



ASSESSING LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING AMONG UNIVERSITY OF ILESA UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates knowledge sharing among undergraduate students at the University of Ilesa by examining the platforms and methods they use, the factors influencing their behaviors, and their attitudes, awareness, and perceptions. It also explores the challenges hindering effective knowledge exchange. As a newly established institution in 2023, the University presents a unique setting to examine emerging knowledge-sharing practices during the formative stages of academic culture. A quantitative research design was employed, using a descriptive cross-sectional survey to collect data from a stratified random sample of 400 undergraduate students across various faculties. Structured questionnaires were used to gather data, which were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that over 80% of students preferred digital platforms particularly WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Docs for academic interactions. Students generally exhibited positive attitudes toward collaboration, though concerns about academic competition were noted. Recognition and appreciation were identified as strong motivators for sharing knowledge, while time constraints were not seen as major barriers. However, poor Internet access emerged as a critical infrastructural challenge, significantly hindering digital collaboration. Despite these limitations, the study indicates that a positive culture of academic knowledge sharing is developing among students. The study concludes that addressing infrastructural barriers, especially unstable internet service is essential for enhancing digital knowledge-sharing practices. The findings offer actionable insights for university administrators and policymakers to develop strategies that support collaborative learning through improved digital infrastructure and peer-to-peer engagement initiatives.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing, Digital platforms, Academic collaboration

Introduction

In the evolving landscape of higher education, knowledge sharing has emerged as a pivotal component of academic and personal development among students. Universities are no longer solely centers for the dissemination of knowledge from lecturers to students; they are dynamic environments where peer-to-peer learning and collaborative engagement play a significant role in shaping students' intellectual and social competencies. Students share knowledge with one another through the process of exchanging information and working together to generate new knowledge (Evangelista *et al.*, 2025). According to Jesuthasan *et al.* (2022), students' learning process greatly benefits from peer knowledge sharing, and successful and useful university learning depends on inclusive and efficient knowledge sharing.

This study is focused on ascertaining the level of knowledge sharing among undergraduate students of the University of Ilesa, a newly established university in Osun State, Nigeria, in 2023. As a newly emerging institution, the University of Ilesa offers a unique context within which to study knowledge sharing practice. In its initial development phase, building academic culture, and transforming student body, it offers an uncharted territory on which to examine how students interact, cooperate, and exchange information in an institution establishing a new identity. The exchange of knowledge among university students is vital for academic excellence, innovation, and the development of critical thinking skills. In many established universities, knowledge sharing is facilitated through structured platforms, cultural norms, and support systems that encourage collaborative learning. However, the situation may differ in newly established institutions, where such systems and cultures are still evolving.

The University of Ilesa, created in 2023, is a new entrant into Nigeria's higher education landscape. As a young institution, it is in the early stages of developing its academic culture, infrastructure, and support mechanisms. This raises important questions about how students interact academically, especially in terms of knowledge sharing. Given the limited time since its establishment, it is unclear whether students at the University have developed strong habits or systems for sharing academic knowledge effectively. There is a growing concern that the lack of well-established academic networks, mentorship structures, digital tools, or even awareness about the benefits of knowledge sharing may hinder collaborative learning among undergraduates.

Despite the importance of knowledge sharing in higher education, there is currently little to no empirical data on how it occurs at the University of Ilesa. Without such insight, the university may struggle to create effective policies and programmes to foster a collaborative learning environment. Therefore, there is a pressing need to assess the level of knowledge sharing among its undergraduate students, identify existing challenges, and propose actionable strategies to enhance this critical aspect of academic development.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the level of knowledge sharing among undergraduate students of University of Ilesa. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. examine the methods and platforms used by undergraduate students at the University of Ilesa for knowledge sharing;
2. identify the key factors that influence knowledge sharing among the students;
3. assess students' attitudes, awareness, and perceptions towards knowledge sharing; and
4. identify the challenges hindering effective knowledge sharing among undergraduate students at the University of Ilesa.

Research Questions

1. What methods and platforms do undergraduate students at the University of Ilesa use for academic knowledge sharing?
2. What are the key factors that influence students' willingness and ability to share academic knowledge?
3. What are the attitudes, levels of awareness, and perceptions of undergraduate students towards knowledge sharing?
4. What challenges or barriers do students face in engaging in effective academic knowledge sharing at the University of Ilesa?

Review of Related Literature

Knowledge sharing is a fundamental component of academic development and collaborative learning in higher education (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024). As universities aim to cultivate critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving abilities, the ability of students to share and exchange knowledge becomes increasingly important. In recent years, the topic has received growing attention due to the proliferation of digital tools and the emphasis on learner-centered education. However, the extent and effectiveness of knowledge sharing among students often vary significantly based on institutional, cultural, technological, and individual factors. According to Zamiri and Esmaeili (2024), the transfer or exchange of explicit or implicit knowledge, concepts, experiences, or even skills from one student or group of students to another is referred to as knowledge sharing. In order to do this, the student or group of students must communicate with one another, either in person or virtually. On the other hand, purposefully hiding information that could help others is known as knowledge hoarding (Thomas, 2025).

Managing every facet of the knowledge process from acquisition to sharing and innovation, is known as knowledge management. Sharing knowledge is the most important part of the knowledge process (Akanbiemu *et al.*, 2021). In academic contexts, knowledge sharing encompasses both formal and informal interactions, including classroom discussions, group assignments, peer tutoring, and digital collaboration through platforms like WhatsApp, Google Drive, and university learning management systems (Zamiri & Esmaeili 2024). A significant source of knowledge transfer is also human interaction. Students interact in person in classrooms, cafes, and libraries while on campus (Song *et al.*, 2024).

According to Zamani (2021), knowledge sharing is vital for converting tacit knowledge (personal, experiential) into explicit knowledge (documented, shareable), especially in collaborative environments such as universities. Prior to recently, business and public organisations were the primary focus of the vast

majority of knowledge sharing research. However, it was determined that since students will be a part of the workforce in the future, it is equally crucial to understand how they share their knowledge. According to Evangelista *et al.* (2025), undergraduate students had a favorable attitude toward knowledge sharing and thought it was crucial for successful learning. They did note, though, that students were less likely to share for the academic assignments that needed to be graded.

Two main obstacles preventing students from sharing their information and knowledge with classmates were lack of relationship depth and the worry that other students may perform better than them (Nawaz *et al.*, 2024). Majid and Chitra (2023) also reported that academic competition was associated with decreased knowledge sharing while trust, teamwork and instructors' positive attitude resulted in more knowledge sharing (Warraich *et al.*, 2024). According to Amana and Al-Tabtabae (2023), there are barriers to students sharing knowledge because every student brings their own values, habits, and beliefs from a range of backgrounds. This will make it more difficult to share knowledge in order to address problems. Maybe if a culture is established, people will be able to share knowledge and complete tasks quickly.

Methodology

A quantitative research approach was employed to objectively measure and analyse the level of knowledge sharing among undergraduate students at the University of Ilesa. This approach allows for the collection of numerical data that can be statistically analysed to identify trends and relationships. The study utilised a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. This design is appropriate as it enables the collection of data at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of current knowledge sharing practices among students. It also facilitates the identification of patterns and correlations within the data.

The target population comprises all the 5,763 undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Ilesa during the 2024/2025 academic session. All undergraduate students of the University of Ilesa across the nine (9) faculties would make up this study population. The University of Ilesa has 3,781 students in 100 level and 1,892 students in 200 level. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure that students from different faculties and departments were proportionately represented. This method involved dividing the population into distinct subgroups (strata) based on faculty and then randomly selecting participants from each subgroup. This approach enhances the generalisability of the findings across the entire student population.

Based on the study population, a sample size of 400 students was drawn to achieve a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. This sample size is deemed sufficient to provide reliable and valid results. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The questionnaire was divided into several sections to collect: demographic data of the respondents, data on methods and platforms used by undergraduate students for knowledge sharing, frequency and extent of

knowledge sharing among students, data on factors that influence knowledge sharing among the students, data on challenges and obstacles hindering effective knowledge sharing. Data collected from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Data Analysis and Results

The findings of the study on the method and Platforms University of Ilesa undergraduate students use for academic knowledge sharing are presented in Table 1. Based on 400 students' survey responses, the analysis focuses on their preferences for in-person conversations, online platforms, and the particular tools they use most frequently to share academic materials.

Table 1: Respondents' Methods and Platforms for Academic Knowledge Sharing

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I prefer using online platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram, Google Docs) to share academic information with fellow students	238 (59.5%)	82 (20.5%)	38 (9.5%)	42 (10.5%)
I prefer face-to-face discussions for academic knowledge sharing	31 (7.75%)	55 (13.75%)	167 (41.75%)	147 (36.75%)

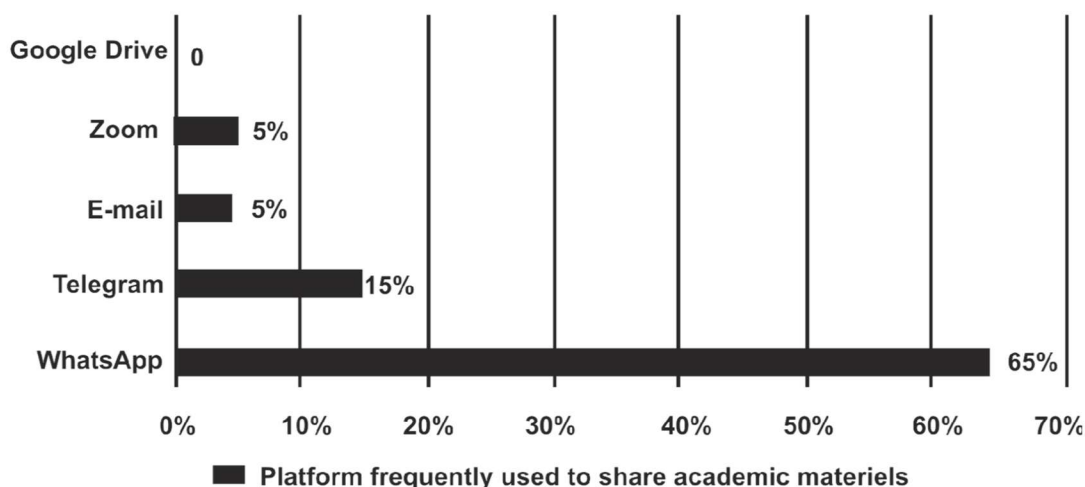


Fig. 1: Platform Frequently used to Share Academic Materials

Table 1 and Figure 1 clearly indicates that a majority of students prefer online platforms, with WhatsApp being the most widely used medium, while face-to-face discussions are generally less favored. These findings provide insight into the digital orientation of academic knowledge sharing among students at the University of Ilesa.

Table 2 presents the results for Research Question Two, which sought to identify the key factors influencing students' willingness and ability to share academic knowledge.

Table 2: Combined Summary of Factors Influencing Students' Willingness and Ability to Share Academic Knowledge

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I share knowledge more readily with friends than with unfamiliar classmates	68 (17%)	52 (13%)	138 (34.5%)	142 (35.5%)
I am more likely to share knowledge if I feel appreciated or recognised for my contribution	169 (42.25%)	83 (20.75%)	80 (20%)	68 (17%)
Time constraints affect my willingness to share academic information	63 (15.75%)	41 (10.25%)	185 (46.25%)	111 (27.75%)
I avoid sharing knowledge if I feel it might give others a competitive advantage over me	121 (30.25%)	128 (32%)	102 (25.5%)	49 (12.25%)

Data from Table 2 shows that recognition and appreciation significantly motivate students to share academic knowledge, while competitive concerns discourage many from doing so. Friendship has little influence, as most students share knowledge regardless of social closeness. Time constraints are also not a major barrier, with students generally managing to share information despite busy schedules.

Table 3 presents the results for research Question Three, which examines the attitudes, levels of awareness, and perceptions of undergraduate students toward academic knowledge sharing.

Table 3: Summary of Students' Attitudes, Awareness and Perceptions Toward Knowledge Sharing

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Knowledge sharing improves academic performance	209 (52.25%)	162 (40.5%)	29 (7.25%)	0 (0%)
Academic collaboration and knowledge sharing with peers are beneficial to me	199 (49.75%)	186 (46.5%)	15 (3.75%)	0 (0%)
I am open to sharing academic knowledge when asked	124 (31%)	159 (39.75%)	85 (21.25%)	32 (8%)

The results show that students hold overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward knowledge sharing, with most agreeing that it enhances academic performance and offers significant academic benefits through peer collaboration. Furthermore, a large majority reported that they are open to sharing knowledge when approached, reflecting strong awareness and favourable perceptions toward academic information exchange.

Table 4 below presents the results for Research Question Four, which examines the challenges or barriers that students face in engaging in effective academic knowledge sharing. Responses were analysed to understand the extent to which interpersonal factors and infrastructural limitations affect their knowledge-sharing practices.

Table 4: Summary of Challenges and Barriers to Effective Academic Knowledge Sharing

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Lack of trust among students limits knowledge sharing	42 (10.5%)	81 (20.25%)	151 (37.75%)	126 (31.5%)
Poor internet access within the campus hinders effective academic knowledge sharing	119 (29.75%)	138 (34.5%)	108 (27%)	35 (8.75%)
Unstable power supply affects effective academic knowledge sharing	135 (33.75%)	142 (35.5%)	92 (23%)	31 (7.75%)

Overall, the results show that lack of trust is not viewed as a major barrier to effective knowledge sharing, as most respondents disagreed with this statement. However, infrastructural challenges specifically poor internet access and unstable power supply are identified as major obstacles, with the majority of students agreeing that these factors hinder effective academic knowledge sharing on campus.

Discussion of the Finding

The findings of this study clearly highlight the growing prominence of digital communication platforms particularly *WhatsApp*, *Telegram*, and *Google Docs* as preferred tools for academic knowledge sharing among students. With majority of respondents indicating they use such platforms regularly for academic interactions, it is evident that digital tools play a central role in shaping contemporary academic collaboration. This trend aligns with the findings of Oguntimehin and Kolawole (2024), who emphasised the increasing reliance on mobile instant messaging applications among University of Ibadan post graduate students for academic purposes, citing convenience, real-time communication, and ease of access as primary motivators.

Conversely, only few of students said they preferred face-to-face contacts, which was a much lower preference. A move toward virtual cooperation was highlighted by the majority's lack of interest in more conventional forms of knowledge sharing. These results are in line with findings of Pang *et al.* (2020), who offers an important background for comprehending the notable drop in students' inclination for in-person academic interactions. The study emphasises how the COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst that hastened the global adoption of online learning and he also discovered that students quickly adjusted to this new way of learning and knowledge sharing, growing more at ease and skilled with virtual communication platforms and digital technologies.

The research also showed that academic information sharing has social and psychological components. Significantly more students said they would be just as willing to share information with acquaintances as with close friends. These results are consistent with Zhang's (2020) research, which found that digital communication tools lower social barriers and promote knowledge sharing between acquaintances and larger peer networks. This suggests a collaborative, inclusive academic culture where trust and openness extend beyond close social circles.

Recognition and appreciation were identified as key motivators for sharing, with majority of the respondents indicating they were more likely to contribute academically when their efforts were acknowledged. This corroborates the findings of Nguyen *et al.* (2025), who found that one of the main motivators for students participating in group academic projects is recognition and admiration.

From the data collected, it shows that majority of students did not believe that time constraints made it harder for them to share knowledge due to the asynchronous nature of online platforms, which let students participate at their own leisure and convenience. This result is in line with the findings of Chen *et al.* (2022) and Al-Fraihat *et al.* (2020). Chen *et al.* (2022) also found that asynchronous platforms help students manage their time well and encourage regular knowledge sharing, while Al-Fraihat *et al.* (2020) found that students value the ability to interact asynchronously, which lessens time-related difficulties in knowledge sharing.

However, competition emerged as a notable deterrent. Majority of students admitted to withholding knowledge when they perceived it could give others a competitive edge. This supports the findings of Singh *et al.* (2021), their findings indicate that competition reduces intrinsic motivation to share knowledge by increasing perceived risks of losing personal advantage. This aligns with the result of this research that majority of students withhold knowledge to maintain a competitive edge. Despite these competitive concerns, the overall attitude toward academic collaboration was highly positive. A significant majority believed that knowledge sharing enhances academic performance, and they acknowledged the benefits of peer collaboration. Furthermore, most of the respondents expressed a willingness to share when approached, reflecting a broadly cooperative academic culture.

Finally, the study identified certain barriers to effective knowledge sharing. Although trust among students was not deemed a major issue, majority of them disagreed that it limited sharing. Poor internet connectivity and unstable power supply was reported by majority of respondents as a significant challenge. This infrastructural limitation poses a direct contradiction to students' reliance on digital platforms and highlights the need for universities to invest in robust technological infrastructure. Similar concerns were raised by Santos *et al.* (2024), who emphasised that institutional support, including technological resources, is critical for fostering a sustainable knowledge-sharing environment.

Conclusion

The study concludes that digital platforms have significantly reshaped academic knowledge sharing among students at the University of Ilesa. Students overwhelmingly rely on tools like WhatsApp and Google Docs for academic interaction, driven by ease, flexibility, and accessibility. While competition may inhibit knowledge sharing to some extent, recognition and social inclusiveness strongly promote it. Time constraints are less of a concern due to the asynchronous nature of digital tools. Nonetheless, infrastructural

challenges, especially poor internet connectivity and unstable power supply remain major barrier to effective knowledge sharing. To harness the full potential of digital academic collaboration, university administrators must address these infrastructural gaps and support a more robust digital environment. Strategic investments in technological infrastructure and peer engagement initiatives are essential for fostering a sustainable, collaborative academic culture in this emerging institution.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance academic knowledge sharing and address identified barriers:

Strengthen Technological Infrastructure: Universities should invest in reliable, high-speed internet access on campus and explore partnerships with internet service providers to ensure affordable connectivity for students off-campus.

1. *Alternative Power Supply:* To address the challenge of unstable power supply, the university should invest in reliable backup generators and alternative energy sources. Consistent power supply will support uninterrupted access to online learning and academic knowledge sharing.
2. *Promote Recognition-based Incentives:* Academic institutions should implement systems to acknowledge students' contributions to knowledge sharing, such as digital badges, public recognition in group projects, or certificates for collaborative efforts.
3. *Mitigate Competitive Pressures:* Institutions should foster a collaborative rather than competitive academic culture. This could involve restructuring assessment methods to emphasis group-based projects or shared learning outcomes, reducing the perceived risk of losing personal advantage.
4. *Enhance Digital Literacy and Platform Training:* To maximise the benefits of digital tools, universities should offer workshops on effectively using platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Docs for academic purposes. Training should focus on best practices for asynchronous collaboration and managing group dynamics, building on the adaptability.
5. *Encourage Inclusive Knowledge-sharing Practices:* Institutions should leverage this by creating structured online forums or peer networks where students can connect with broader academic communities to further reducing social barriers

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