

Unraveling knowledge sharing behavior under ethical leadership: the mediating role of knowledge-centered culture and intrinsic motivation

Mariam Saeed Al Mansoori, Fauzia Jabeen, Patrice Piccardi and Arianna Pezone

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine the impact of ethical leadership on employees' knowledge sharing behavior, focusing on the mediating roles of intrinsic motivation and perceived knowledge-centered culture.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from 480 employees working in public sector units in the United Arab Emirates by using a survey-based approach. The survey data were subsequently analyzed using structural equation modeling.

Findings – Results demonstrate that ethical leadership is key to knowledge sharing behavior and that their relationship is positively mediated by intrinsic motivation and knowledge-centered culture.

Research limitations/implications – Future studies should focus on testing this study's model in a cross-cultural context. Each context presents a unique set of challenges that could shed light on the model's generalizability and effectiveness in producing consistent results across diverse situations. The results also emphasize the need to invest in ethical leadership development to effectively cultivate knowledge sharing behavior among public sector employees.

Practical implications – This study offers leaders and practitioners a deeper understanding of the practical pathways to building a positive workplace environment that fosters employees' knowledge sharing behavior. Organizations must establish a knowledge-oriented culture that integrates knowledge sharing into daily practices and expectations.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the literature on ethical leadership and knowledge management by exploring whether ethical leadership can significantly predict employees' knowledge sharing behavior on the basis of the effects of intrinsic motivation and knowledge-centered culture. By understanding the role of intrinsic motivation and knowledge-centered culture in facilitating knowledge sharing, public sector leaders can implement targeted strategies to cultivate a culture of appreciation and recognition, thereby enhancing employee engagement and organizational performance.

Keywords Ethical leadership, Intrinsic motivation, Knowledge sharing behavior, Knowledge-centered culture, Public sector, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction

Ethical leadership is a cornerstone of contemporary organizational dynamics, exerting significant influence over various facets of organizational behavior and performance. In today's fast-paced and interconnected world, the role of ethical leadership transcends mere adherence to regulatory frameworks; it embodies a moral compass that guides organizational culture, fosters trust among stakeholders and shapes employee behaviors and attitudes (Goswami and Agrawal, 2023; Le and Nguyen, 2023; Su *et al.*, 2021). The absence or presence of ethical leadership within an organization can yield profound

Received 21 June 2024
Revised 2 January 2025
11 April 2025
Accepted 10 May 2025

Funding: The authors acknowledge financial support from Abu Dhabi University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Grant No. 19300768.

ramifications for the organization's bottom line, long-term sustainability and reputation (Hassan *et al.*, 2023). In particular, ethical leadership exerts pivotal influence on employees' knowledge sharing behavior (Brown and Treviño, 2006; Brown *et al.*, 2015). Knowledge sharing behavior refers to the voluntary exchange of information, expertise and insights among individuals within an organization (Guo *et al.*, 2023). It encompasses activities such as mentoring, collaboration, communication and documentation, all aimed at leveraging collective knowledge for mutual benefit (Hoang *et al.*, 2023). Knowledge sharing enhances organizational learning, promotes innovation, accelerates problem-solving by harnessing employees' diverse perspectives and experiences, fosters a sense of belonging and camaraderie and strengthens team cohesion and morale (Wu, 2021). Knowledge sharing behavior drives organizational agility, adaptability and competitive advantage in today's knowledge-based economy (Satar *et al.*, 2025). Ethical leadership is crucial for nurturing such an environment by fostering trust, transparency and mutual respect among team members. When leaders demonstrate ethical behavior and prioritize fairness and integrity, employees feel more inclined to share their knowledge and contribute to collective goals (Haider *et al.*, 2022). This symbiotic relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior creates a virtuous cycle within an organization.

The link between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing has been the focus of many studies, most of which have highlighted the consistent and positive association between the two concepts. Brown and Treviño (2006) found that ethical leaders create a climate and culture in which knowledge sharing is more likely. While ethical leadership and knowledge sharing have become somewhat established in the literature as correlating variables, a comprehensive understanding of their relationship is still lacking (Ki, 2021), especially in the context of public sector organizations. Hoang *et al.* (2023) and Upadhyay *et al.* (2019) revealed that several intermediary factors complicate the direct relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing. However, previous studies have failed to correlate the direct and indirect effects of ethical leadership on knowledge sharing when these intermediary variables are present. Hence, the two-way interactive effect of ethical leadership and these intermediary variables on knowledge sharing remains unclear. In addition, prior studies have often overlooked the interplay between ethical leadership and the intermediary variables, thereby providing an incomplete understanding of the mechanisms through which ethical leadership influences knowledge sharing behavior (Boer *et al.*, 2011; Carmeli *et al.*, 2011; Kim and Qu, 2020; Lei *et al.*, 2019a; Wu, 2021). Lei *et al.* (2019a) studied ethical leadership and employee performance, whereas Wu (2021) examined the effects of ethical leadership on employee engagement and innovation. Kim and Qu (2020) examined gratitude and obligation as a mediating link between social exchange and prosocial behavior, but they overlooked knowledge sharing as a key behavioral outcome. Hence, neither study examined the intermediary mechanisms that connect ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior.

Furthermore, previous literature has focused on different motivational mechanisms at the individual and organizational levels while the relationship between motivation and knowledge sharing behavior remains unexplored (Law *et al.*, 2017; Nguyen *et al.*, 2019). In addition, limited research has viewed leadership through moral lenses as knowledge sharing behavior has moral relevance (Le and Lei, 2019). Scholars have recommended addressing culture within the organization in the knowledge sharing context (Bavik *et al.*, 2018). Ethical leaders demonstrate ethical norms through communication with followers and thus play a critical role in shaping organizational culture (Ko *et al.*, 2018).

Hence, despite the extensive research in this area, key gaps persist and warrant further investigation, especially with regard to integrating ethical leadership, intrinsic motivation and knowledge sharing and exploring how a knowledge-centered culture mediates the relationship in the context of public sector units. The mediating mechanisms that explain how ethical leadership fosters knowledge sharing through intrinsic motivation and a

supportive culture remain underexplored. Ethical leadership studied in the context of organizations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) serves a profound purpose; it helps the country navigate its development toward a complex sociocultural landscape and sustainable organizational growth within an “economy of the future.” With its mix of traditional ties and modern ambitions, the UAE presents a distinctive case for examining leadership practices, especially when organizations are rapidly diversifying and modernizing. Its distinctive context makes the UAE a case of special importance for leadership practices that can help manage a diverse workforce. Local Emirati employees work alongside foreign nationals from various cultural backgrounds. This workforce requires leaders who can manage the various perspectives and values they bring. Therefore, the UAE needs ethical leaders who have a deep understanding of ethical principles that allow them to resonate and engender trust across the many cultures in the workplace.

The importance of ethical leadership extends to governance and regulatory compliance. As stakeholders demand transparency and accountability, organizational leaders must demonstrate ethical behavior to instill confidence in their stakeholders. This need is especially true in the UAE, where many new regulations promote ethical business practices. Ethical leaders are more likely to obey such regulations and enhance their organizations’ reputation. The UAE is a beacon of rapid development and global integration, with its organizations playing pivotal roles in shaping the nation’s trajectory toward prosperity and innovation (Ismail, 2024). In this context, ethical leadership has emerged as a linchpin for steering organizations toward responsible stewardship, societal impact and long-term success (Nijhof *et al.*, 2019).

Based on the discussions of Farouk and Jabeen (2018), Jabeen and Isakovic (2018) and Bin Taher *et al.* (2015), the significance of our topic of interest to the UAE public sector can be outlined as follows. *First*, ethical leadership is vital in the UAE’s diverse workforce as it fosters an inclusive environment that respects cultural differences and promotes harmony (Anadol and Behery, 2020; Cheffi *et al.*, 2023). *Second*, ethical leaders build a culture of accountability and transparency, thus preventing misconduct, maintaining trust during crises and ensuring long-term organizational sustainability (Burhan *et al.*, 2023). *Third*, ethical leaders drive initiatives that support social responsibility, diversity, inclusion and employee well-being, thereby enhancing their organizations’ social impact and reputation (Ejaz *et al.*, 2022). *Finally*, ethical leadership aligns with the UAE’s vision of a knowledge-based economy and sustainable development by promoting innovation, collaboration and ethical practices that support national goals. Ethical leaders drive initiatives that address societal challenges and promote diversity and inclusion (Gotsis and Grimani, 2017).

To fill the gaps in the literature, our study aims to explore the role of ethical leadership in shaping the knowledge sharing behavior of employees in the UAE public sector, which faces unique organizational and structural challenges. It examines the mediating role of intrinsic motivation and the effect of a knowledge-centered culture on knowledge sharing behavior based on the conceptualization of ethical leadership. It attempts to answer the following research questions: How does ethical leadership impact the knowledge sharing behavior of subordinates in public sector units? How do intrinsic motivation and knowledge-centered culture mediate the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior in public sector units?

This research goes beyond merely contributing to theoretical discussions; it also serves a practical purpose for public sector organizations and provides valuable insights into how ethical leadership can be leveraged to improve knowledge sharing in such organizations. Knowledge sharing occurs in an ethical climate, in which people feel comfortable sharing their knowledge. If a leader does not model the right kind of ethical behavior or if the kind of behaviors that align with or go against the ethical grain are not clear within an organization, then knowledge sharing and organizational performance are both interrupted. Understanding the interplay between these variables in the UAE public sector context is

critical as the UAE government has strongly emphasized fostering innovation, knowledge sharing and organizational excellence as part of its national agenda for sustainable development and growth ([The UAE Government, 2025](#)). By elucidating the role of ethical leadership in shaping knowledge sharing behavior among employees, this study directly addresses a critical aspect of organizational effectiveness and performance enhancement that aligns with the strategic priorities of public sector units in the UAE.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical underpinnings

The past decade has witnessed a surge of interest in ethical leadership among social scientists. Unlike other leadership theories that include ethical components, ethical leadership is distinctly focused on the ethical aspects of leadership. While theories such as transformational or authentic leadership might mention ethics or morality in their descriptions, such as when a leader is said to lead from the heart or be true to oneself, these theories are not primarily about ethics. By contrast, “ethical leadership is about being a morally good leader and also leading in a morally good way” ([Mayer et al., 2009](#)). This focus on not only being a good individual but also being a good role model of ethical behavior for others is one reason why ethical leadership emphasizes the figure of speech “lead as if everyone is watching,” with “everyone” possibly referring to the people with whom one is closely working. What sets ethical leadership apart is its foundation being rooted in social learning theory ([Bandura, 1977](#)). This theory explains how followers learn from the leaders they choose to follow and to whom they give their allegiance. It is a theory on how people use others as models for appropriate behavior, especially in ambiguous situations.

Beyond individual behavior, ethical leadership influences something far more compelling: organizational outcomes. Research has linked ethical leadership to an array of positive outcomes within organizations, including engagement, satisfaction, commitment and performance. At the same time, ethical leadership appears to have negative outcomes. The study of ethical leadership is essential for understanding its distinct contributions to organizational dynamics. By focusing on the ethical side of leadership, scholars and practitioners alike can appreciate the robust effect of ethical leaders on their employees and the organizations they govern.

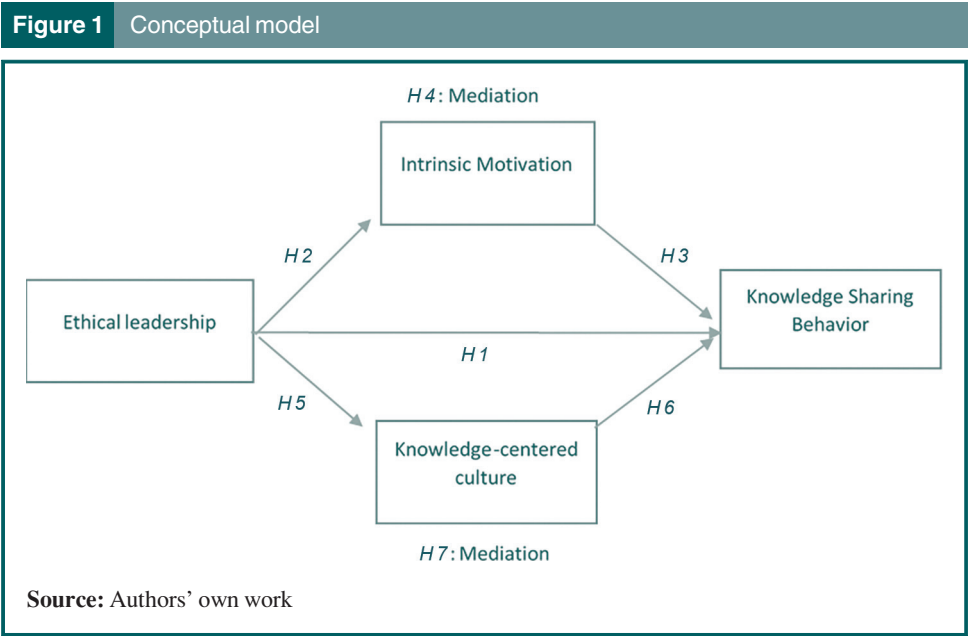
An ethical perspective on leadership suggests that leaders influence followers and exert a powerful and significant effect on their ethical conduct ([Yukl and Chavez, 2002](#)). This effect occurs primarily through leaders’ modeling of desired behaviors, including ethical and prosocial behaviors. In this context, “modeling” is a broad, basic psychological process. Its interpretation could range from “basic impersonation” to “role models.” Through modeling, employees can (and do) learn extensively about their organizations. In accordance with social learning theory, ethical leaders do not simply tell their employees how to behave; they also model that behavior. [Bandura \(1977\)](#) outlined fundamental learning processes. In the context of ethical leadership, these processes help explain how leaders’ ethical conduct can influence employees’ attitudes toward knowledge sharing through observational learning. Recent literature has begun exploring the connection between leadership and psychological ownership; unsurprisingly, leadership is the primary cause of psychological ownership ([L. Guarana and Avolio, 2022](#)). However, in this development, we notice a gap in the understanding of the human side of follower leadership. The mechanisms through which employees become the type of “us” who share knowledge (or do not) are still understudied.

Proposed by [Homans \(1958\)](#), social exchange theory is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behavior ([Guangxi et al., 2020](#)). The theory helps to comprehend the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior through the effects of intrinsic motivation and knowledge-centered culture because it is not limited to material goods but also includes symbolic values ([Shahid and Muchiri, 2019](#)).

Proposed by Bandura (1977), social learning theory explains the impact of ethical leadership on significant outcomes. Social exchange relationships operate according to norms of reciprocity (Blau, 1964); when individuals feel that a person (such as an ethical leader) or organization has treated them positively, they respond by treating this person or organization favorably in return (Shore et al., 2006). In our study, we focus on the effects of ethical leadership on knowledge sharing behavior from a social exchange perspective. In the 1960s, Edward Deci, the proponent of self-determination theory, explored the conditions that can undermine “intrinsic” motivation (Sheldon et al., 2003). The social environment influences intrinsic motivation through its impact on needs satisfaction or perceptions of autonomy, competence and relatedness (Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2009). These needs are regarded as universal necessities, and studies have suggested that they are among the most salient requirements and are closely associated with event-based affect (Sheldon et al., 2001). One such need refers to the desire to engage in a certain activity because an individual is interested in or enjoys it (Sheldon et al., 2003). Drawing on the literature, this study develops a research model that combines social learning theory and self-determination theory and focuses on the impact of ethical leadership on knowledge sharing behavior (Figure 1).

2.2 Hypotheses development

2.2.1 Ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior. Ethical leadership is identified through interpersonal relationships, personal actions and personal relations (Zhu et al., 2019). Ethical leaders enthusiastically promote ethical behavior among employees via two-way communication, which is reflected in decision-making, reinforcement and ethical standards (Abu Bakar and Connaughton, 2022). Their ethical characteristics help them develop an ethical culture in the workplace by setting moral standards (Rujirawanich et al., 2011). Ethical leaders strive to create an environment where everyone is treated fairly and equally, and employees feel valued and respected (Ogbechie, 2023). When leaders reinforce and act as role models of ethical behavior, they can influence employees’ attitudes (Fan et al., 2011). Previous studies have posited that ethical leadership positively affect employees’ pro-social motivation (Xia and Yang, 2020), trust (Le and Lei, 2019; Tu et al., 2019) and subjective well-being (Hayat et al., 2020), which subsequently motivate them to engage in knowledge sharing behavior (Koay and Lim, 2022). Knowledge sharing is a



sociological behavioral perspective that signifies an individual's capacity to share and exchange information and experiences among employees within the entity (Zeb *et al.*, 2020). It is an exchange of professional knowledge relevant to organizational requirements (Chen, 2018). Employees who engage in transmission, communication and interaction facilitate the coordination of knowledge exchange among themselves to meet their obligations (Sun *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, the entity maximizes its knowledge capabilities, allowing employees to smoothly accomplish their duties (Sun *et al.*, 2020). Knowledge sharing also creates an environment where all employees trust and respect one another. Mutual trust among employees creates a psychosocial bond and a sense of mutual obligation, which in turn reduce the fear of being exploited by competitors within the entity (Zeb *et al.*, 2020).

Previous studies have distinguished between explicit and tacit knowledge sharing as critical dimensions of organizational knowledge sharing practices. Explicit knowledge sharing involves transferring articulated information, whereas tacit knowledge sharing focuses on exchanging experiential and context-specific insights that are more challenging to articulate (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Ethical leadership is pivotal in fostering both dimensions by cultivating trust, psychological safety and open communication, all of which encourage employees to share structured information and personal experience-based knowledge (Le and Nguyen, 2023).

Moreover, prior studies (Le and Nguyen, 2023; Goswami and Agrawal, 2023) have explored the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing through the lens of various mediators and moderators. For instance, Le and Nguyen (2023) demonstrated that trust acts as a positive mediator while distributive justice moderates this relationship. Similarly, Goswami and Agrawal (2023) identified positive capital as a mediating variable and shared goals as a moderating element in shaping the connection between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing. Underpinned by theories such as social exchange theory and social learning theory, existing studies have posited that ethical leadership positively influences employees' knowledge sharing behavior. In general, the influence of ethical leadership on employees' knowledge sharing behavior has been examined from several perspectives. From a social perspective, Ganguly *et al.* (2019) viewed knowledge sharing as a part of the construction of social reality. They regarded knowledge sharing as something that emanates from an individual's understanding of "real" knowledge. From a personal perspective, Bhatti *et al.* (2021) argued that ethical leadership is a contextual element that significantly affects knowledge sharing. Table 1 summarizes the relevant literature.

Hence, from a social learning perspective, ethical leadership fosters an organizational climate in which integrity, fairness and transparency are valued, thereby promoting employee trust and reciprocity (Wu, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2021). Employees who perceive their leaders as ethical role models are more likely to share knowledge because they feel valued and appreciated for their contributions (Grant and Gino, 2010). Despite these arguments supporting the positive relationship between leadership roles, leadership styles and knowledge sharing, few studies have focused on the relationship between ethical leadership and specific aspects of knowledge sharing behavior (Bavik *et al.*, 2017). Accordingly, the current study aims to strengthen this relationship and move beyond existing research by assessing the effects of ethical leadership on knowledge sharing behavior. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. Ethical leadership is positively related to employees' knowledge sharing behavior.

2.2.2 Intrinsic motivation as a mediator. Motivation is regarded as a foundational construct in organizational psychology as it explains the underlying reasons behind individual behaviors in the workplace (Lazauskaite-Zabielske *et al.*, 2015). This study focuses on intrinsic motivation, which refers to the internal desire to engage in work because it is inherently satisfying and stimulating (Amabile *et al.*, 1994). Deci *et al.* (1999) first introduced

Table 1 Literature synthesis

Authors	Aims	Methodology	Characteristics		Findings
			Setting	Participants	
Sun <i>et al.</i> (2020)	How EL alleviates knowledge contribution	Empirical study	China	355 engineers	Knowledge-based psychological ownership is identified as the main factor
Lei <i>et al.</i> (2019a)	EL, KCC, tacit and explicit KS	Empirical study	China	100 firms	A positive relationship is identified
Shafique <i>et al.</i> (2020)	EL, creativity, KS, innovation and psychological empowerment (individual and organizational levels)	Empirical study	Pakistan	322 small-sized information technology firms	A positive relationship is identified
Nguyen <i>et al.</i> (2019)	IM, EM and KS	Meta-analysis	–	44 studies	EM and IM are associated with higher levels of KS
Yang <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Collaborative culture, KS and innovation capabilities	Empirical study	China	77 firms	KS plays a mediating role between CC and innovation
Bernerth <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Current state of control variables in leadership research	Meta-analysis	General	–	Recommendations are put forward to assist leadership scholars using control variables
Law <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Intrinsic enjoyment and extrinsic motivators and KS	Meta-analysis	General	–	Studied factors can promote in-depth KS
Le and Nguyen (2023)	Affective and cognitive-based trust (mediation) and distributive justice (moderation)	Empirical study	Vietnam	339 participants	Positive mediation of trust and moderation of distributive justice are proven to impact the relationship
Goswami and Agrawal (2023)	Psychological capital (mediation) and shared goals (moderation)	Empirical study	India	248 employees	Positive capital mediates the relationship, and shared goals moderate the relationship
Note(s): IM = intrinsic motivation; EM = extrinsic motivation; KCC = knowledge-centered culture; EL = ethical leadership; KS = knowledge sharing					
Source(s): Authors' own work					

the concept of intrinsic motivation and demonstrated that certain tasks provide inherent rewards independent of external incentives. In other words, individuals engage in activities because they find them interesting, enjoyable and fulfilling and not because of separable consequences (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Intrinsic motivation is crucial in fostering knowledge creation as it encourages individuals to share knowledge effectively. It serves as a key driver of knowledge sharing behaviors by instilling enthusiasm for seeking information and approaching challenges innovatively (Baldé *et al.*, 2018). Intrinsically motivated employees are more likely to engage in these behaviors, making them essential contributors to the effectiveness of organizational knowledge sharing. Prior studies have reported that intrinsic motivation promotes knowledge sharing behaviors that require individual participation (Park and Kim, 2018). Therefore, employees' inherent motivations are essential for promoting knowledge sharing behaviors (Hau *et al.*, 2013). In particular, the intrinsically motivated nature of knowledge sharing is contingent upon various personal traits of employees, such as commitment, personality and goal orientation (Law *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, the relationship between ethical leadership and intrinsic motivation is positive as the literature review suggests that ethical leaders can develop employees' skills and abilities to meet their job requirements (Brown and Treviño, 2006). Consequently, employees perceive greater self-efficacy and competence and demonstrate enhanced intrinsic motivation (Shareef and Atan, 2019).

When ethical leaders stress the impact of achieving organizational goals on employees' work, they embed moral values into employees' tasks (Piccolo *et al.*, 2010). Ethical leaders create a space for employees to become more meaningful, thereby affecting employees' intrinsic motivation positively. Intrinsically motivated employees are likely to be more engaged in their duties (Park and Kim, 2018). Based on self-determination theory, intrinsically motivating

behavior can satisfy employees' psychological needs for competency, autonomy and relatedness (Shafique *et al.*, 2020). Hence, we hypothesize the following:

H2. Ethical leadership positively affects intrinsic motivation.

H3. Intrinsic motivation positively affects knowledge sharing behavior.

H4. Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior.

2.2.3 Knowledge-centered culture as a mediator. Knowledge-centered culture refers to a set of organizational values, core beliefs, norms and social rules that act as a common reference for employees in creating, sharing and applying knowledge (Ferreira Peralta and Francisca Saldanha, 2014). It is a common core of employees' organizational values, beliefs, social rules and norms when sharing, creating and applying knowledge (Lei *et al.*, 2019b). Significant organizational characteristics facilitate and encourage knowledge creation and distribution among employees (Migdadi, 2022). Knowledge-centered culture is a decisive factor of organizational culture and is characterized by values oriented toward knowledge, openness, collaborative climate and trust that encourage employees to share knowledge and ideas with others (Yang *et al.*, 2018). Perceived knowledge-centered culture represents the organizational climate and practices that promote and value employee knowledge sharing (Nonaka, 2009). Meanwhile, the current study focuses on knowledge-centered culture rather than on organizational culture. Organizational culture is a broad and complex construct that has been studied by many researchers (Lei *et al.*, 2019b). Mueller (2014) showed that organizational culture represents the source of values and beliefs that influence organizational behavior and provides the basis for effective knowledge sharing. Ethical leaders play a critical role in shaping this culture by fostering openness, trust and collaboration within the organization (Brown and Treviño, 2006). Employees who perceive their organization as having a knowledge-centered culture are likely to engage in knowledge sharing behaviors because they feel supported and rewarded for their contributions (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005). Leaders play a fundamental role in shaping and institutionalizing organizational culture (Jung, 2001). For instance, ethical leadership and knowledge-centered culture have potential links that have been overlooked by researchers (Giritli *et al.*, 2013). Highlighting the potential role of organizational culture toward knowledge sharing, Wang and Noe (2010) suggested that future research needs to study the mechanism by which cultural values affect employees' knowledge sharing-related intentions and behaviors. Although knowledge-centered culture has been considered the driving force behind the success of knowledge management practices (Yang *et al.*, 2018), the literature on its direct link to knowledge sharing behaviors is still lacking (Shao *et al.*, 2015). A more in-depth study of the correlations among cultural traits is necessary to clarify the influences of specific cultural traits and the antecedent conditions of knowledge sharing (Lei *et al.*, 2019a, b). Hence, we hypothesize the following:

H5. Ethical leadership is positively related to knowledge-centered culture.

H6. Knowledge-centered culture is positively related to knowledge sharing behavior.

H7. Knowledge-centered culture mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior.

3. Method

3.1 Sample and procedures

Data were gathered through an online cross-sectional survey in the UAE over two months (May–April 2023). On the basis of a master list obtained from the administration department of the UAE, the survey link for the study was sent randomly to employees ($n = 1,000$) working in various UAE public sector units, such as education, health care and social welfare. This study targeted public sector employees with at least one year of professional

experience. The inclusion of only experienced employees in the current study was aimed at obtaining better insights. If a participant has been in an environment for at least one year, they are likely to have a certain level of engagement and familiarity with that environment, making them more qualified participants for the survey (Yates *et al.*, 2021). A total of 480 responses were collected. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants before their participation in the survey, and their consent was obtained. Table 2 outlines the demographic characteristics of the 480 respondents. Of the respondents, 61.25% were male, and 38.75% were female. The largest age group was 35–44 years (45%). Regarding education, 50.2% held an undergraduate degree, 11% held a high school diploma and 38.8% held a postgraduate degree. The majority (82.7%) of the respondents had over 10 years of association with their current organization while the rest had (17.3%) one to five years of association.

3.2 Measures

The study measurement items were retrieved from previous studies (see the Appendix). A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) was used to evaluate the study variables. All measurement items were translated from English to Arabic by a professional translator using forward and backward translation to ensure the accuracy of the translation and retain the correct meaning of the items. Two researchers assessed and reviewed the final translations to improve language accuracy.

Ethical leadership: Ethical leadership was assessed using 15 items from the ethical leadership questionnaire (ELQ) validated and developed by Yukl *et al.* (2013). The ELQ items cover different aspects of ethical leadership, including behaviors and values such as leader integrity, honesty, fairness, accountability and ethical guidance.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics		
Sample characteristics	Sample (%)	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	61.25	294
Female	38.75	186
<i>Age</i>		
18–24 years	5.6	27
25–34 years	24.8	119
35–44 years	45	216
45–54 years	19.8	95
55 years and above	4.8	23
<i>Education level</i>		
High school	11.0	53
Undergraduate	50.2	241
Postgraduate	38.8	186
<i>Sector type</i>		
Government sector	71.04	341
Private sector	15.42	74
Semi-government	13.54	65
<i>Organizational tenure</i>		
1–5 years	17.3	83
5–10 years	18.8	90
10–20 years	34.2	164
20 years and above	29.7	143
Note(s): <i>n</i> = 480		
Source(s): Authors' own work		

Knowledge-centered culture: It was measured using seven items derived from the work of [Donate and Guadamillas \(2011\)](#) to reflect the cultural values that promote and support knowledge management activities.

Intrinsic motivation: Intrinsic motivation was assessed using three items from the multidimensional work motivation scale developed and validated by [Gagné et al. \(2015\)](#). The scale assesses employees' work motivation for externally identified regulations and intrinsic motivation.

Knowledge sharing behavior: Knowledge sharing behavior was assessed using a 15-item scale developed by [Yi \(2009\)](#).

3.2.1 Control variable. Researchers use control variables to eliminate statistically significant distortions linked to unimportant variables ([Bernerth et al., 2018](#)). Purifying the results and exposing “true relationships” help researchers avoid potential confounding effects. In the current study, we used organizational tenure as control variables in the analysis of ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior, mainly because organizational tenure may influence leader–subordinate relationships.

3.3 Analytical procedures

This study used a comprehensive approach to answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses. Inferential statistical methods, particularly structural equation modeling (SEM) and regression analysis, were applied. Model fit evaluations were also performed. Initially, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. CFA is used to assess how well the measured variables represent the intended constructs – also known as the measurement model ([Brown and Moore, 2012](#)). The constructs were found to be unidimensional (following the guidelines of [Hair et al., 2016](#)), with the factor loadings being approximately 0.5, which is acceptable.

3.3.1 Common method bias. Common method bias occurs when both dependent and independent variables are measured from the same survey questionnaire. To address this issue, this study applied Harman's single-factor analysis. The test results showed that a single factor explained 31.108% of the variance; this value falls below the 50% threshold recommended by [Podsakoff et al. \(2003\)](#). In addition, loading and cross-loading tests ([Kock, 2015](#)) were conducted to ensure that the data were unbiased.

3.4 Validity and reliability of measurement model

First, we tested the reliability of the measures for the constructs by examining the Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The Cronbach's alpha values were as follows: ethical leadership = 0.978, knowledge-centered culture = 0.928, intrinsic motivation = 0.931 and knowledge sharing behavior = 0.935. These results exceeded the recommended level of 0.7 ([Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994](#)). Convergent validity was assessed following the suggestion of [Hair et al. \(2009\)](#) through factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR). As shown in [Table A1 \(Appendix\)](#), the factors ranged from 0.698 to 0.948 (all greater than 0.6). The CR values were greater than 0.7. Finally, the AVE values ranged from 0.55 to 0.98, thereby exceeding 0.5. Thus, all the measures exhibited adequate convergent validity.

Discriminant validity refers to the degree to which the items discriminate between variables ([Fornell and Larcker, 1981](#)). This study used the AVE measure of [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#) to assess discriminant validity. Correlation analysis was performed, and the square roots of the AVEs were compared with the interconstruct correlations. As shown in [Table 3](#), the square roots of the AVEs surpass the interconstruct correlation coefficients. The results were neither very high (>0.90) nor very low (<0.10). Thus, the measurement model showed adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3 Discriminant validity					
Factors	EL	KSB (CP)	KSB (PI)	KCC	IM
EL	1.00	0.342	0.344	0.681	0.572
KSB (CP)	0.342	1.00	0.608	0.519	0.524
KSB (PI)	0.344	0.608	1.000	0.459	0.552
KCC	0.681	0.519	0.459	1.000	0.626
IM	0.572	0.524	0.552	0.626	1.00

Note(s): EL = Ethical leadership; KSB = knowledge sharing behavior; CP = communities of practice; PI = personal interactions; KCC = knowledge-centered culture; IM = intrinsic motivation
Source(s): Authors' own work

4. Results

4.1 Structural model

This study used SEM with maximum likelihood estimation to test the hypotheses. Table 4 presents the fit indices of the model. The fit indices were satisfactory (df = 730; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.073; goodness-of-fit index [GFI] = 0.775; comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.902; TLI = 0.895), suggesting that the relationships among the latent constructs fit the data.

4.2 Control variables

As shown in Table 5, organizational tenure exerted a positive effect on knowledge sharing behavior and ethical leadership. Hence, the long tenure of followers has a positive effect on knowledge sharing behavior and ethical leadership perception.

4.3 Hypothesis testing

The results of the hypothesis testing for structural relationships are shown in Table 6. This section covers the direct, indirect and total effect analyses.

Table 4 Fit indices for the structural model		
Fit index	Scores	Recommended value
<i>Absolute fit measures</i>		
CMIN/df	3.581	$\leq 2^a$; $\leq 5^b$
GFI	0.775	$\geq 0.90^a$; $\geq 0.80^b$
RMSEA	0.073	$\leq 0.8^a$; $\leq 0.10^b$
<i>Incremental fit measures</i>		
NFI	0.869	$\geq 0.90^a$
AGFI	0.747	$\geq 0.90^a$; $\geq 0.80^b$
CFI	0.902	$\geq 0.90^a$

Note(s): ^aAcceptability: acceptable; ^bAcceptability: marginal; CMIN/df = chi-square divided by degrees of freedom; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; NFI = normed fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index
Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 5 Control variables					
Control variables	Std. beta	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
Tenure > KSB	0.513	0.130	2.876	0.004	Supported
Tenure > EL	0.704	2.148	3.052	0.002	Supported

Note(s): Significance at the 0.05 level
Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 6 Path coefficients of research hypotheses

Hypo	Relationship	Std. beta	β	SE	t-value	p-values	Decision
H1	Ethical leadership → knowledge sharing behavior	0.392	0.286	0.031	9.327	0.000	Supported
H2	Ethical leadership → intrinsic motivation	0.567	0.109	0.007	15.618	0.000	Supported
H3	Intrinsic motivation → knowledge sharing behavior	0.586	2.227	0.141	15.805	0.000	Supported
H4	Ethical leadership → intrinsic motivation → knowledge sharing	0.02		11.09		0.000	Supported
H5	Ethical leadership → knowledge-centered culture	0.707	0.292	0.013	12.833	0.000	Supported
H6	Knowledge-centered culture → knowledge sharing behavior	0.558	0.984	0.067	14.711	0.000	Supported
H7	Ethical leadership → knowledge-centered culture → knowledge sharing	0.02		12.3		0.000	Supported

Note(s): Significance at the 0.05 level

Source(s): Authors' own work

4.3.1 Direct effect analysis. As shown in Table 6, all the direct effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables were statistically significant. Therefore, all hypotheses were supported, as evidenced by the p -value for all the hypotheses being 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This result indicated a strong and consistent relationship between the variables, thus confirming the robustness of the model. In addition, the significant p -values highlighted the validity of the proposed theoretical framework for explaining the proposed relationships.

4.3.2 Indirect effect analysis. Table 6 shows the indirect effects of ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior via the mediating role of intrinsic motivation, with the p -value being 0.000 (H4). This result indicated that the relationship was supported as H1 and H4 were both supported. Regarding the indirect effects of ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior via the mediating role of knowledge-centered culture, the p -value was 0.000 (H7). This result indicated that the relationship was supported as H2 and H5 were both supported. These findings confirmed the mediating role of knowledge-centered culture and intrinsic motivation in the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to understand how ethical leadership fosters an environment conducive to the open exchange of knowledge and collaborative work among employees. The results of the path analysis indicate that ethical leadership has a positive and significant influence on employees' knowledge sharing behavior (H1). All seven items measuring the aspects of ethical leadership positively predicted knowledge sharing behavior, underscoring the robust influence of ethical leadership on fostering an environment in which knowledge sharing is both provoked and practiced. This finding aligns with the study of Ismail (2024), who emphasized the role of ethical leadership in fostering a supportive, trust-based, transparent organizational culture conducive to open communication and collaboration. According to past research (Zhu *et al.*, 2019; Keck *et al.*, 2020), ethical leaders, by consistently modeling values such as fairness and integrity, create an environment in which employees feel interested and respected. These motivated employees contribute to organizational knowledge. Supporting the result is the investment of the UAE government in building a knowledge-based economy and the development of a vision centered on innovation, collaboration and leadership ethics (Vullings *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, ethical leadership plays a pivotal role in driving knowledge sharing behaviors that align with the country's broader strategic objectives of knowledge creation and dissemination (Trong Tuan, 2017). This finding further indicates that while leadership is a major factor, other variables, such as organizational structure, job design and team dynamics, might also play a vital role in influencing knowledge sharing behavior. Nevertheless, the significance of this relationship highlights the importance of ethical leadership in shaping employee behavior.

Within the UAE public sector, ethical leadership could be seen as a critical factor in facilitating knowledge sharing behavior because of the hierarchical and formal nature of

government organizations (Jabeen and Al Dari, 2023). In several public sector firms within the UAE, knowledge sharing is vital for attaining organizational efficiency and improving public service delivery (Van Gils and Van Quaquebeke, 2022). For instance, in government firms involved in health care, education and urban planning, employees' capabilities to share critical information and best practices are crucial for meeting service standards and implementing innovative solutions. Fairness and trust help ethical leaders reduce uncertainty and, consequently, lead to knowledge sharing. Employees are more likely to share knowledge when they perceive a sense of belonging, trust and psychological safety; that their contribution will be valued; and that they will not face any negative repercussions.

Previous studies have established ethical leadership as a key predictor of knowledge sharing behavior. Interestingly, the current study revealed a significant relationship between these variables, mediated by knowledge-centered culture and intrinsic motivation. The findings demonstrate that ethical leadership, coupled with intrinsic motivation, fosters knowledge sharing behavior both at the individual level and within the broader organizational culture, highlighting the dual influence of personal and institutional factors. The analysis provides compelling evidence that intrinsic motivation significantly mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior (*H4*). The result indicates positive and statistically significant effects indicating that intrinsic motivation plays a vital role in enhancing the influence of ethical leadership on knowledge sharing behavior. In other words, employees' intrinsic motivation strengthens their willingness to share knowledge within the organization, adding a vital layer to how ethical leadership fosters collaborative behavior. The findings align with the results of Goswami and Agrawal (2023), who emphasized the mediating role of intrinsic motivation. The study results affirmed the findings of Baldé *et al.* (2018), who highlighted the role of intrinsic motivation as a critical mediator in leadership-driven behaviors. While ethical leadership is generally associated with positive organizational behaviors, studies suggest that its direct impact on knowledge sharing behavior may not always be strong or consistent (e.g. Wang and Sung, 2016). By demonstrating that intrinsic motivation serves as a key mediating factor, our study highlights that ethical leadership alone may not be sufficient to drive knowledge sharing, reinforcing the need to consider psychological mechanisms that enhance this relationship. Prior research has shown that ethical leadership's impact on knowledge sharing is sometimes weak or inconsistent (e.g. Kim and Lee, 2020), particularly in rigid hierarchical organizations. Our study helps resolve these discrepancies by demonstrating that intrinsic motivation can act as a key explanatory factor and suggest that organizations should not rely solely on ethical leadership to enhance knowledge sharing behavior. Instead, they should cultivate a work environment that nurtures intrinsic motivation – through autonomy, meaningful work and trust – thereby strengthening the positive effects of ethical leadership.

The results support *H7*, indicating that knowledge-centered culture significantly mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior ($p = 0.000$). This finding suggests that while ethical leadership sets the foundational tone for a collaborative environment, the presence of a robust knowledge sharing culture is essential to solidify and enhance this effect. In a knowledge-centered culture, employees are motivated to share knowledge and perceive knowledge sharing as an embedded norm within the organizational environment. Firms can amplify the influence of ethical leadership on this behavior by formalizing a culture that promotes knowledge sharing. This finding is particularly relevant in the UAE public sector, where government organizations are increasingly focusing on fostering knowledge-driven innovation and efficiency to achieve national goals, such as the UAE Vision 2021 and Centennial 2071 (Government of the United Arab Emirates, 2025). Studies have proven that ethical leaders demonstrate behaviors that encourage collaboration, trust and open communication, all of which form the basis of knowledge sharing (Bavik *et al.*, 2018). Employees who perceive their leaders as ethical are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization, including knowledge sharing (Lu *et al.*, 2019).

Although past research has supported this result, researchers have shown that ethical leadership alone might not always guarantee knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing behavior is complex and generally requires more than positive examples from leaders; it requires reinforcement through organizational culture and norms. Here, a knowledge-centered culture becomes instrumental (Azeem *et al.*, 2021). Ethical leadership may act as an initial driver by encouraging an environment of respect and collaboration. However, a knowledge-centered culture provides the structural and normative support that embeds knowledge sharing behavior into daily practice (Bavik *et al.*, 2018). In the UAE public sector, where hierarchical structures and formalized processes often dominate, a knowledge-centered culture can serve as a mechanism to break down barriers to knowledge sharing. Public sector firms in the UAE face unique challenges, including strict adherence to processes, siloed departments and high formality levels. Such challenges can limit knowledge sharing unless a strong culture supports and encourages it (Cheffi *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, fostering a knowledge-centered culture allows ethical leadership to have a more profound impact by ensuring that leaders' values are communicated and embedded into practices.

Furthermore, the study findings prove that education and organizational tenure enhance followers' perceptions of their ethical leaders. In addition, these two control variables help employees more effectively engage in knowledge sharing behavior compared with new employees. The study findings also affirm the previous findings by Bavik *et al.* (2018), who reported similar findings in their studies. In particular, higher education enhances ethical awareness and fosters trust and transparency, which encourages knowledge sharing. Higher education institutions in the UAE, like their western counterparts, have introduced ethics courses into different academic programs. This approach contributes to employees who are completing higher education degrees and expands the understanding of the roles of ethics and critical thinking. In addition, longer organizational tenure strengthens alignment with organizational values, builds trust through consistent leader behavior and promotes psychological safety, thereby enabling knowledge sharing behavior (Lu *et al.*, 2019).

5.1 Theoretical implications

This research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of ethical leadership's role in influencing knowledge sharing behavior within organizations. It advances several key areas in organizational behavior and leadership theory by providing new insights into the mechanism through which ethical leadership influences knowledge sharing behavior in the UAE public sector. For instance, this study reinforces Bandura's social learning theory (1977), by demonstrating that employees model the behavior of ethical leaders in ways that promote knowledge sharing. This study highlights the effectiveness of ethical leadership in influencing knowledge sharing behavior in an environment (UAE public sector), where leaders play a major role in shaping organizational norms and practices because of the pronounced power distance. This study also adds depth to ethical leadership theory by showing that while ethical leaders can significantly influence knowledge sharing, the presence of motivational and cultural factors is essential for maximizing this impact. This study further suggests that the effectiveness of ethical leadership is partially contingent upon these mediating factors and thus calls for a more relational and context-specific approach within ethical leadership theory.

In addition, this study underscores the value of incorporating intrinsic motivation as a critical pathway in leadership models, expanding existing theories that emphasize broader organizational alignment over individual relational connections. By emphasizing the mediating role of intrinsic motivation, our study extends self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985) within the leadership and knowledge sharing context. Many leadership studies have focused on external incentives (e.g. rewards and recognition), but our findings suggest that intrinsic motivation, stemming from ethical leadership, plays a more

sustainable role in fostering knowledge sharing behavior. This insight adds novelty by shifting the focus from transactional to transformational and ethical leadership influences, especially in public sector units, which are known for generous external incentives but place lower emphasis on intrinsic motivational factors.

This research reinforces knowledge-centered culture as a vital construct that can strengthen the effects of leadership behaviors on knowledge sharing. It adds to organizational culture theory by highlighting the unique role of knowledge-centered culture in facilitating knowledge-driven outcomes, particularly in hierarchical collectivist contexts, such as the UAE public sector.

5.2 Practical implications

Public sector organizations aiming to enhance employees' knowledge sharing behavior must invest in ethical leadership development while fostering a culture that supports and encourages the same. Leaders must be trained to demonstrate ethical behaviors and build conducive strategies to enhance employees' intrinsic motivation and knowledge-centered culture to build strong relational connections with them, as intrinsic motivation and knowledge-centered culture are crucial mediators. This approach could involve fostering open-minded communication, facilitating team building and encouraging collaboration to strengthen trust-based relationships, leading to knowledge sharing.

These variables collectively shape the organizational climate and employee belief toward knowledge sharing, influencing how individuals are motivated to exchange information and ideas. By delving into the intricate dynamics between these constructs, this study aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms that drive employee knowledge sharing behavior. Understanding the interactive mechanisms of ethical leadership practices, intrinsic motivation and knowledge-centered culture can provide valuable insights into fostering a supportive environment conducive to knowledge sharing. By understanding the role of intrinsic motivation in facilitating knowledge sharing, public sector leaders can implement targeted strategies to cultivate a culture of appreciation and recognition, thereby enhancing employee engagement and organizational performance. This study provides public sector practitioners with valuable insights into the importance of ethical leadership traits. As revealed by the results of this study, the positive relationship between ethical leadership, intrinsic motivation and knowledge sharing behavior indicates that employees' intrinsic motives may be affected negatively or positively about ethics. Hence, this study recommends that organizations emphasize the formulation of clear and specific codes of ethics and implement ethics awareness programs. This undertaking will ensure that managers perform assessments fairly and protect employees' copyright ideas, consequently increasing employees' enjoyment and desire to work. Entities may design a platform for employees to share their ideas and information and make sure that their inputs are adequately protected and registered under their names. Moreover, managers can arrange regular meetings with employees to share their achievements and exchange thoughts toward new projects. Managers should listen more during these meetings and provide more space for employees to express their ideas. In addition, managers need to be more transparent with employees regarding their performance through one-to-one conversations to clarify misunderstandings. These actions will make employees perceive fairness in the workplace environment, which will in turn make them feel safe in sharing knowledge with other employees and ultimately create a knowledge-centered culture in the workplace.

Public organizations should invest in leadership development programs that emphasize the importance of ethical behavior and integrity. Leaders should be trained to engage in ethical conduct, communicate transparently and uphold moral principles in their decision-making processes. Public organizations can cultivate a sense of belonging and attachment among employees by providing opportunities for meaningful interactions with leaders and fostering a strong organizational culture that aligns with employees' values and goals. In addition,

organizations must focus on establishing a knowledge-oriented culture that integrates knowledge sharing into everyday practices and expectations. This undertaking might include establishing platforms for rewarding employees who actively contribute toward knowledge exchange and embedding knowledge sharing objectives within performance appraisals.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between ethical leadership, mediators (intrinsic motivation and perceived knowledge-centered culture) and employees' knowledge sharing behavior in public sector organizations. The findings demonstrate that ethical leadership significantly enhances knowledge sharing behaviors among employees, underscoring the role of leaders in promoting fairness, transparency and trust. A knowledge-centered culture is also identified as a significant mediator. Such a culture strengthens the positive impact of ethical leadership on knowledge sharing by embedding sharing practices into organizational norms and expectations. This finding highlights the importance of a supportive culture that endorses and institutionalizes knowledge sharing behaviors.

A limitation of this study is that it concentrated mainly on public organizations in the UAE and used a study sample made up almost entirely of local government organizations. This focus raises questions about how well the study's findings apply to other organizations with varied cultural backgrounds, such as private or multinational enterprises. Future researchers may conduct studies that either sample a broader range of organizations or use more representative samples before making claims about the effects of ethical leadership on knowledge sharing behavior.

This study used two variables, namely, intrinsic motivation and knowledge-centered culture, as mediators between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior. Future research could explore several strands of inquiry to gain a clearer overall picture of the link between other constructs, such as relational identification, organizational identification and gratitude, as well as to answer the following question: What is the potential role of other mediating variables in this link? Future studies may also examine the moderating effects of other variables such as ethical climate, power distance and trust coupled with leaders' emotional intelligence, in examining ethical leadership and knowledge sharing behavior in public sector units in emerging Arab countries. Nevertheless, the insights from this study contribute to a deeper understanding of how ethical leadership interacts with different organizational and interpersonal factors to shape knowledge sharing behaviors. They also underscore the need for organizations to cultivate both intrinsic motivators and a knowledge-centered culture to enhance knowledge sharing behavior in public sector units.

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Appendix

Table A1 Standardized loading and reliability for measurement model

Construct	Sub-construct	Code – construct/indicator	Factor loading	AVE	CR	α
EL		EL1 My boss shows a strong concern for ethical and moral values	0.827	0.75	0.98	0.978
		EL2 My boss communicates clear ethical standards for members	0.825			
		EL3 My boss sets an example of ethical behavior in his/her decisions and actions	0.855			
		EL4 My boss is honest and can be trusted to tell the truth	0.914			
		EL5 My boss keeps his/her actions consistent with his/her stated values (“walks the talk”)	0.886			
		EL6 My boss is fair and unbiased when assigning tasks to members	0.869			
		EL7 My boss can be trusted to carry out promises and commitments	0.896			
		EL8 My boss insists on doing what is fair and ethical even when it is not easy	0.906			
		EL9 My boss acknowledges mistakes and takes responsibility for them	0.868			
		EL10 My boss Regards honesty and integrity as important personal values	0.895			
		EL11 My boss Sets an example of dedication and self-sacrifice for the organization	0.830			
		EL12 My boss opposes the use of unethical practices to increase performance	0.793			
		EL13 My boss is fair and objective when evaluating member performance and providing rewards	0.876			
		EL14 My boss puts the needs of others above his/her own self-interest	0.856			
		EL15 My boss holds members accountable for using ethical practices in their work	0.877			
KCC		KCC1 In my work there is a common language to support knowledge exchange and sharing between employees and departments	0.799	0.649	0.928	0.928
		KCC2 My work encourages employees to experiment and implement new ideas in their working day	0.867			
		KCC3 In my work considered employee mistakes are a learning consequence and are tolerated up to a certain limit	0.779			
		KCC4 My work culture is based on confidence and openness	0.855			
		KCC5 My work encourages employees to share knowledge at an informal level	0.758			
		KCC6 The employees in my work demonstrate responsible behavior and a high learning disposition	0.792			
		KCC7 All employees in my work perceive the same purpose and feel bound to it	0.783			
IM		IM1 Because I have fun doing my job	0.904	0.82	0.933	0.931
		IM2 Because what I do in my work is exciting	0.948			
		IM3 Because the work I do is interesting	0.868			
KSB	Personal interactions	KSB1 I support less experienced employees during my personal free-time	0.698	0.55	0.957	0.935
		KSB2 I engage in long-term training relationships with junior employees	0.765			
		KSB3 I spend time in personal conversation (e.g., discussion in hallway, over lunch, through telephone) with other employees to help them with their work-related problems	0.0732			
		KSB4 I keep other employees updated with important organizational information through personal conversation	0.774			
		KSP5 I share passion and excitement on some specific subjects with other employees through personal conversation	0.796			
		KSB6 I share experiences that may help other employees to avoid risks and trouble through personal conversation	0.799			
		KSP7 I spend time in online chats with other employees to help them with their work-related problems	0.743			
		KSB8 I spend time in e-mail communication with other employees to help them with their work-related problems	0.590			

(continued)

Table A1

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Sub-construct</i>	<i>Code – construct/indicator</i>	<i>Factor loading</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>α</i>
	Communities of practice	KSB9 I meet with employees within my organization and employees from other organizations to create innovative solutions for problems that occur in work	0.893			
		KSB10 I meet with employees within my organization and employees from other organizations to share their own experience and practice on specific topics with common interests	0.910			
		KSB11 I meet with employees within my organization and employees from other organizations to share success and failure stories on specific topics with common interests	0.889			
		KSB12 I meet with employees within my organization and employees from other organizations to work to encourage excellence in community's practice	0.885			
		KSB13 I support personal development of new employees within my organization and employees from other organizations	0.743			
		KSB14 I send related information to employees within my organization and employees from other organizations via e-mail	0.631			
		KSB15 I share ideas and thoughts on specific topics via organization supported online platform-of-practice system	0.670			
Note(s): $\alpha \geq 0.7$, composite reliability ≥ 0.7 ; average variance extracted ≥ 0.5 ; ***significant at $p < 0.001$						
Source(s): Authors' own work						

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