceptable and in alignment with the rule of thumb in Hair, Hult, Ringe, and Sarstedt (2017).
Table 1. FLs, CR, AVE, and discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>FLs</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>Discriminant Validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tacit Knowledge Sharing (TKS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TKS_1</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.717</td>
<td>0.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TKS_2</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TKS_3</td>
<td>0.757</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TKS_4</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TKS_5</td>
<td>0.790</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TKS_6</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Thriving (JT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT_L1</td>
<td>0.869</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.778</td>
<td>0.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT_L2</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>JT_L3</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT_L4</td>
<td>0.889</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>JT_L5</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.623</td>
<td>0.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT_V1</td>
<td>0.822</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT_V2</td>
<td>0.746</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT_V3</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT_V4</td>
<td>0.844</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT_V5</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Innovation (INNO)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI_1</td>
<td>0.869</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.796</td>
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<tr>
<td>EI_2</td>
<td>0.811</td>
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<td>0.661</td>
<td>0.074</td>
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<td>EI_3</td>
<td>0.746</td>
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<td>0.078</td>
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<td>EI_4</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: FL = factor loadings; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; JT_L = learning; JT_V = vigour.

Table 2. Structural model estimates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H</th>
<th>Paths</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tacit knowledge sharing → Employee innovation</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tacit knowledge sharing → Job thriving</td>
<td>0.203</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Job thriving → Employee innovation</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tacit knowledge sharing → Job thriving → Employee Innovation</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P < 0.05; R² = 0.461.

Having obtained acceptable values in the first step, the study advanced to the second step to estimate the structural components of the model. The statistical significance of each hypothesized path was evaluated using the bootstrap method, and closely followed the rule of thumb in Hair et al. (2017). Table 2 shows the estimates of the hypothesized relationships. The relationship between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation was positive and significant (β = 0.164, p < 0.05), supporting H1. This finding suggests that tacit knowledge sharing is remarkably important for employee innovation, despite the argument that public organizations do not have the necessary organizational characteristics and conditions to foster effective tacit knowledge sharing. Besides, organizational support for the sharing of tacit knowledge may be evident in this organization, given the uncertainties and challenges impacting organizational work. Thus, the organization may rely more on people-based approaches to knowledge sharing, which happens to be a good medium for the exchange of tacit knowledge (McAdam & Reid, 2000). Additionally, the effect type was consistent with the findings of past investigations conducted in the private sector (Fayyaz et al., 2020; Ganguly et al., 2019; Tassabehji et al., 2019; Wang & Wang, 2012). Concerning the generality of findings from the private sector, the link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation as evidenced in the extant literature has demonstrable value to public organizations.

H2 was also supported by the significant positive relationship between tacit knowledge sharing and job thriving (β = 0.203, p < 0.05). This finding supports the basic argument of the socially embedded model of thriving that job thriving is cultivated through positive interactive communications between employees at work (Spreitzer et al., 2005). It is also in accordance with the findings of related empirical works (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009; Jiang et
that thriving at work is enhanced by the quality of work relationships and relational resources, like tacit knowledge. Elahi et al. (2020) pointed out that employees who thrive focus on obtaining new resources by building strong social relationships. In this context, building social relationships means serendipitous knowledge sharing is likely to occur. Employees may feel more enthused and are more likely to develop competencies (skills, knowledge, and attitude) in response to the quantity and quality of tacit knowledge shared during work-based interactions.

At the same time, the relationship between job thriving and employee innovation was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.297$, $p < 0.05$); thus, H3 was supported. This result conforms to past empirical works (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009; Kleine et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2020; Riaz et al., 2018; Riaz et al., 2019) that reported similar findings. Hence, employees who experience job thriving have the psychological resources to effectively facilitate and support innovation. Finally, H4, which predicted the mediational role of job thriving, was assessed using the direct and specific indirect estimations. From these estimates, the significance of tacit knowledge sharing to employee innovation was reduced after the introduction of the mediational factor ($\beta = 0.095$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that job thriving partially mediates the relationship between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation. H4 was confirmed by the significant positive results. The increase in the pool of personal resources due to tacit knowledge sharing may cause an upward spiral for job thriving. The augmented personal resources can provide the required energy to meet any work-related demands and improve the quality of learning through the application of new knowledge. This psychological change, as manifested in the joint experience of vigor and learning, is likely to drive behavioral actions toward innovation. The $R^2$ estimate indicates that the model accounted for a 46.1% variation in employee innovation, which is regarded as moderate by Hair et al. (2017). A summary of these findings is represented in Figure 2.

5. CONCLUSION

The study presents an explicit effort to understand the link between tacit knowledge sharing, job thriving, and employee innovation. The results presented have implications for both theory and practice. In theory, the study evidenced that tacit knowledge sharing and job thriving are important antecedents of employee innovation, job thriving and employee innovation are positive consequences of tacit knowledge sharing, and job thriving is an important contextual factor in the link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation. These results were represented in the research model to highlight the link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation, given job thriving as a contextual resource. Concerning job thriving as a contextual factor, the findings on its antecedent (tacit knowledge sharing) and consequence (employee innovation) are strongly consistent with and may be used to further extend Spreitzer et al.’s (2005) socially embedded model of thriving. Further, plausible evidence was presented for the much-discussed, yet less investigated, link between tacit knowledge sharing and employee innovation in the public sector and African contexts.

In practice, public organizations looking to improve employee innovation must consider directing their efforts toward fostering a knowledge-sharing culture and supportive work environment, in which teamwork, task
interdependence, and interdepartmental communications are actively encouraged and supported. In such an environment, tacit knowledge sharing would be reinforced and stimulated to support organizational work, which in turn would generate positive individual outcomes, like job thriving and employee innovation. Second, public organizations should focus resources on programs that facilitate the exchange of critical tacit knowledge (such as workshops, training, seminars, and conferences) and, where necessary, ensure an impact assessment is conducted. These programs could serve to reinvigorate employees while presenting them with new things to learn. Third, public organizations should regularly gauge job thriving to maintain a positive social and psychological climate, thereby fostering its effectiveness for innovative work. Finally, these organizations could select and assign employees who exhibit strong levels of job thriving to innovation-related tasks and assignments and provide them with the necessary support in the form of information and autonomy. These actions could inspire other employees to act accordingly.

The main study limitation is that the dataset was restricted to a single public organization in a particular geographic region in Nigeria. However, the results represent an important snapshot of the links between tacit knowledge sharing, job thriving, and employee innovation in the public sector. The study took the form of a cross-sectional study, which may not be enough to establish a causal effect. A longitudinal study to examine the changes in tacit knowledge sharing and thriving in relation to employee innovation may help researchers draw concrete statistical inferences on the causality effects among the constructs.

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**REFERENCES**


**APPENDIX: QUESTION ITEMS**

**Tacit Knowledge Sharing (TKS)**

TKS_1: In discussions, I try to express my thoughts to help communicate my position on a particular issue formally or informally.

TKS_2: During any group discussions, I try to find out other’s opinions, thoughts, and information.

TKS_3: I try to understand others’ thought better by repeating what was said and asking him/her “is this what you mean?”

TKS_4: I try to understand the different pieces of knowledge and how they fit together in a given context.

TKS_5: I usually write a summary note of what was discussed in a meeting.

TKS_6: I interact with people in my organization to create a shared or common understanding of a problem.

**Job Thriving (JT): vigor (JT_V), learning (JT_L)**

JT_V1: I feel alive and vital at work

JT_V2: At work, I have energy and spirit

JT_V3: I do not feel very energetic at work

JT_V4: I feel alert and awake at work

JT_V5: I am looking forward to each new day

JT_L1: At work, I find myself learning often
JT_L2: I continue to learn more and more as time goes by
JT_L3: I see myself continually improving at work
JT_L4: I am not learning at work
JT_L5: I have developed a lot as a person

Employee Innovation (INNO)
EI _1: I clearly define problems to be solved at work
EI _2: I sometimes come up with creative ideas for work problems
EI _3: I sometimes propose my creative ideas and try to convince others at work
EI _4: At work, I am usually involved in the implementation of new ideas.