

## **Employees' Relationship, Knowledge Sharing and Employees' Productivity- Evidence From an Emerging Economy's Non-Quoted Manufacturing Firms**

Olusegun Timothy Odesola and Victor Akingunloye,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

### **Abstract**

This study appraised the influence of employees' relationships (ER) and knowledge sharing (KS) on employees' productivity (EP) through the lens of the Social Exchange and Knowledge Integration Theory (SEKIT). A descriptive survey was adopted as the research design. Data for the study were obtained from primary sources through the administration of structured questionnaires. A sample size of 100 was randomly selected from employees of non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State. Both correlation and regression analyses were employed to analyze the data collected. The findings show that employees' relationships ( $R^2 = 0.212$ ,  $f = 23.358$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) had a positive association with employees' productivity in non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State. Additionally, the results indicate that KS had a positive but weak correlation with EP ( $r = 0.260$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the combined influence of ER and KS on EP was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.319$ ,  $f = 19.68$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings underscore the importance of fostering positive relationships among employees and cultivating a knowledge-sharing climate to enhance productivity, as conceptualized within the framework of SEKIT.

**Keywords:** Knowledge sharing, employees' productivity, employees' relationship, manufacturing firms, Knowledge Management

### **Introduction**

How do employees' relationships and knowledge-sharing practices influence productivity in non-quoted manufacturing firms in an emerging economy? This research question is significant because it addresses the critical challenges faced by non-quoted manufacturing firms in emerging economies, where limited resources, informal structures, and restricted access to advanced management tools often hinder growth. By investigating how employee relationships and knowledge-sharing practices impact productivity, this question has the potential to inform strategies that enhance collaboration, innovation, and performance. The answers to this question can provide

valuable insights for business leaders, policymakers, and academics, ultimately contributing to the growth and development of these firms and the broader economy. Furthermore, understanding the dynamics between employee relationships, knowledge sharing, and productivity can help identify cost-effective solutions, drive sustainable economic growth, and improve the competitiveness of non-quoted manufacturing firms in emerging economies. Several attempts have been made in the past by researchers in both developing and developed economies to provide empirical responses to the question of how employees' relationships and knowledge-sharing practices influence productivity.

For instance, Rotich and Mutuku (2023) employed a census survey of all 60 employees at Sireet Outgrowers Empowerment and Producer Company Limited in Nandi County, using structured questionnaires and descriptive, correlation, and regression analysis. The study found that knowledge management practices, particularly knowledge IT tools, significantly and positively influenced employee performance in the agricultural sector, specifically among tea outgrowers in Kenya. In another attempt, Layaman, Harahap, Djastuti, Jaelani and Djuwita (2021) employed a purposive sampling technique, collecting data from 6 employees of Sharia Banking in Indonesia, and analyzed the data using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study found that proactive knowledge sharing strongly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership, cohesion, learning goal orientation, and employee performance in the Indonesian Sharia banking sector. Tilahun (2022) employed a quantitative research design, collecting data from Ethio Telecom's 994 call centre employees using questionnaires and analyzing the data using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The study found that knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing have a significant and positive impact on employee performance, mainly operational, quality, and innovation performance, in the Ethiopian telecommunications sector. Also, Sutrisno (2024) employed a quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Partial Least Squares (PLS), collecting data from 189 SMEs in Semarang Regency, Indonesia, through online questionnaires using purposive sampling. The study found a statistically significant positive correlation between knowledge sharing, knowledge management, and employee performance in the Indonesian SME sector, highlighting the importance of practical knowledge sharing and management systems for enhancing organizational performance. Meher and Mishra (2022) employed a quantitative approach, collecting data from 354 samples from various IT firms in India and analyzing the data using SPSS-23, AMOS, and path analysis. The study found that organizational learning, facilitated by organizational intelligence, knowledge sharing, and organizational culture, significantly

enhances employee performance in the Indian IT sector. Nurrachman, Hermanto, and Chan (2019) employed a quantitative approach, collecting data from 69 employees of PT Tama Cokelat Indonesia through a survey method and analyzing the data using descriptive statistics and Partial Least Square (PLS) regression analysis. The study found that knowledge sharing has a positive and significant impact on employee performance in the Indonesian food and beverage sector, specifically at a chocolate manufacturing company.

Kuzu and Özilhan (2014) employed a survey method, collecting data from employees of a five-star hotel, to examine the relationship between employee relationships, knowledge sharing, and performance. The study found that a positive relationship between employees and knowledge sharing is crucial for enhancing employee performance in the hospitality sector, specifically in hotels. Rotich and Mutuku (2023) employed an explanatory and cross-sectional survey design, collecting data from all 60 employees at Sireet Outgrowers Empowerment and Producer Company Limited in Nandi County using structured questionnaires and analyzed the data using descriptive, correlation, and regression analysis. The study found that knowledge management practices, particularly knowledge IT tools, knowledge creation, knowledge culture, and knowledge sharing, have a positive and significant influence on employee performance in the Kenyan tea industry. Emumejakpor, Ikpe and Wilson (2023) employed a descriptive survey research design, collecting data from 62 academic staff at Cross River Institute of Technology and Management Ugep, Nigeria, using questionnaires, and analyzed the data using regression analysis with SPSS version 25.0. The study found a significant positive effect of knowledge sharing on academic staff performance in the Nigerian education sector, specifically in a technological institute. Pradhanawati, Dewi and Kusuma (2022) employed an explanatory research design, collecting data from 100 employees at SMEs Batik in Semarang, Indonesia, and analyzing the data using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study found that employee relations and tacit knowledge-sharing activities have a positive effect on employee performance in the Indonesian batik industry, specifically among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Pakpahan and Sambung (2022) employed a quantitative research design, collecting data from 75 employees at three health education institutions in Palangka Raya using questionnaires and simple random sampling and analyzing the data using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The study found that leader-member exchange (LMX), innovation, and knowledge sharing have a positive impact on employee performance in the Indonesian health education sector.

However, these empirical attempts to provide answers to the opening research question were characterized by one flaw or the other. For instance, Pakpahan and Sambung's (2022) study has limitations, including a relatively

small sample size of 75 respondents, which may not be representative of the larger population of health education institutions. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires may introduce biases and limit the generalizability of the findings. Pradhanawati et al.'s (2022) study has limitations, including a limited sample size of 100 employees from a single location (SMEs Batik in Semarang), which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Additionally, the study's reliance on a single data collection method (questionnaires) may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships between tacit knowledge sharing, employee relations, and employee performance. Emumekpor et al.'s (2023) study has limitations, including a relatively small sample size of 62 academic staff from a single institution, which may not be representative of the larger population of academic institutions. Rotich and Mutuku's (2023) study has limitations, including a relatively small sample size of 60 employees from a single organization (Street Outgrowers Empowerment and Producer Company Limited), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Layaman et al.'s (2021) study has limitations, including a tiny sample size of 6 employees from Sharia Banking in Indonesia, which raises concerns about the representativeness and generalizability of the findings.

Additionally, the study's reliance on purposive sampling may introduce biases and limit the validity of the results. Tilahun's (2022) study has a limitation, which is the study's focus on a single organization (Ethio Telecom) and department (customer service) may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Nurrachman et al.'s (2019) study has limitations, including a relatively small sample size of 69 respondents from a single organization (PT Tama Cokelat Indonesia), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Kuzu and Özilhan's (2014) study has limitations, including a narrow focus on a single industry (hotel sector) and a specific context (a five-star hotel), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors and contexts.

Previous empirical studies have predominantly focused on developed economies, neglecting developing economies, mainly African countries. As Anning-Dorson (2018) notes, replicating studies in diverse geographical locations is crucial due to cultural and structural variations. A review of existing literature reveals significant research gaps across multiple dimensions (Miles, 2017). Notably, population gaps persist due to small sample sizes and specific organizational contexts, limiting generalizability. For example, studies by Pakpahan and Sambung (2022), Pradhanawati et al. (2022), and Emumekpor et al. (2023) employed small sample sizes, raising representativeness concerns. Knowledge gaps arise from narrow industry or organizational focuses, hindering insight applicability to diverse contexts like non-quoted firms. Methodological gaps are evident in the reliance on

questionnaires, which can introduce biases and limit analysis depth. Theoretical gaps stem from underutilized frameworks, while empirical gaps arise from single-sector studies and restricted sample populations. Evidence gaps are pronounced for non-quoted manufacturing firms in emerging economies. This study addresses these gaps by examining the influence of employees' relationships and knowledge sharing on productivity in 100 non-quoted manufacturing firms using a questionnaire. By adopting a robust methodological approach and addressing population, knowledge, and evidence gaps, this research enhances understanding and provides actionable insights for improving productivity in non-quoted manufacturing firms.

Employees' relationships refer to the connections and interactions that employees have with each other, their supervisors, and the organization as a whole. It encompasses elements like trust, communication, collaboration, respect, and a sense of belonging. These relationships can significantly impact employees' engagement, satisfaction, and productivity. It's like a social ecosystem within the workplace. When employees feel connected, respected, and supported by their colleagues and the organization, they are more likely to be productive and devoted to their work. Strong relationships create a sense of community and shared purpose, fostering collaboration and creativity (Wang & Chen, 2020; Islam, Ahmad & Islam, 2018; Arasli, HejratyNamin & Abubakar, 2018). It is a virtuous cycle: as employees feel more connected and supported, they are more motivated to contribute to the achievement of the team, which, in turn, enhances their sense of belonging and fulfillment. It's a win-win for everyone. Knowledge sharing (KS) is the act of exchanging information, insights, and experiences within an organization. It involves actively seeking out and disseminating knowledge among team members so that everyone has access to the collective wisdom and expertise of the group. It's not just about sharing facts or data but also about sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative ideas. It can occur through formal channels like meetings and training sessions or through informal means like water-cooler chats and email threads. It's all about harnessing the power of collective intelligence to drive innovation and productivity. Knowledge sharing fosters a culture of collaboration and innovation within an organization, enabling employees to access and leverage the collective wisdom and expertise of the team (Motasem, 2022; Guo, Zhang, Zhou & Deng, 2020; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). This results in more informed decision-making, efficient problem-solving and continuous learning. Ultimately, the free flow of knowledge leads to improved productivity, as employees are better equipped to work together towards common goals, share best practices, and continuously improve their skills and capabilities.

Non-quoted manufacturing firms are vital to Nigeria's economy, driving growth, employment, and industrial diversification. As a significant segment

of the country's SMEs, they contribute substantially to GDP and provide jobs, especially in semi-urban and rural areas. These firms promote local industries by utilizing indigenous raw materials, reducing import dependence, and aligning with Nigeria's economic diversification goals. Additionally, non-quoted manufacturing firms foster innovation, developing cost-effective solutions that enhance competitiveness during economic downturns. However, they face challenges like limited capital access, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory hurdles. Researching these firms can inform policies addressing structural issues, integrating informal operations into the formal economy, and supporting sustainable growth. By promoting rural development and social equity, non-quoted manufacturing firms play a crucial role in inclusive economic progress, making their study essential for shaping Nigeria's industrial and economic policies. This study contributes to the existing literature on employee productivity by exploring the interplay between employee relationships and knowledge sharing in non-quoted manufacturing firms within an emerging economy. Grounded in the Social Exchange and Knowledge Integration Theory (SEKIT), this research provides a theoretical lens to understand how reciprocal interactions and the integration of tacit and explicit knowledge enhance employee productivity. Specifically, this study addresses the knowledge gap by providing empirical evidence on the combined influence of employee relationships and knowledge sharing on productivity, thereby offering valuable insights for policymakers, managers, and researchers seeking to improve employee productivity in similar contexts.

## **Literature Review**

### **Employees' Relationship**

Literature has a lot to show that much work has been done on the concept of employee relationships, with scholars offering various perspectives and definitions. Rousseau (1989) proposed the concept of "psychological contracts" as a way to understand the relationship between employees and their organisations. The author argued that employees have expectations from their organisations and that these expectations are not necessarily explicitly stated in employment contracts but rather are based on implicit promises made by the organization. The author also highlighted the importance of trust and reciprocity in employee-employer relationships. An employee who feels that their organisation is fulfilling its implicit promises has the probability of being satisfied, committed, and loyal to assigned responsibilities, thereby resulting in improved productivity and organizational success. Employees' relationship refers to any industrial relationship between the organisation and its workers as well as between employees and their efforts to maintain a positive relationship with one another. In a nutshell, employee relationship can refer to a variety of things, such as the relationship between an employee and their

employer that may include job satisfaction and employee engagement; the relationship between an employee and coworkers that may involve teamwork and collaboration; the relationship between an employee and their customers or clients that may also entail customer service and interpersonal skills and the relationship between an employee and their role or responsibilities including job fit and employee development.

The term employee relationship is any form of interaction between employees in an organization. The term is a widely accepted notion in organisational and management literature. The concept encompasses the ways in which employees interact with one another, including communication, collaboration, conflict resolution and socialization. By understanding and managing employee relationships, organisations can produce a helpful and fruitful workplace culture that supports the engagement of employees, employees' job satisfaction and performance. Good communication between employees and their employer is germane for constructing a culture that will result in a constructive workplace. In an attempt to advance work performance, feedback, either positive or negative, must be given to an employee with respect to assigned roles. Gould-Williams (2017) identified one key area of focus in the scholarly literature as the role of communication in employee relationships. Research has shown that communication is crucial to fostering a sagacity of trust and openness in the workplace that could result in improved job satisfaction and higher levels of engagement among employees. For Bordia, Irmerand Abusah (2006), effective communication can also aid in building stronger relationships between employees and their managers, resulting in better performance and higher levels of employee retention. Guest (2004) opined that in every business or work environment, there is a need for individuals to interact together. As a result of this, people in an organisation need to maintain a positive and healthy relationship with one another. These relationships can cover a wide range of aspects, including communication, tolerance, trust, duty, fulfillment and enjoyment. Various organisations have policies and initiatives that are specifically designed to enhance employee interactions. This is due to the fact that positive workplace relationships can result in a wide range of advantages, including better productivity, increased job satisfaction, and higher rates of employee retention.

The determinants of employee relationships comprise key factors influencing the quality and effectiveness of employee-organization interactions, significantly impacting engagement, productivity, and retention. These determinants include effective communication, which fosters trust and rapport, improving job satisfaction and productivity (Yukl, 2006). Respect and recognition contribute to positive morale, while teamwork and collaboration

enhance job satisfaction and engagement. Conflict resolution, work-life balance, and equality and fairness are also essential, as they maintain healthy relationships (Rowe, 1988), reduce stress and enhance commitment (Friedman & Reed, 2007), and promote equal opportunities and a productive environment (Budd & Bhawe, 2010).

### **Knowledge Sharing**

Knowledge Sharing (KS) is an essential constituent of knowledge management (KM). The conceptual framework of KS is anchored on the fact that knowledge is a valuable resource that is produced and exchanged via social interactions. The process of knowledge sharing involves the transfer of explicit knowledge (facts, procedures, and rules) and tacit knowledge (e.g., skills, experience, and expertise) between individuals or groups within an organization. According to the socialization, externalization, combination and internalization model (SECI) developed by Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000), knowledge is created through a spiral of four stages: externalization (translating tacit or unspoken knowledge into explicit or unequivocal knowledge), combination (incorporating explicit or unequivocal knowledge), socialization (distributing tacit or tacit knowledge) and bringing inward (applying explicit or unequivocal knowledge to tacit or unspoken knowledge). This model suggests that KS is a social process that involves both explicit and tacit knowledge and requires active participation and engagement from individuals.

Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000) defined KS as the procedure of relocating knowledge, expertise as well as information among persons or groups of people within an organisation. KS encompasses the interchange of ideas, insights, best practices, and lessons learned, which can foster more organisational innovations. Knowledge sharing was defined by Connelly and Kelloway (2003) as the interchange of knowledge or the behaviour that aid others with knowledge. In an empirical investigation, Ipe (2003) opined that the procedure by which a secluded individual's knowledge is recognized, assimilated and used by other individuals is recognized as knowledge sharing. It implies that the distribution of knowledge is, at any rate, a sentient behavior and that the source of knowledge is also not willing to relinquish ownership of such knowledge. Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal (2001) identified the significance of knowledge itself as one of the strategic resources for organizations. The authors argued that knowledge is a critical resource that can deliver organizations with a sustainable competitive advantage. They described how knowledge could be formed, captured, kept, shared, and leveraged to support organisational goals and improve performance. They also discussed various knowledge management approaches and technologies, such as communities of practice, knowledge repositories, and

knowledge networks. It could give businesses a competitive advantage that is sustainable in a competitive, lively economy. Renzl (2008) opined that knowledge sharing behavior is the foundation of how staff can support the application of organisational optimization, knowledge and innovation. The author added that sharing knowledge within a group or amongst groups is indispensable for organisations in the development of expertise and competencies for the enhancement of value needed to sustain competitive advantage. Thus, the effectiveness of knowledge management is increasingly dependent on information exchange.

Effective knowledge management relies on several key elements of knowledge sharing, including organizational culture, trust, communication channels, and leadership and management support. A conducive organizational culture, as highlighted by Nonaka, Toyama, and Konno (2000), encourages employees to share ideas and collaborate freely. Trust, as noted by Dirks and Ferrin (2001), facilitates open exchanges and collaboration by building confidence in others' reliability and competence. Formal and informal communication channels enable knowledge exchange, while effective communication disseminates and applies information across the organization. Finally, leadership and management support are crucial in fostering a knowledge-sharing culture, with leaders prioritizing knowledge sharing as a strategic asset and management providing necessary infrastructure and incentives (Ruggles, 1998). By integrating these elements, organizations can create an environment that promotes knowledge sharing, driving innovation and growth.

### **Theoretical Justification**

This study introduced the Social Exchange and Knowledge Integration Theory (SEKIT), a novel theoretical framework that elucidates the complex interplay between employee relationships, knowledge sharing, and productivity. By integrating elements of Social Exchange Theory and Knowledge Integration Theory, SEKIT provides a nuanced understanding of how positive employee relationships, built on trust and reciprocity, facilitate a culture of knowledge sharing, ultimately driving enhanced productivity. The Social Exchange and Knowledge Integration Theory (SEKIT) offers a novel framework for understanding the interplay between employee relationships, knowledge sharing, and productivity in non-quoted manufacturing firms in emerging economies. SEKIT integrates two established theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Knowledge Integration Theory (KIT).

SET, initially proposed by Blau (1964) and Homans (1958), posits that organizational relationships are based on reciprocity, where individuals engage in exchanges expecting mutual benefits. Positive interactions, such as trust, respect, and communication, foster a supportive environment that

enhances job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity. Knowledge Integration Theory (KIT), articulated by Kogut and Zander (1992), emphasizes combining and integrating knowledge to enhance decision-making, creativity, and innovation. Effective knowledge integration, facilitated by collaboration and shared understanding, leads to higher operational efficiency and productivity. By combining SET and KIT, SEKIT explains how employee relationships, built on trust and reciprocity, contribute to a knowledge-sharing culture. The quality of interpersonal relationships facilitates knowledge flow, enhancing employees' ability to perform tasks efficiently. In non-quoted manufacturing firms in emerging economies, where resources and formal structures may be limited, SEKIT provides a robust theoretical lens to examine how positive employee relationships foster a knowledge-sharing culture that drives productivity. This integration of SET and KIT offers a novel approach to understanding the mechanisms behind employee performance in these specific organizational contexts.

### **Hypotheses Development**

This section established the hypotheses for the current study.

### **Employees' Relationship and Employees' Productivity**

Employee relationships are widely recognized as crucial to organizational success, yet their specific impact on employee productivity remains understudied (Islam, Ahmad, & Islam, 2018). While research has shown that positive employee relationships can enhance engagement, motivation, and creativity, the mechanisms underlying these effects are not fully understood. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the relationship between employee relationships and productivity varies across different types of relationships or organizational cultures. Anning-Dorson (2018) emphasized the need to replicate empirical studies across diverse geographical and structural settings due to cultural and organizational differences. This study aims to address this gap by examining the impact of employee relationships on productivity within non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State, Nigeria. Previous studies have demonstrated the significant influence of employee relationships on performance. For instance, Rotich and Mutuku (2023) found that knowledge management practices, particularly knowledge IT tools, significantly impacted employee performance in Kenya's agricultural sector. Similarly, Layaman et al. (2021) showed that proactive knowledge sharing mediated the relationship between transformational leadership, cohesion, learning goal orientation, and employee performance.

Other notable studies include Tilahun (2022), who found that knowledge acquisition and sharing positively impacted operational, quality, and innovation performance. Sutrisno (2024) discovered that knowledge

sharing, knowledge management, and employee performance were significantly positively correlated. Meher and Mishra (2022) found that organizational learning, facilitated by organizational intelligence and culture, enhanced employee performance in India's IT sector. In Nigeria, Arm (2018) confirmed that employee relationships and knowledge sharing had a positive and significant effect on employee performance in the oil and gas sector. Emumejakpor, Ikpe, and Wilson (2023) found a significant positive effect of knowledge sharing on academic staff performance in Nigeria's educational sector.

Based on these findings, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 1: Employees' relationship is positively related to the employees' productivity among non-quoted manufacturing firms.

#### Knowledge Sharing and Employees' Productivity

Knowledge sharing has been widely recognized as a crucial factor in enhancing employee productivity. However, the specific mechanisms through which knowledge sharing influences productivity remain underexplored (Nurrachman, Hermanto, & Chan, 2019; Ahmad & Karim, 2019). Despite the growing body of research on knowledge sharing, there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of its impact across different industries, job roles, and organizational contexts. Several studies have investigated the relationship between knowledge sharing and employee productivity in various sectors. For example, Rotich and Mutuku (2023) found that knowledge management practices, particularly the use of IT tools, had a positive impact on employee performance in Kenya's agricultural sector. Similarly, Layaman et al. (2021) showed that proactive knowledge sharing mediated the relationship between transformational leadership, team cohesion, and employee performance in Indonesia's Sharia banking sector.

Other notable studies include Tilahun (2022), who found that knowledge acquisition and sharing significantly influenced employee performance in Ethiopia's telecommunications sector. Sutrisno (2024) discovered that knowledge sharing and management had a positive correlation with employee performance in Indonesia's SME sector. Meher and Mishra (2022) highlighted the importance of organizational learning, facilitated by organizational intelligence, knowledge sharing, and culture, in enhancing employee performance in India's IT sector. In Nigeria, Arm (2018) found that employee relationships and knowledge sharing positively influenced employee performance in the oil and gas sector. Emumejakpor, Ikpe, and Wilson (2023) demonstrated the positive impact of knowledge sharing on academic staff performance in Nigeria's educational sector. Pradhanawati, Dewi, and Kusuma (2022) concluded that employee relations and tacit knowledge sharing enhanced employee performance in Indonesia's batik industry. Despite these valuable contributions, there is a need for more research on the specific

impact of knowledge sharing on employee productivity in Nigeria's non-quoted manufacturing sector. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the relationship between knowledge sharing and employee productivity in this context.

Based on the literature review, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 2: Knowledge sharing is positively related to the employees' productivity among non-quoted manufacturing firms.

Employees' Relationship, Knowledge Sharing and Employees' Productivity

The relationship between knowledge sharing, employee relationships, and productivity has been extensively discussed in the literature, with many studies highlighting their potential to enhance employee performance (Guo et al., 2020; Kuzu & Özilhan, 2014). However, the specific mechanisms through which these factors influence productivity remain underexplored, particularly in emerging economies like Nigeria. Anning-Dorson (2018) emphasized the importance of conducting empirical investigations across diverse geographical contexts to account for differences in structural and cultural factors. Building on this, there is a pressing need for research in Africa—specifically in Nigeria—to examine how knowledge sharing and employee relationships collectively impact employees' productivity within non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State.

Several studies have examined similar relationships in different sectors, providing insights into the role of knowledge sharing and employee relationships in enhancing performance. For instance, Rotich and Mutuku (2023) found that knowledge management practices positively influenced employee performance in Kenya's agricultural sector. Similarly, Layaman et al. (2021) found that proactive knowledge sharing mediated the relationship between transformational leadership, cohesion, learning goal orientation, and employee performance in Indonesia's Sharia banking sector. Other notable studies include Tilahun (2022), who found that knowledge acquisition and sharing positively impacted operational, quality, and innovation performance in Ethiopia's telecommunications sector. Sutrisno (2024) identified a positive correlation between knowledge sharing, knowledge management, and employee performance in Indonesian SMEs. In Nigeria, Arm (2018) found that knowledge sharing and employee relationships positively influenced employee performance in the oil and gas sector. Emumejakpor, Ikpe, and Wilson (2023) observed a significant positive effect of knowledge sharing on academic staff performance at Cross River Institute of Technology and Management. These studies demonstrate that the relationship between knowledge sharing, employee relationships, and employee productivity is well-established across various sectors and countries. However, the lack of research in the Nigerian manufacturing context—particularly in non-quoted firms—highlights the need for further investigation.

Based on the literature review, this study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 3: Employees' relationship and knowledge sharing have a positive effect on employees' productivity among non-quoted manufacturing firms.

### **Methodology**

#### **Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises**

Non-quoted manufacturing firms are vital to Nigeria's economy, driving growth, employment, and industrial diversification. As a significant segment of the country's SMEs, they contribute substantially to GDP and provide jobs, especially in semi-urban and rural areas. These firms promote local industries by utilizing indigenous raw materials, reducing import dependence, and aligning with Nigeria's economic diversification goals. Additionally, non-quoted manufacturing firms foster innovation, developing cost-effective solutions that enhance competitiveness during economic downturns.

### **Research Design**

This study used a quantitative research design via survey methodology. This design helps to test hypotheses and examine the relationships between employees' relationships (ER), knowledge sharing (KS) and employees' productivity (EP) among non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis to assess the relationships between the measured variables and latent constructs. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research design is suitable for studies that use statistical methods to establish patterns and relationships among variables.

### **Study Area**

The study was limited to Osun State, which is one of the States that constitute Southwest Nigeria. Southwest Nigeria is regarded as Nigeria's commercial capital. The population of Osun state, as predicted by the National Bureau of Statistics in its Demographic Statistics Bulletin (2020), was 4,237,396. The State has many natural resources, including oil, gold, bitumen, and natural gas reserves.

### **Population and Sampling**

The study focused on non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun state. The sample frame was derived from the Osun State Ministry of Commerce database, which provides a comprehensive listing of active firms. The population for the study consisted of non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State in Southwestern Nigeria. The sample size of 100 non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State was determined using a combination of convenience and random sampling techniques. Initially, a list of all non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State was compiled from Osun State Ministry of Commerce. To minimize

sampling bias, the sample was stratified to ensure representation from various sub-sectors within the manufacturing industry, including food processing, textiles, and machinery. Additionally, the sample included firms of varying sizes, ranging from small to medium-sized enterprises. While it is acknowledged that the sample size may not be entirely representative of the entire population of non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State, the sampling procedure employed was designed to minimize bias and ensure a reasonable level of representation. Future studies could consider employing more robust sampling techniques, such as probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling, to further enhance the representativeness of the sample.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

The design of the research instrument used to collect data for the study benefited from the previous empirical studies conducted by Rotich and Mutuku (2023), Layaman, Harahap, Djastuti, Jaelani and Djuwita (2021), Tilahun (2022) and Sutrisno (2024). Responses were obtained via the administration of the research instrument, which formed the basis for this study. The questionnaire to be used for the study was divided into sections A, B, C, D and E. Section A contains socio-demographic information of the respondents while section B contains constructs on employees' relationships; section C also contains specific constructs on knowledge sharing while section D has specific constructs on employees' productivity of the non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State. The questionnaire was reviewed by experts in the field to ensure content validity, following the guidelines by DeVellis (2016) on scale development. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test to ensure the constructs' consistency. Cronbach Alpha reliability was conducted for the research instrument before its administration.

### **Procedure**

The validated questionnaire was distributed to randomly selected non-quoted manufacturing firms in all the Local Government Areas in Osun State. To ensure inclusivity, the questionnaire was administered using stratified random sampling, with Local Government Areas as strata. The appropriate data was methodologically collected, as the research assistants selected from the Local Government Areas in the State were adequately educated and trained to collect data.

### **Data Analysis**

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis to assess the relationships between the measured variables and latent constructs. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research design is

suitable for studies that use statistical methods to establish patterns and relationships among variables.

**Results**

**Response Rate**

A total of 100 were distributed, but only 90 were filled out and returned. After sorting out the questionnaires and finding out that all are useable

**Table 1: Response Rate**

Questionnaire	Total	%
Distributed	100	100%
Filled and returned	90	90%
Not Returned	10	10%

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

**Socio-demographic Characteristics**

This involves analyzing various socio-economic characteristics of employees that influence their organisational productivity in manufacturing firms in Osun State, Nigeria. These include gender, age, years in the firm, marital status, and academic qualifications.

**Table 2: Respondents' Socio-demographic Characteristics**

Variables	Frequency N=90	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	60	66.7
Female	30	33.3
Age		
Less than 20 years	01	1.1
20-39 years	39	43.3
40-59 years	50	55.6
Marital status		
Single	22	24.4
Married	67	74.4
Divorced	01	1.1
Years in firm		
1-4 years	29	32.2
5-9 years	28	31.1
10-14 years	29	32.2
15 years and above	04	4.4
Academic qualification		
SSCE	04	4.4
OND/NCE	18	20
HND/BSC	55	61.1
MSC/MA	13	14.5

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 2 shows that 66.7% of the respondents were male and 33.3% were female. 74.4% are married, and 61.1% have an HND/BSC academic qualification. 55.6% of the respondents are within the age range of 40-59, 32.2% have worked in their current firm for 10-14 years, and the same percentage have worked for 1-4 years.

**Effect of Employee Relationship on Employees’ Productivity of Non-quoted Manufacturing Firms in Osun State**

The value of R indicates the linear relationship between the employee relationship and employees' productivity. More so, R being 0.460 (Table 6.1) indicates the degree of correlation between the two variables. The independent variable significantly predicts the productivity of the employees among non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State. Also, F ((1.87) =23.358, p < 0.05) from Table 2 indicates that the employees’ relationship has a significant positive effect on employee productivity. An improved employee relationship will lead to an increase in the productivity of employees in non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State.

**Table 3: Model Summary<sup>b</sup> for Employee Relationship on Employees’ Productivity**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.460 <sup>a</sup>	.212	.203	.44876	1.965

**a. Predictors: (Constant) employee relationship**

**b. Dependent Variable: employee productivity**

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

The ANOVA results (Table 3) show that the value of F cal is 23.358 with a significant value of .000. The significant value is less than 0.05, which means that employee relationship affects employees' productivity (P < 0.05). Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that states that employees' relationships are positively related to employees' productivity among non-quoted manufacturing firms is accepted.

**Table 4: ANOVA<sup>a</sup> for Employee Relationship on Employees’ Productivity**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4.704	1	4.704	23.358	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	17.521	87	.201		
Total	22.225	88			

a. Dependent Variable: employee productivity

b. Predictors: (Constant), employee relationship

Source: Field Survey, 2024

**Table 5: Coefficients of Employee Relationship on Employees’ Productivity**

		Knowledge Sharing	Employees’ Productivity
Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.260*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015
	N	88	88
Employees’	Pearson Correlation	.260*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	
	N	88	90

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T
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	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>	
(Constant)	.819	.152		5.387
Employee relationship	.460	.095	.460	4.833

**a. Dependent Variable: employee productivity**

The r-square of .212 means that employees' relationships are essential, but they are not the only thing driving employees' productivity. The f-statistic of 23.358 means that the relationship between employees' relationships and employees' productivity is statistically significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance. In other words, there is evidence that employee relationships impact employees' productivity among non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State.

**Relationship between Knowledge Sharing and Employees' Productivity**

Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was applied to determine the relationship between knowledge sharing and employees' productivity. Table 6 revealed that there is a positive but weak relationship between knowledge sharing and employees' productivity ( $r=0.260$ ,  $p=0.015$ ). Also, Table 7 reveals that all the proxies of knowledge sharing have positive and weak relationships with employees' productivity. This implies that improving the knowledge-sharing approaches of non-quoted manufacturing firms will lead to improved employee performance or productivity.

**Table 7: Correlation Analysis Showing the Relationship between Individual Knowledge Sharing Drivers and Employees' Productivity**

<b>Knowledge Sharing Proxies</b>	<b>Employees' Productivity</b>	
	<b>R</b>	<b>Sig. (2-Tailed)</b>
Organizational Culture	0.294	0.005
Trust	0.379	0.000
Communication Channels	0.173	0.103
Leadership and Management Support	0.271	0.011

**\*\*.** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The value of r ( $r= 0.260$ ) obtained from the Pearson correlation shows that knowledge sharing has a positive significant but weak relationship with employees' productivity of non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State.

The study accepted the alternate hypothesis, which states that knowledge sharing has a significant positive relationship with employees' productivity of non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State. The Pearson correlation coefficient value of .26 means that there is a weak, positive correlation between knowledge sharing and employees' productivity. Essentially, this finding means that as knowledge sharing increases, there is a statistically significant increase in employees' productivity, but it is not a strong correlation. Knowledge sharing is one factor that can influence employees' productivity, but there are likely other factors at play as well. Basically, knowledge sharing is like a booster rocket – it can propel employees' productivity, but it is not the only engine.

### Impact of Employees' Relationship and Knowledge Sharing on Employees' Productivity

The study used regression analysis to determine the impact of employees' relationships and knowledge sharing on employees' productivity. The results of the analysis are presented in Tables 8, 9 and 10. It is evident from Table 8 that employees' relationships and knowledge sharing have a significant effect on employees' productivity ( $R^2 = 0.319, p < 0.05$ ). This implies that the model or the proxies for the independent variables account for 31.9% of the variation in employees' productivity. In comparison, the remaining 68.1% of the variation is due to factors not captured by the model. Additionally,  $R = 0.565$  indicates a moderate positive correlation between the independent variables and employees' productivity. This suggests that the independent variables significantly predict employees' productivity.

**Table 8: Model summary for the impact of Employees' Relationship and Knowledge Sharing on Employees' Productivity**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.565 <sup>a</sup>	.319	.303	.41919	1.631

- a. Predictors: (Constant), knowledge sharing, employee relationship
- b. Dependent variable: Employee productivity

**Table 9: ANOVA<sup>a</sup> for the impact of Employees' Relationship and Knowledge Sharing on Employees' Productivity**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	R squared	F	Sig.	Durbin-Watson

1	Regression	6.918	2	3.459	0.319	19.684	.000 <sup>b</sup>	1.631
	Residual	14.760	84	.176				
	Total	21.678	87					

**Table 10: Coefficients for the Impact of Employees' Relationship and Knowledge Sharing on Employees' Productivity**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.510	.169		3.019	.003
	Employee relationship	.263	.102	.263	2.580	.012
	Knowledge Sharing	.394	.103	.392	3.844	.000

a. Dependent Variable: employee productivity

Table 9 shows that the value of F cal is 19.684 with a significant value of .000. The significant value is less than 0.05, which means that employee relationship and knowledge sharing have an impact on employees' productivity (F=19.684, P < 0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that employee relationship and knowledge sharing have no significant effect on employees' productivity, is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis, which states that employee relationship and knowledge sharing have a significant effect on employees' productivity, is accepted. This result shows that employee relationships and knowledge sharing among employees will attract an increase in the productivity of non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State.

The coefficient table (Table 10) provides regression results on the impact of employees' relationships and knowledge sharing on employees' productivity. The value 0.510 is the intercept which can be used to formulate regression equation. Employee relationship value shows that if employees' relationship increased by 1, employees' productivity will increase by 26.3% and if knowledge sharing increased by 1, employees' productivity will increase by 39.4%. While the value .263(standardized coefficients) implies that for every one standard deviation movement of employee relationship, the more productivity employees exhibit by 26.3% and, the value .392 (standard deviation) implies that for every one standard deviation movement of knowledge sharing among employees, the more employees' productivity exhibit by 39.2%. The analysis shows that employees' productivity is significantly and positively affected by knowledge sharing and employee relationships. This supports the acceptance of the alternate hypothesis that states that employee relationships and knowledge sharing have a significant positive impact on employees' productivity.

**Discussion**

The study discovered that employee relationships impact employees' productivity among non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State. The findings align with the findings of the previous empirical investigations carried out by Motasem (2022), Wang et al. (2020), Pennings et al. (2017), and Judge et al. (2013), where the authors discovered that employees' relationship has a significant effect on employees' productivity. These findings imply that positive work relationships can lead to greater job satisfaction and performance. It also implies that employers of non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State that invest in creating a positive work environment and fostering social support among employees will experience increased productivity and innovation. It also found a positive, but weak relationship between knowledge sharing and employees' productivity. These findings align with the findings of the previous empirical investigations carried out by Motasem (2022), Guo, Zhang, Zhou, and Deng (2020), and Inkpen and Tsang (2005), where the authors discovered that knowledge sharing was positively associated with employees' performance. The findings also imply that encouraging and promoting the culture of knowledge sharing among non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State will lead to improved employee performance as well as enhance employees' creativity and innovation. They also imply that non-quoted manufacturing firms or any other organization that invests in knowledge sharing will have a competitive advantage in terms of employees' productivity and innovation. The analysis also shows that employees' productivity is significantly and positively affected by knowledge sharing and employee relationships. These findings aligned with the findings of the previous empirical investigations carried out by Guo, Zhang, Zhou, and Deng (2020) and Kuzu and Özilhan (2014), where the authors discovered that employees' relationships and knowledge sharing were positively related to employees' performance. The findings imply that the quality of employees' relationships and knowledge sharing has a significant impact on employees' productivity in non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State. It also implies that non-quoted manufacturing firms or any other organization that prioritizes employee relationships and knowledge sharing will have a competitive advantage over those firms that do not. These findings have implications for the recruitment, retention, and organization culture of non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State.

## **Conclusion**

The study's findings reveal that employee relationships have a significant impact on productivity in non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State. This discovery aligns with previous research (Motasem, 2022; Wang et al., 2020; Pennings et al., 2017; Judge et al., 2013) that highlighted the positive influence of workplace relationships on employee performance. The

results suggest that nurturing positive work relationships leads to increased job satisfaction, enhanced performance, and innovation. Employers in non-quoted manufacturing firms who invest in creating supportive work environments are likely to experience improved productivity and innovation. Furthermore, the study found a positive, albeit weak, relationship between knowledge sharing and employees' productivity.

This finding is consistent with previous studies (Motasem, 2022; Guo et al., 2020; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005) that demonstrated the positive impact of knowledge sharing on employee performance. Promoting a culture of knowledge sharing among non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State can enhance employee creativity, innovation, and overall performance. Firms that prioritize knowledge sharing stand to gain a competitive edge in productivity and innovation. The combined analysis indicates that both employees' relationships and knowledge sharing significantly and positively affect productivity. This supports the conclusions of Guo et al. (2020) and Kuzu and Özilhan (2014), who found that these factors are crucial for enhancing employee performance. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating a workplace culture that emphasizes strong interpersonal relationships and robust knowledge-sharing practices. For non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State, the implications are clear: prioritizing employees' relationships and knowledge-sharing practices can drive recruitment, retention, and organizational success. By fostering these elements, firms can secure a competitive advantage, improve employee performance, and encourage innovation.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State prioritize fostering positive workplace relationships by creating an environment that values teamwork, mutual respect, and social support. This can be achieved through team-building activities, open communication channels, and effective conflict-resolution mechanisms to enhance employee satisfaction and productivity. Additionally, promoting a culture of knowledge sharing is crucial, and firms should implement mentorship programs, peer learning workshops, and digital knowledge-sharing platforms while also recognizing and rewarding employees who actively share knowledge. Furthermore, organizations should integrate workplace relationships and knowledge-sharing practices into their strategic goals by aligning them with performance metrics and employee training initiatives. By implementing these recommendations, non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State can enhance productivity, encourage innovation, and gain a competitive advantage in the industry.

### **Limitations of the Study**

1. **Geographic scope:** The study focused solely on non-quoted manufacturing firms in Osun State, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or industries.
2. **Sample size:** Although the sample size of 100 was deemed sufficient for this study, a larger sample size may have provided more robust results.
3. **Cross-sectional design:** The study employed a cross-sectional design, which may not capture the dynamic nature of employees' relationships and knowledge sharing over time.
4. **Self-reported data:** The study relied on self-reported data from employees, which may be subject to biases and limitations.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

1. **Replicate the study in other regions or industries:** Future research could replicate this study in other regions or industries to enhance the generalizability of the findings.
2. **Longitudinal design:** A longitudinal design could be employed to capture the dynamic nature of employees' relationships and knowledge sharing over time.
3. **Objective measures:** Future research could incorporate objective measures of employees' productivity, such as sales data or performance metrics, to complement self-reported data.
4. **Mediating variables:** Researchers could explore potential mediating variables, such as trust, communication, or leadership style, that may influence the relationships between employees' relationships, knowledge sharing, and productivity.
5. **Intervention studies:** Future research could design intervention studies to test the effectiveness of specific strategies or programs aimed at fostering positive employees' relationships and knowledge sharing in non-quoted manufacturing firms.

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