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Knowledge sharing in a remote working organisation

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Background: With the increase in remote working environments since the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, organisations were periodically forced to adopt remote working strategies. Moving to a remote working environment has several advantages and challenges. A challenge faced by most organisations is the adoption of a strategy that would emulate a face-to-face working environment as closely as possible. One crucial aspect in trying to achieve this has been the sharing of knowledge remotely, as knowledge sharing is easier to conduct face-to-face than in a remote working environment.

Objectives: This study explored how knowledge is shared and retained in a remote working organisation. The study also identifies some of the benefits and barriers to knowledge sharing in remote working environments.

Method: This qualitative study collected empirical data from seven semi-structured interviews with individuals who were part of a remote team from a research organisation.

Results: The study found that knowledge can be shared remotely using a combination of processes and technological tools such as online platforms (e.g. Microsoft Teams and SharePoint). It was also found that mentoring and collaboration should be implemented as knowledge-retention strategies. The building of trust through the socialisation of team members should be encouraged to promote knowledge sharing. The findings of this study add value with a focus on sharing knowledge in a remote working organisation to ultimately enhance or optimise knowledge sharing for this environment.

Conclusion: Collaborative practices such as knowledge sharing can be significantly impacted by the nature of remote working. Strategic initiatives need to be thoughtfully implemented to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing, as the reliance on technology alone may not bring favourable results.

Contribution: This study adds findings and suggestions to a relatively new but important aspect of knowledge management and focuses on managing knowledge remotely where physical interaction is very limited.

Keywords: remote work; knowledge sharing; knowledge retention; collaboration learning; barriers; trust.

Introduction

In 2019, with the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) spreading globally, countries started implementing lockdown strategies to deal with the pandemic. Because of COVID-19, remote work increased, forcing organisations worldwide to adopt remote working strategies, which have both challenges and advantages (Galanti et al. 2021). The shift towards remote work has posed challenges and opportunities for knowledge development and use, highlighting tensions in knowledge codification, knowledge silos and new knowledge creation (Matikainen, Kianto & Olander 2023). Matikainen et al. (2023) mention that the temporal and spatial separation encountered in remote work limits knowledge flows and impacts knowledge production and sharing. With significant differences between an office working environment and a remote working environment, it is expected that remote working environments would impact knowledge sharing. Physical closeness could improve knowledge sharing in office settings by enabling staff members to approach one another for informal information transfers, debates and feedback (Goel, Game & Sanz Vergel 2023). Goel et al. (2023) highlight that knowledge is exchanged and problems are solved quickly. However, in remote work settings, the absence of physical closeness could pose obstacles to unplanned knowledge exchange, necessitating deliberate efforts to arrange virtual meetings, connect via digital platforms and provide materials ahead of time.

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By encouraging learning, various viewpoints and experiences, knowledge sharing within teams could aid knowledge-retention (Yeo 2020). Based on the circumstances of the organisation involved in this study and the global remote working environment, it could be beneficial to better understand how knowledge is shared in remote working environments. Knowledge sharing benefits employees receiving knowledge and ensures that knowledge is retained for future use. This study investigates the impact of knowledge sharing within a remote working environment, with the objective of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of how knowledge sharing could be facilitated in a remote working environment. This study also seeks to identify any barriers to sharing knowledge while remote working, and ultimately lays the foundation for recommendations and improvements.

Literature review

Knowledge management (KM) uses an organisation's collective information and structures to enhance their competitive advantage, foster innovation and creates efficiency (Serban & Luan 2002). Organisations could leverage knowledge as a competitive advantage by managing, disseminating and transferring explicit and tacit knowledge within their global networks (Patel et al. 2021). Explicit knowledge is easily documented, transferred, codified, articulated and shared. Reports, databases, policies and documented procedures are examples of explicit knowledge (Serban & Luan 2002). As it is innate to each person, tacit knowledge is communicated through socialisation techniques (e.g. face-to-face communication, group projects and casual conversations). Through participation, conversation and observation, people could gather and duplicate tacit knowledge possessed by others. However, as tacit knowledge is ingrained in people, it is more difficult to transmit (Patel et al. 2021). Because explicit knowledge is definite and palpable, it may be communicated more simply from one person to another. As tacit knowledge is the knowledge that people store within themselves, it is more subtle and challenging to express. Tacit knowledge is difficult to convey or record because it is derived from individual experiences, perceptions and gut feelings (Patel et al. 2021).

Knowledge sharing is the process of sharing knowledge, ideas, skills and experiences among members of a community or organisation. It entails workers' readiness and initiative-taking to impart knowledge to others, whether explicit or tacit (Chumg et al. 2016). Knowledge sharing is essential because it helps businesses to create creative ideas and enhance internal procedures and practices. These improvements result in higher productivity and long-term business survival (Ahmad & Karim 2019).

When a person works remotely, they are not required to be physically present in a regular office or workplace. Alternatively, people can work in any location of choice (Morrison-Smith & Ruiz 2020). These proximity restrictions impact severely on unplanned communication, affecting team members' sense of trust and camaraderie, which is necessary to facilitate more efficient knowledge sharing. Being in the same physical location when working with team members enables nonverbal clues and gestures to improve understanding and conversation (Meluso, Johnson & Bagrow 2020). Meluso et al. (2020) discuss that the lack of physical closeness could lead to a reduction in chance encounters and unofficial knowledge and information sharing that frequently transpire naturally in a typical onsite work setting. However, knowledge sharing in a distant setting seeks to rely on digital tools such as databases, e-learning apps, knowledge systems and electronic data interchange systems. Information technology (IT) solutions that blur organisational boundaries and cloud computing systems that enable remote data availability and storage are necessary for current-day remote work (Stachová et al. 2020).

Defining and discussing knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing can be defined as the transferring of individuals' professional information, methodologies and viewpoints to others and to employ this knowledge in their working environment (Martinsson Broström & Skoglund 2023). Nguyen et al. (2020) define knowledge sharing as the sharing between individuals and groups of people at various levels within the organisation. In addition, knowledge sharing is defined as employees' enthusiasm or desire to share information with other employees within an organisation; this information includes ideas, experiences, processes and formulas (Arsawan et al. 2020). Nguyen et al. (2020) note that the knowledge-sharing process involves at least two people – one person dispensing the knowledge and the other obtaining the knowledge. It could include explicit knowledge in the form of information, formally expressed and communicated systematically through documents and reports, and tacit knowledge, which is based on actions, experiences, commitment, understandings and insights (Martinsson, Broström & Skoglund 2023).

Nguyen et al. (2020) state that the knowledge-sharing process in which knowledge is exchanged allows for new knowledge to be created. Knowledge sharing comprises two processes: knowledge donation and collection (Nguyen et al. 2020). Nguyen et al. (2020) note that when knowledge sharing occurs among employees, the knowledge acquired could help encourage innovative work behaviour. Sharing knowledge leads employees to acquire the knowledge to develop and use new ideas. Knowledge sharing can be promoted by developing trust among team members, advocating the use of new technologies while showing dedication to knowledge-sharing initiatives (Martinsson et al. 2023). Martinsson et al. (2023) mention that knowledge sharing could be promoted in various ways (e.g. by fostering an open and inclusive work climate in which people feel at ease and inspired to share their knowledge). This is accomplished by encouraging communication, collaboration and teamwork. It is important for managers to stress the significance of knowledge and information sharing, and the benefits it provides to individuals and their organisations

(Martinsson et al. 2023). Informal get-togethers and generating a sense of reciprocity assists employees build personal ties and increase trust. Senior management's involvement in knowledge-sharing programmes can encourage and influence employees to participate (Cidade, Bissani & Oliveira 2022).

Benefits of knowledge sharing

According to Martinsson et al. (2023), some of the benefits of knowledge sharing include:

- *Enhanced team performance and satisfaction*: fosters connections between team members' diverse ideas and working techniques, resulting in increased team performance and decision-making satisfaction.
- *Increased innovation and competitive advantage*: broadens employees' viewpoints and improves their innovative performance.
- *Improved organisational outcomes*: improves key organisational outcomes (e.g. firm performance, productivity, absorption capacity and competitive advantage).
- *Creation of organisational memory and community*: promotes social relationships, trust and cooperation, strengthens the foundation for knowledge generation.
- *Development of innovative viewpoints*: encourages the emergence of innovative perspectives. It adds to shorter communication pathways, faster working methods and organisational innovation.
- *Enriched cognitive resources*: improves a team's cognitive resources by enabling the exchange of knowledge, opinions and viewpoints, enhancing the cognitive resources of the team.
- *Facilitation of learning and growth*: fosters an open work environment in which people feel free to share their knowledge, resulting in continual learning and improvement.
- *Improvement in communication and collaboration*: use of virtual collaboration technologies allows knowledge-sharing activities that improve communication, collaboration and the flow of informal communication within teams.

Barriers and challenges to knowledge sharing

Effective knowledge sharing could be hampered by organisational culture, mistrust and the fear of losing their competitive edge. It is imperative to establish a nurturing atmosphere that fosters dialogue, undertaking measures to establish trust and integrate knowledge-sharing technologies to expedite idea sharing. Organisations must solve any potential challenges that may impede knowledge sharing to reap the benefits of knowledge sharing for innovation and organisational growth (Castaneda & Cuellar 2020).

Castaneda and Cuellar (2020) state that the practice of 'knowledge hiding' is an obstacle to knowledge sharing. In this practice, people knowingly withhold or conceal knowledge and information sought by others. This kind of behaviour can obstruct communication and teamwork within organisations. This is regarded as a counterproductive workplace behaviour, as knowledge hiding can limit employees' creativity and harm performance (Bari, Ghaffar & Ahmad 2020).

Another significant challenge in knowledge sharing is trust among team members. Organisations must solve any potential challenges that may impede knowledge sharing to reap the benefits of knowledge sharing for innovation and organisational growth (Castaneda & Cuellar 2020). Team members become more committed and reciprocal because of their trusting relationship, which encourages them to share their knowledge and experiences (Chumg et al. 2022). Long-term formal and informal interactions help team members build strong relational embeddedness through relationships built on trust and integrity, thus further encouraging knowledge sharing (Chumg et al. 2022). Castaneda and Cuellar (2020) state that to overcome trust barriers, an organisation needs to implement strategies to build trust effectively, leading to greater knowledge sharing.

Knowledge sharing in remote working environments

Knowledge sharing is essential in a global virtual work environment and can be facilitated via communication technologies and virtual tools. Organisations should be encouraged to foster a culture of knowledge sharing because it improves innovation, individual and organisational performance, and one's competitive advantage (Martinsson et al. 2023). Peters (2018) identified the challenges for team members working in different locations, as these isolated team members can experience miscommunication as well as conflict. However, this can be addressed through the support from management who proactively engage to ensure a more cohesive team.

Erwin-Svoboda, Hess and Watrin (2022) mention that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, most organisations were forced to adopt a remote working strategy. Erwin-Svoboda et al. (2022) conducted a quantitative study to explore how knowledge sharing was affected in a remote working environment, and they identified the significant barriers to be access to technology, clarity on locating information and an overburden of information to process when staff had to start working remotely. Organisations that want to effectively share knowledge among their team members from various cultures and time zones face increased complexity owing to global remote working teams (Davidavičienė, Majzoub & Meidute-Kavaliauskiene 2020). Virtual teams appear to be more active in tasks that require knowledge sharing and exchange, and their success and efficacy of virtual teams depend on how much their members' beliefs in information sharing, communication and collaboration grow over time (Chumg et al. 2022).

Erwin-Svoboda et al. (2022) suggest that team members must ensure that time is available to facilitate knowledge sharing in remote working environments with teams in the exact physical location. These teams can also share informal

knowledge in their remote physical locations, allowing for social interaction. Knowledge sharing can occur in remote working environments by setting up platforms for communication and ensuring the appropriate technology is available; this can be done by scheduling time for formal and informal knowledge sharing. However, informal communication is a challenge as there is very limited opportunity for team members to interact in a social setting that allows unplanned communication (Natu & Aparicio 2022). Informal communication between team members is essential, as this can lead to discussions about the problems team members face and provide solutions to these problems. Informal discussions also facilitate the exchange of ideas and new information that team members might have acquired.

Factors that affect knowledge sharing in a remote team

Although remote working virtual teams can offer many benefits to organisations, they still face unique challenges. In some instances, members of virtual teams are dispersed in various geographical locations and might cooperate and coordinate with others through information communication technologies (ICTs) (Chumg et al. 2022). The factors affecting knowledge sharing in a remote working virtual team include culture, motivation, leadership, ICT, conflict, trust and communication.

Culture

Because of the characteristics of intercultural challenges and disputes, cultural diversity and identity can jeopardise remote working virtual team members' knowledge-sharing behaviour and creativity (Chumg et al. 2022). Value and norm divergence can lead to misconceptions and other intercultural problems that could impede the process of knowledge exchange. The relationships between team members and the processes for collaboration and knowledge sharing are made more difficult by cultural differences within the team, although virtual teams give organisations a way to incorporate skills, talent and other assets from people worldwide (Davidavičienė et al. 2020). Generally, organisations with a supportive culture have more interactions, collaboration, encouragement and equity among their members. This type of workplace is friendlier and more enjoyable (Chumg et al. 2016).

Motivation

People's reluctance to share information is one of the challenges in knowledge sharing. Team members are more willing to participate in the knowledge-sharing process if they believe there will be benefits to both parties involved (Davidavičienė et al. 2020). The sharing of knowledge in virtual teams is favourably affected by contentment. Employee detachment lowers employees' sense of ability and prevents them from sharing information. When a company supports its workers, their belief in their ability to achieve targets and overall performance increases, encouraging further knowledge sharing.

Leadership

Many difficulties arise from the need for face-to-face interaction among team members, which might impact knowledge exchange and the effectiveness of virtual teams. Leadership can overcome these difficulties. Leadership is crucial for virtual teams to overcome problems and attain their full potential. Leaders must devise strategies to inspire team members to impart knowledge and information. The quality of leadership significantly influences the performance of virtual teams (Davidavičienė et al. 2020).

Information communication technology

Knowledge exchange among employees is facilitated through the use of ICTs. However, this does not negate the necessity of employee cooperation. It has been demonstrated that ICTs have a favourable effect on the knowledge-sharing process, and the use of technology by virtual teams is crucial for team communication (Davidavičienė et al. 2020). Using ICTs for social communication has become a consistent behavioural habit of social engagement, whether consciously or unconsciously (Chumg et al. 2022).

Conflict

Conflict is often a result of perceived differences in beliefs, values or goals that impair their capacity to collaborate and impact the workplace. When working together, people communicate differently and have different perceptions, attitudes and values which may result in potential conflict.

Trust

The degree to which team members trust each other significantly affects how they share knowledge in virtual teams (Chumg et al. 2022). Trust is an essential aspect that influences team knowledge sharing, which is a defining characteristic of the interactions between team members. Trust is critical because it bridges the psychological gap between the team members. The social bonds between team members are strong, and their contribution to knowledge sharing is boosted when partners are trusted. In virtual teams, in which communication and collaboration rely on electronic means, trust plays an even more significant role because of the additional uncertainties and risks associated with remote interactions (Chumg et al. 2022). Social interaction can build trust in virtual teams by promoting transparency and predictability.

Communication

Engaging in collaborative activities is crucial for virtual teams, as it promotes the exchange of superior knowledge and fosters trust among members. Regular communication enhances the quantity of knowledge and information accessible to evaluate another person's skills, behaviours and intents inside the relationship, which is likely to foster trust (Olaisen & Revang 2017).

Research methods and design

This study adopted a qualitative approach to reaching the objectives of this study. As part of this qualitative approach, a purposive sample was identified for collecting the qualitative research data. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants with specific knowledge or experience to contribute to the research aims (Hamilton & Finley 2019). By deliberately selecting persons with the requisite information or insights, researchers could acquire significant and comprehensive insights into a research issue (Rahi 2017). Participants were identified as employees within a multinational health research organisation, with particular focus on a remote team located in South Africa (SA) — this team, comprised of eight members, as the target sample. From this target sample, seven team members participated in this research as one member chose not to participate. At the time of data collection, these team members operated across various provinces in SA and were geographically dispersed across Gauteng, the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. These team members belonged to various departments within the selected multinational health research organisation, and shared only the same national location. Employees were part of the data management, data science, software development and project departments.

Interviews were chosen as the data collection method, which comprised of semi-structured online interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom with each of the members of the SA remote team. The interview questions focused on:

- Exploring how knowledge is shared and managed.
- Impact of remote work on knowledge sharing.
- Organisation's support of knowledge-sharing activities, training initiatives within the organisation, personal skills and development.
- Collaborating in learning activities among colleagues.

In addition, the questions focused on employees' experiences of barriers impacting knowledge sharing and trust that impact knowledge sharing between remote team members. Qualitative analysis in the form of thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the interviews. The interviews were conducted in the last quarter of 2023. This study used an inductive methodology that gathered evidence, analysed it and developed understanding in light of the conclusions of the analysis.

Results

Demographics

In this section, participants were asked about their years of experience related to their current position, as well as how long they had been employed at the organisation. The years of experience could be used as an indicator of the knowledge gained from previous organisations.

Table 1 shows that although some employees are new to the organisation, most employees have experience related to their current role. This indicates that they bring valuable knowledge to be shared within the organisation. The years in the current position indicate that some employees were employed during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019/2020. Participant identifiers (excluding age and tenure length) were not collected to avoid any breach of confidentiality.

Current organisational practices and approaches to knowledge sharing

The most common way that the participants shared knowledge and collaborated was through virtual team meetings. Participants were asked how often the SA team met and the purpose of the meetings. These meetings were important for the team, as they allowed for knowledge-sharing opportunities, discussion of issues specific to the SA team, and allowing the team to connect on a social level, which could lead to a personal connection allowing team members to easily approach each other for assistance. However, even though these meetings occurred regularly, there were some challenges experienced, which included:

- *Lack of team meetings*: several respondents said that while there used to be regular meetings, the team has not met in about a year.
- *Scheduling issues*: two respondents said that the meeting did not occur because of scheduling constraints.

The absence of regular meetings appeared to impede social interaction, which was crucial for effective knowledge sharing within the team. Some of the team members felt excluded from team meetings because of their remote location and time zone differences, which represented a missed opportunity to obtain valuable insights from experienced team members. In addition, meeting with selected individuals might foster siloed working environments, hindering collaboration and information flow (Jeske & Olson 2025). Moreover, the lack of awareness regarding the team's prolonged absence from meetings raised questions about the leadership support and ultimately the culture of the organisation.

When it came to the preferred technologies used for meetings, most of the collaborations were taking place within Microsoft Teams. The presence of this and other platforms suggested a structured framework for sharing ideas and asking questions within the organisation. Participants were asked about the platforms they used for interaction. The following themes were identified from their responses.

TABLE 1: Indication of years of experience in current role and years of overall experience.

Gender	Years of experience related to current position	Years in current position
Female	11	2.5
Female	12–13	1.5
Male	9	2.0
Female	21	2.9
Female	25	2–3
Female	16	About 4
Male	20	5.0

Microsoft Teams

Most participants said that Microsoft Teams was the primary platform they used for communication and collaboration. Participants highlighted its versatility, from formal communication through email to meetings with screen-sharing capabilities. Some team members commented on the quick chat functionality, which further streamlined communication, facilitating immediate responses and knowledge sharing within the team.

SharePoint

Some participants used the SharePoint platform for document sharing and collaboration among remote teams. Participants emphasised its use for saving specifications, documentation and other essential files, facilitating seamless access and review by team members. Integration with Microsoft Teams enhanced its effectiveness in supporting knowledge sharing and project management.

Outlook

Three of the respondents said they used Outlook for formal communication. This platform seemed to be used more for client and external communication than Teams, which was used for internal communication.

WhatsApp

Two respondents said they used WhatsApp, which served as a supplementary platform for informal interactions between remote team members. Participants noted the convenience of quick calls or messages related to non-work-related matters, fostering camaraderie and team cohesion in virtual work settings.

The organisation did have some strategic initiatives to enhance knowledge sharing, but the knowledge of these initiatives and participation in these initiatives seemed mixed among the participants. The identified initiatives included:

- *Training programmes*: these were identified by some participants, as some participants expressed limited awareness of specific training programmes or initiatives.
- *External resources*: there was reliance on external resources for training and development, and some participants mentioned that the organisation used some of the following resources for training and skills development: LinkedIn Learning, Pluralsight and Udemy.
- *Informal mentoring and training*: some participants within the team had experienced some form of informal mentoring and training in an attempt to transfer knowledge to assist with skill development. One of the participants identified that there was a process underway to develop an internal training platform.

Barriers to knowledge sharing while working remotely

The following themes were identified from the responses of the participants:

Lack of experience and guidance

Participants frequently encountered challenges when faced with tasks for which they lacked experience and guidance. This creates uncertainty and inefficiency in the completion assignments. For instance, Participant 3 highlighted the consequences of assumed knowledge, which can lead to blame when critical information is missed because of a lack of guidance:

> 'Assuming that you know something, the organisation thinks something is assumed knowledge and everybody knows. In saying that, often find I missed something that is critical, then it can become a sort of a blaming game like you missed something out, unfortunately no one is actually trained you on that critical part of that knowledge.' (P3)

Workload interference

The participants noted that their workload often interfered with their ability to effectively engage in knowledge-sharing activities. Operational duties took precedence over knowledge-sharing responsibilities, impacting their ability to fulfil their roles effectively. Participant 5 highlighted the challenge of balancing operational tasks with knowledge-sharing responsibilities:

> 'Um, I think specifically for me, at this point, it's workload, my workload doesn't allow for that to happen as effectively as it should. So, I think, knowledge sharing should be much higher on the priority list, and, executed more successfully.' (P5)

Time zone and distance barriers

Time zone differences and geographical distance pose significant challenges in arranging meetings and sharing information promptly. Coordinating across different time zones made it difficult to schedule sessions and hindered real-time communication. Participants 6 and 7 pointed out the difficulties in overcoming time zone barriers to facilitate effective knowledge sharing:

> 'Guess just the availability of team members. So, if you want to arrange a session, it can sometimes get tricky. When do I need to work later to be able to present training, etcetera? So, it's more just the time zone thing?' (P6)

> 'Definitely, time zones often, because sometimes you want to share something, and then that person's not available, or you're not available to be able to share it. The other thing is just the availability, you know, just like I said, just someone to have a chat with and makes it easy to resolve whatever is not working. So, it's difficult to share knowledge when you're not close.' (P7)

Engagement and inclusivity challenges

Engaging team members and ensuring inclusivity in remote settings have emerged as significant challenges. The participants discussed difficulties in assessing engagement levels and promoting inclusivity during remote presentations. In addition, the lack of inclusivity in discussions resulted in delays in problem-solving and frustration among team members:

> 'Engagement. Sometimes, it's difficult to assess the impact or the level of engagement in a team situation, especially when dealing with a big team. If you're doing a presentation, sometimes you

are very focused on presenting and speaking. So, if somebody forgets to loop you into a discussion, they can go quite a long way down a particular track. And you don't know about that until way down the line, and would have been much, much better if they were included too that's happened a few times, if people have been trying to resolve something trying to resolve something going around in circles, contacting a few people, and then I find out about this accidentally.' (P8)

Lack of trust among team members

Trust plays a vital role in the sharing of knowledge. Honesty and transparency emerged as fundamental factors in establishing trust among team members. Participants highlighted the importance of being truthful about their capabilities, admitting limitations and sharing information openly. This creates an environment in which team members feel confident in their knowledge integrity:

'I would say things like honesty, help to build trust, if I feel if I'm being honest, I don't know how to do this.' (P1)

'What breaks my trust is somebody that states they know what that what they are doing. And I know that you might initially feel like you know, but ultimately people feel uncomfortable in admitting that you're not 100% sure.' (P5)

Several key challenges have been highlighted that impact knowledge sharing in remote work environments. Lack of experience and guidance leads to uncertainty and inefficiency in completing tasks, whereas workload interference hinders the prioritisation of knowledge-sharing responsibilities. Time zone differences and geographical distance pose barriers to scheduling meetings and real-time communications. In addition, engaging team members and ensuring inclusivity in remote settings are significant challenges affecting problem-solving and team dynamics. Addressing these challenges is essential for promoting effective knowledge sharing in remote teams.

Potential resolutions to address these challenges

The following themes were identified from the responses of the participants as potential solutions to the challenges they experienced working in a multinational remote working organisation:

- *Clear communication and training:* participants emphasised the importance of clear communication via email and ensured task comprehension through training. This theme underscores the significance of transparent communication channels and provides adequate training to equip individuals with the necessary skills.
- *Cohesive team collaboration*: cohesive team collaboration involves consolidating diverse viewpoints through structured team meetings. Participants stressed the importance of cohesive teamwork in arriving at unified solutions.
- *Effective time management*: effective time management facilitates the prioritisation of tasks and responsibilities, enabling better allocation of time for knowledge sharing and task completion.
- *Using recorded training sessions*: leveraging recorded training sessions offers flexibility and accessibility, allowing individuals to access training materials at their convenience.
- *Fostering mutual respect and engagement*: fostering mutual respect for each other's time and active engagement in remote meetings promotes equitable participation and collaboration.
- *Personal connections and collaboration*: participants highlighted the importance of building trust through personal connections and collaboration within the team. Engaging in combined meetings in which both work-related and informal discussions take place allows team members to get to know each other on a personal level, fostering a sense of camaraderie and trust. In addition, collaborative projects provide opportunities for team members to work together towards a common goal, strengthen bonds, and enhance trust through shared experiences and achievements.

These solutions emphasise the importance of clear communication and training for task comprehension and skill development in remote work environments. In addition, cohesive team collaboration, effective time management, and leveraging of recorded training sessions contribute to productivity and engagement. Fostering mutual respect and engagement promotes equitable participation and collaboration, thus enhancing the overall team dynamics.

Conclusion

Based on the overall summary of the findings, the multinational research organisation used technology to support knowledge sharing throughout the organisation. Microsoft Teams was the preferred platform for knowledge-sharing. Other platforms, such as SharePoint, were used for document sharing, and Outlook for external communications. The organisation has set up collaboration spaces within Microsoft Teams, which encourages team members to share information and ask questions that need to arise. Even with this setup, there was limited social interaction which is important for knowledge sharing. With the limited social interaction experienced by the participants, they got to know each other, which built trust, leading to greater levels of knowledge sharing.

In addition, the analysis revealed that while time zones impacted knowledge sharing (especially in a multinational context), the SA team had to adapt and become more flexible in overcoming the challenges that the time zone differences presented. Participants recognised that the organisation did to some degree support knowledge sharing but indicated that improvements could be made through mentoring and enhancing communication. The findings also revealed that the organisation did little to support training initiatives and most employees acquired work-related skills by accessing online resources. However, opportunities for collaborative learning were limited. Training and mentoring were strongly recommended strategies for knowledge sharing. Barriers to

knowledge sharing were identified as feedback on tasks, assumed knowledge, workload preventing knowledge sharing, time zones and exclusion from discussion. This indicates that these barriers seem to be linked to the culture of the organisation.

Organisations looking to remote working as a potential model for operation need to understand the challenges this presents. Collaborative practices such as knowledge sharing can be significantly impacted by the nature of remote working. Strategic initiatives need to be thoughtfully implemented to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing, as the reliance on technology alone may not bring favourable results, as seen with the case of this research. Knowledge sharing in its essence is a truly social practice, that relies heavily on trust and the desire to build people through sharing. The core of this is ingrained in the culture of an organisation.

Working remotely should be approached as an opportunity to try something new with the familiar (being the technology). Further research into innovative approaches to fostering knowledge sharing while remote working is greatly encouraged. Organisations are looking to technology to overcome the barriers to knowledge sharing among remote teams. However, technology is just the tool; practice and culture are what make the tool effective. Organisations looking to effectively share knowledge in this environment have to put practices in place that will guide the sharing of knowledge and foster a supportive culture for knowledge sharing.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

C.S.S. as the student conducted the literature review, the interview guide development, collection of data and analysis of the findings, as well as the final write up of this research in the format of a mini-dissertation. P.A.L. was the supervisor and in the capacity helped C.S.S. refine her literature review and interview guide. P.A.L. also took the final mini-dissertation and converted it to a 6000-word article submitted to the *South African Journal of Information Management* (*SAJIM*), with C.S.S.'s permission.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, P.A.L., upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. The article does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

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