Employees' Perceptions on the use of Online Internal Communication for Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract: The primary objective of this study was to assess employees' perceptions on the use of online internal communication (OIC) for knowledge sharing from a personal/individual perspective. This is important because of the emphasis placed on the relevance of knowledge management (KM) in transforming ordinary organisations into learning ones, and to a greater degree through the use of new media technologies. One of the important dimensions of KM that is crucial for organisational learning is knowledge sharing (KS). However, the use of OIC to share knowledge among employees in deposit-taking savings and credit co-operative societies (SACCOs) in Kenya is still low. Therefore, it is necessary to explore employees' perceptions and personal/individual factors influencing employees' online KS using the available OIC tools. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Primary data were collected using an online structured questionnaire targeting the accessible population of 485 mid-level employees of deposit taking SACCOs in Kenya, and data were migrated to SPSS version 25.0 to generate descriptive statistics. Thematic coding of data obtained from eight focus group discussions involving 72 employees and in-depth interviews with eight senior managers were presented as narrative analysis. The findings of this study indicated that most employees lacked the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude for adopting OIC for knowledge sharing (KS), and emphasised the need for training prior to the implementation process and an organisational environment that is conducive for attutude modification in the use of existing OIC. This study is unique and adds to the existing body of knowledge in the proposed theoretical framework emphasing the need to enhance KS through OIC, specifically on a personal/individual level, considering the managerial/organisational and technical levels as well, to contribute to organisational learning and innovation to ensure sustainable competitive advantage.

Keywords: Employees' perceptions, Innovation, Knowledge management, Knowledge sharing, Online internal communication (OIC), Organisational learning, Savings and credit co-operative societies (SACCOs)

1. Introduction

The field of organisational communication has experienced drastic transformation in the last few decades. A notable example is the introduction of management systems, especially knowledge management (KM), which has affected how organisations communicate. KM refers to a systematic process through which organisations can create, identify, acquire, select, organise, share, disseminate and store important information, knowledge and skills, and use them for their own benefit (Chibuzor, Jovita and Onyemachi, 2019, Kaira and Phiri, 2022; Tajpour et al., 2022). Moreover, the advancement of new media technologies and the changing landscape in the business environment have seen a surge in the use of online communication in organisations to leverage organisational knowledge (Lee, 2018; Deng, Duan and Wibowo, 2022). For the purpose of this study, reference is made to online internal communication (OIC) which is defined as the "communication used by employees in their internal communication efforts within the organisation by using specific Internet resources to perform specific action" (Waititu, 2022 p.64). In recent literature (Appel-Meulenbroek, Weggeman and Torkkeli, 2018; Lee, 2018; Du et al., 2019; Alyammahi et al., 2022), knowledge is considered as a critical resource to enhance an organisation's competitive advantage in the knowledge-based economy. Indeed, various studies (Dong et a., 2017; Al Kashari and Al Taheri, 2019; Lee, 2018; Chibuzor et al., 2019; Kaira, and Phiri, 2022; Tajpour et al., 2022) have identified the need for knowledge sharing (KS) to empower employees to be creative and innovative. In the regard, Yeşil and Hırlak (2019, p.100) define KS as "the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organisation".

Although considerable research has been devoted to KM and KS (Razak et al. 2016; Alyammahi et al., 2022, Eshak et al.(2022), research into the use of OIC for KS among employees to create, collect and communicate knowledge is scarce. Consequently, this limited insight has made OIC for KS difficult to implement and be accepted by employees, specifically to establish users' perceptions thereof (Yusuf and Wanjau, 2014; Wamitu, 2015). Based on these limited insights, the research problem is the lack of information on the perceptions of employees to accept and adopt online internal communication for knowledge sharing. Although this study does

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not intend to test hypotheses, the independent variables are employees' perceptions and individual determinants for KS while the dependent variable is the adoption of OIC for KS. Hence, this study sets out to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What perceptions do employees of deposit-taking SACCOs in Kenya hold about their adoption of OIC for KS?

RQ2: What are the individual determinants for KS in the deposit-taking SACCOs in Kenya?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

Three theories formed the basis of this study. The first is the Social Network Theory (SNT) (Granovetter, 1973; Granovetter, 1983), with its primary concerns being the structural features of networks and the type of ties or relationships between employees (Granovetter, 1973; Granovetter, 1983; Chung and Crawford, 2016; Zeng, Deng and Liu, 2022). According to Bhutto et al., (2020), there is a need to form strong relations or ties among employees through various interactions as emphasised by SNT. The interactions can enhance relationship building to assist in modifying KS behaviour and social networks. In addition, this theory focuses on employees' social relationships and the impact of these relationships on KS behaviour. This theory is specifically relevant to this study as it is argued that if strong relationships do exist between employees, they are more likely to develop positive perceptions toward sharing of knowledge while using OIC tools because of the trust-based relationship building that takes place. This relates to the personal/individual perspective to share organisational knowledge.

The second theory is the Social Exchange Theory (SET). This theory focuses on social interactions and cost-benefits analysis of ensuing relationships and was formulated by Gouldner (1960) and Emerson (1976) and later reinforced by scholars like Razak et al. (2016) and Elita, Moordiningsih and Sinthia (2020). Again, this theory is also relevant as it focuses on the managerial/organisational perspective of knowledge sharing which in this case creates the structures and processes for social interactions to manage personal/individual factors to enhance knowledge sharing through these relationships.

The third theory is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), which is used to assess users' beliefs about the adoption of new technology based on three determinants, namely perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and attitude towards technology. According to Mugo et al. (2017), this theory influences users' decision to use new technology, hence it is also included to address the technical perspective on the use of OIC tools for KS.

2.2 Knowledge Sharing in the Organisation

KS is considered by Dong et al. (2017) and Du et al. (2019) as those activities that involve the exchange of information and skills among employees in various positions in the organisation in a creative manner. Through those activities, employees are able to modify their KS behaviours by enhancing their interactions as envisaged by SNT; and using multiple communication channels to share organisational knowledge (Osman, et al., 2015; Bhutto et al., 2022). Authors like Gaál et al. (2015) and Yeşil and Hırlak (2019) posit that in organisational communication, KS is considered from the personal/individual, technological and managerial/organisational perspectives. The personal/individual perspective (the effects of the phenomenon on an individual, either directly or indirectly, especially when dealing with tacit knowledge) considers how communication tools can be embraced by employees to share knowledge effectively; the technological perspective (investigates and clarifies the effects of the phenomenon on team-related activities and can include both explicit and tacit knowledge) looks at how KS can be achieved using new digital tools as posited by TAM; and the managerial/organisational perspective (the effects of the phenomenon on the organisational structures and processes, especially when dealing with explicit knowledge) considers how KS through OIC can be used by the management to enhance productivity and create a competitive niche (Al Kashari and Al Taheri, 2019). This article focuses on the adoption of OIC for KS at all levels, but with specific relevance to personal/individual employee level. However, in order to do so, it considers the technological perspective to investigate how KS can be achieved by using new technology in line with the TAM model and the managerial/organisational perspective which focuses on the structures and processes to encourage the sharing of explicit knowledge within individuals.

Several scholars (Chandran and Ha, 2017; Al Kashari and Al Taheri, 2019; Alyammahi et al., 2022) argue that KS can increase the business competitiveness of an organisation and Al Kashari and Al Taheri (2019) state specifically that it can improve employees' performance, enhances efficiency and reduces operational costs. In terms of the personal/individual perspective, KS is based on various factors such as mutual relationships, trust,

work efficiency, innovation and organisational learning. As proposed by SNT, Chau (2018), Du et al. (2019) and Eshak et al. (2022) argue that positive KS behaviours are quickly achieved when trust-based relationships are adopted among all members in the organisation. According to Sigalaa and Chalkiti (2015) and Asiedu, Abah, and Dei (2022), different KS strategies are used to share different types of knowledge. As indicated by Chau (2018), it is not difficult to share explicit knowledge as it is already codified and stored in the organisation repository as databases, documents or manuals ready to be used by employees. However, other studies (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2018; Chau, 2018; Al Kashari and Al Taheri, 2019; Asiedu et al. 2022; Zeng et al., 2022) show that it is a challenge for employees to share tacit knowledge because of its subjective nature as it comprises of individuals' traits such as attitude, thought and emotions, which are derived from human perceptions. Thus, negative perceptions are likely to affect employees' knowledge sharing behaviours and endanger KS in the organisation (Vines, Jones and McCarthy 2015; Girard and Girard, 2015). Therefore, in line with SNT, a personalisation strategy through socialisation is recommended for sharing tacit knowledge and a codification strategy for explicit knowledge. Based on the discussion above, KS is defined as the process of exchanging both tacit and explicit knowledge through various interactions with the aim of retaining this knowledge in the organisation.

Various studies (for example Phung, et al., 2017; Eshak et al., 2022; Kaira and Phiri 2022) suggest the need to enhance the quality of the knowledge being shared. In view of this, it is important for the organisation to understand and promote various employees' interactions and relationships as suggested by the SNT, to enhance the quality of knowledge. However, it is argued that despite the high quality of knowledge, it may not be of any benefit to the organisation if it is not shared among employees (Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar, 2016). As a result, a conducive environment for promoting KS is advocated in the organisation. Individual and team efforts are needed to enhance positive employees' knowledge sharing behaviours. This can be achieved through capacity building, encouraging employees to interact more and to consider documenting and sharing their experiences as a routine activity (Chau, 2018; Lee, 2018).

Since tacit knowledge is commonly shared through personalisation, employees should be encouraged to embrace online social platforms to promote virtual sharing of this knowledge. Additionally, these interactions outlined in the SNT, should be well coordinated to allow for effective sharing of knowledge among all employees (Sigalaa and Chalkiti, 2015). In this regard, cross-functional, multimedia online internal communication (OIC) tools should be implemented. Moreover, employees who are ultimately the end users need to be consulted and involved in this process. Incidentally, as proposed by TAM, new digital innovations should be considered and adopted to enhance the creation, storage and online sharing of knowledge in the organisation (Chibuzor et al., 2019). Moreover, employees need to be adequately trained on new technologies as to help improve the state of KS in the organisation (Jones, 2017; Tajpour et al., 2022).

2.3 Knowledge Sharing in an Online Environment

Several scholars, among them Chibuzor et al. (2019), have researched the relationship between KS and innovation in organisations. According to Noor, Hashim and Ali (2014) and Alyammahi et al. (2022), the adoption of innovations is heavily determined by the creation and sharing of knowledge in this technological age. In their studies, Deng et al. (2022), Kaira and Phiri (2022) Bhutto, Khoso and Mehmood, 2022 and Tajpour et al. (2022) indicated that the adoption of innovations in KS has the ability to encourage employees to share new information, concepts and views in organisations. Further, new innovations such as OIC platforms and tools can positively motivate employees to seek new knowledge and improve their knowledge sharing behaviour as echoed by TAM.

In the current era, the Internet has transformed the way employees interact, hence the need to intensify KS though online networks as suggested by the SNT (Jinyang, 2015). The prerequisite is for employees to adopt OIC tools for their interpersonal relationships through numerous virtual communities with numerous networks, new media tools and platforms that are globally interconnected as suggested by the SNT (Page, Firth and Rand, 2015; Tajpour et al., 2022). Consequently, those changes require employees to positively modify their perceptions and significantly increase their online interaction and their ability to use OIC tools as advocated by TAM.

Researchers (for example Chibuzor et al., 2019; Bhutto et al., 2022) show that management support is greatly needed in enhancing employees' use of innovation in the organisation. Consequently, employees' acceptance of innovation and adoption of OIC tools in their interactions could be greatly enhanced (Gaál et al., 2015) as proposed by TAM. Accordingly, Brčić and Mihelič (2015) posit that employees are likely to develop positive knowledge behaviour change that is necessary for creating and sharing knowledge and propagating new concepts in an online environment. Therefore, the ability of employees to create and share knowledge virtually is dependent on their acceptance and adoption of the online innovations.

2.4 Perceptions Favourable for Knowledge Sharing in an Online Environment

According to various studies (Chau, 2018), the prominence of KS is growing in organisational communication as organisations attempt to cope with emerging contemporary changes. Currently, various multimedia channels are used in or across organisations by employees to share knowledge (Tajpour et al., 2022). In order to achieve KS to an acceptable level of adoption in an online environment, a complex process comprising knowledge creation, collection, immersion, sharing, transfer and conversion is required. This can be achieved through unhindered interactions, up-to-date and easy to use OIC tools, and easy access to the organisation's repository (Chibuzor et al., 2019) as recommended by TAM. Recent studies by Chibuzor et al. (2019), Lee (2018) and Asiedu et al. (2022) show that knowledge can easily be created and shared online when employees interact virtually; this can best be achieved when appropriate innovations are implemented. Conversely, these innovations can only be effective if they are acceptable and meet the individual needs of employees. Likewise, the ability to adopt new technologies is dependent on how employees perceive innovations and their implementation in the organisation. These perceptions are considered to be critical in shaping employees' KS behaviour and hence have the ability to influence their adoption of OIC tools (Chmielecki, 2015). Because negative perceptions may result in resistance due to fear of disrupting the current status, organisations that are willing to succeed in this change-oriented turbulent environment must be ready to mitigate its employees' perceptions in its favour. In addition, the organisation should also address any communication barriers that may be perceived to hinder the successful implementation of OIC tools for KS. Barriers at individual level include inadequate OIC training, poor relationships among employees, unhealthy competition, negative attitudes, reluctance to share knowledge, ineffective communication, and mistrust of online communication systems and processes (Šárka, 2014; Cacciattolo, 2015; Tajpour et al., 2022).

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative and qualitative approach using a cross-sectional design with the aim to study the existing perceptions of employees in the cooperative sector in Kenya. Triangulation, a strategy that combines various research techniques to view or explore a phenomenon, was used in data collection and analysis. Through triangulation, the validity and reliability of the findings were enhanced as it was possible to view and depict the phenomenon in question in a more thorough, contextual and universal manner than when using a single approach.

The target population were employees of deposit-taking SACCOs in Kenya. The accessible population consisted of 485 permanent and contracted mid-level employees stationed in eight branches of the eight selected deposit-taking SACCOs in the city of Nakuru. These employees had direct access to the organisations' OIC system. It is from the accessible population that the sample was drawn. Individual employees of the eight selected deposit-taking SACCOs were the unit of analysis.

The study employed purposive sampling (a non-probability sampling method) and simple random sampling (a probability sampling method). Out of a total of 178 deposit-taking SACCOs operating in Kenya, the researchers purposively selected eight SACCOs based on locality, the use of OIC and their large size in terms of membership. Furthermore, eight branches of the selected SACCOs were purposively selected. The researchers randomly selected 245 employees from the eight SACCOs to participate in the survey. Random sampling was also used to select participants for focus group discussions from the respective branches of the eight selected SACCOs. In addition, purposeful sampling was used to select participants based on the use of predetermined criteria pertinent to find individuals who can provide the most incisive views on particular topics or experiences, which in this case included eight senior managers representative of each selected SACCO and who are knowledgeable on the field for in-depth interviews.

Primary data were collected using a survey, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, whereas secondary data were obtained from the literature review. The researchers first conducted a survey of 245 permanent mid-level employees who had direct access to the SACCOs' OIC systems. The researchers then conducted eight focus group discussions, involving 72 employees who had participated in the survey that included employees from each of the eight selected SACCOs. In addition, the researchers carried out eight in-depth interviews with senior managers, interviewing one manager from each of the selected SACCOs.

An online self-administered questionnaire, which was created on the Google platform and made accessible via an e-mail link, was used in the survey to collect quantitative data. The eight focus group discussions, using a moderator's guide, were used to collect information from the participants who were respondents in the survey. In addition, interviews were also used to collect information from eight senior managers of the selected SACCOs

using an interview schedule. The moderator's guide and the interview schedule were designed using the relevant information obtained from the quantitative data that the researchers felt needed further exploration.

A mixed-method approach was used to analyse and interpret both qualitative and quantitative primary data. Quantitative data, captured on the Google docs platform, were migrated to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS version 25.0) to generate descriptive statistics. Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis was carried out to test the reliability of the items in the questionnaire and thus to ensure internal consistency. The subsequent results were used to correlate various variables to verify the research questions. In addition, regression analysis was used to establish effects between variables. In the qualitative data analysis, themes were formulated through thematic coding. Once coding had been completed, the researchers, through their own theoretical contextualisation, analysed and organised the themes from the codes into categories to represent common, relevant and significant themes. The emerging data were then edited and summarised into key themes in line with the research question. The exploratory patterns and key interpretations were highlighted, and their possible consistencies, relationships and differences were developed to help the researcher answer the research questions.

4. Results

Both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed in order to assess the perceptions of employees on the use of online internal communication (OIC) for knowledge sharing in line with the research problem and to answer the questions (RQ1 and RQ2)

4.1 Quantitative Data on Individual Perceptions

The quantitative data is presented as follows**.**

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics

An online self-administered questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. Of the 187 respondents (76%) in the sample set of 245, more than half of the sample was female (52%) and 48% were male. At the same time, 79.1% of respondents had attained post-secondary education. The majority of the sample was aged 20–50 years (82%); only 3.7% were below the age of 20 years and 1% above 60 years. The majority of the respondents (77.5%) had computer experience of five years and more. The study revealed that there was no major gender disparity and that most SACCOs' employees were below the age of 50 years. All were literate and with vast computer experience, a scenario that is favourable for adopting OIC for KS.

4.1.2 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity on employees' perceptions of the nature of KS

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to measure sampling adequacy and the suitability of data for statistical analysis. The KMO was used to test whether the collected data had attained the acceptable minimum criteria based on a factor-loading cut-off value of 0.6. The analysis conducted passed both tests, where the KMO test was 0.857 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity had a significant value of 0.000. Hence, the data were further subjected to factor analysis.

Factor analysis component matrix on individual perceptions of knowledge sharing in the SACCOs was conducted on sixteen determinants. Four items were extracted from the factor analysis conducted, as they exhibited the highest variance in the component matrix table. These four items were: *I am adequately trained on the use of OIC tools for KS* (0.731); *Collaborating with other employees is necessary for my KS* (-0.474); *The available OIC tools are adequate for my adoption of KS* (0.556); and *The use of OIC tools improves my work output* (0.479). From the descriptive statistics of the shortlisted items under the construct *individual determinants,* it was shown that the items were oscillating between 2.46 and 3.01, where 2.0 to 2.99 was represented by Agree and 3.0 to 3.99 was represented by Disagree. The data were also subjected to regression analysis of variance (ANOVA). Table 1 below summarises the correlation and regression analysis carried out to determine the strength of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. It is shown that individual determinants are significant with an F value of 14.401 and a significance value of 0.000. However, the multiple correlations were positive with a coefficient of 0.490. Items in this variable that were significant accounted for 24.0 % of variation in the dependent variable *Training of other employees.* The value of Durbin Watson at 2.232 conferred that the coefficient was statistically different from zero. The findings also showed that there was no serial correlation. The regression analysis of individual determinants for KS revealed that one item, namely *I am*

adequately trained on the use of OIC tools for KS, had a significant influence on KS, with a significant value of 0.000 when tested at 95% confidence level.

Table 1: ANOVA Table for Employee Perceptions of KS

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.490[a]	0.240	0.224	0.815	2.232

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	38.224	4	9.556	14.4011	0.000
	Residual	120.771	182	0.664		
	Total	158.995	186			

As shown in Table 2 below, a unit increase in *Training on the use of OIC tools for KS* would lead to 0.416 unit increase in *training of other employees*. The result also shows that the item *The available OIC tools are adequate for my adoption of KS* had a negative coefficient -0.039 though not statistically significant when tested at 95% confidence level. Therefore, a unit increase in the item: *The available OIC tools are adequate for my adoption of KS* will result in 0.039 unit decrease in *Training of other employees* which represented KS.

Table 2: Coefficients Table for Individual Determinants for KS

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.445	0.266		5.437	0.000
	[I am adequately trained on the use of OIC tools for KS]	0.416	0.074	0.416	5.642	0.000
	[Collaborating with other employees is necessary for my KS]	0.085	0.076	0.080	1.107	0.270
	[The available OIC tools are adequate for my adoption of KS]	-0.039	0.085	-0.033	-0.464	0.643
	[The use of OIC tools improves my work output]	0.133	0.086	0.114	1.551	0.123
a. Dependent Variable: Adoption of OIC for KS						

4.1.3 Descriptive analysis individual determinants for KS

The quantitative analysis identified two individual determinant for KS as being more significant. The first important determinant was whether employees were adequately trained in the use of OIC for KS. As indicated in Figure 1 below, over half of the respondents were of the contrary opinion with the above statement where 31% strongly disagreed and 24% disagreed.

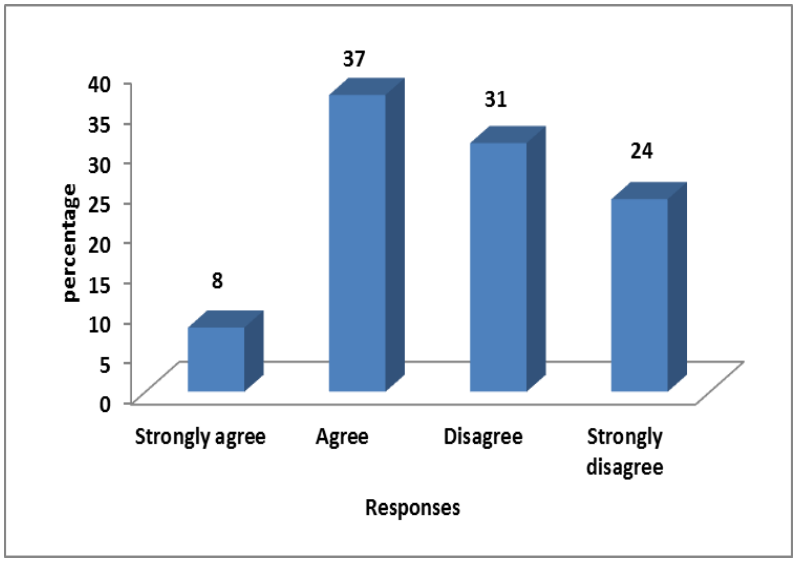

Table 1: Adequately Trained in the use of OIC for KS

The other significant issue was whether collaboration of employees is necessary in enhancing KS. As shown in Figure 2, slightly over 50% of the respondents responded in affirmative with 12% strongly agreeing and 41% agreeing with the above statement.

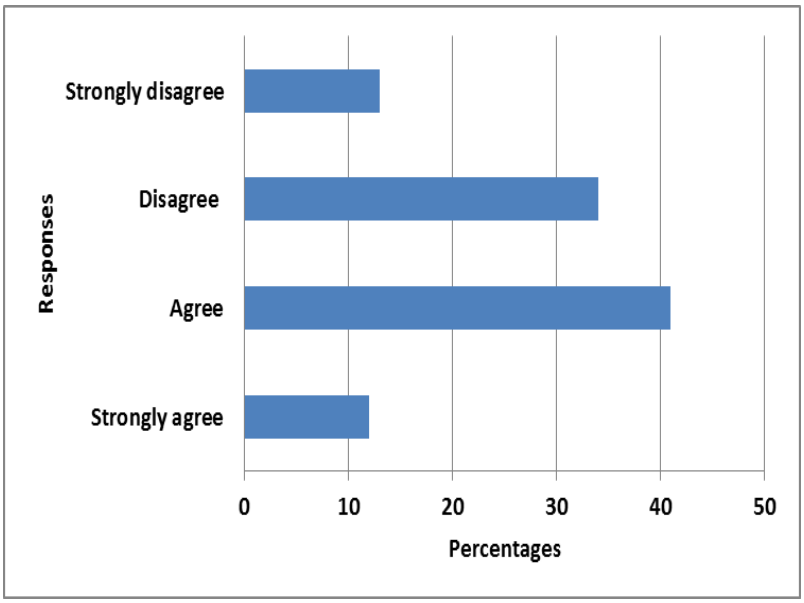

Table 2: Employees' Collaboration is Necessary in Enhancing KS

4.2 Findings of the Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data were based on and derived from the analysis of the quantitative data to provide more insights into employees' individual perceptions in their attempts to adopt OIC tools for KS in their organisations to addressed RQ1 specifically. Several themes emerged from the qualitative data. The most visible themes included training and development and employees' attitude towards the use of OIC tools.

The majority of responses related to the theme of training and development, and covered issues pertaining to employees' training and skills improvement for adopting OIC tools. Although the study's participants indicated that they were actively engaging with OIC tools in their routine work, they generally felt that they were not adequately trained on using these tools beyond their assigned tasks. This is confirmed by a participant who commented that: *"Most of my skills in the use of computer are by self-effort but I understand anything new comes with its challenges… Well, it all depends on whether other employees will teach us … new things because the SACCO seems not to care."* Another one remarked that *"Well… how are we expected to share knowledge with what we have not been trained? We need to first know how OIC can improve work before we can talk of*

knowledge sharing." A senior manager remarked that: *"Training is necessary for employees to effectively use new innovations."* Even though there was an impression that most employees lacked the necessary and relevant training on KS, they nevertheless appreciated the potential of OIC tools for enhancing KS. It can be construed that employees were aware of the need to have the necessary skills, and of the importance of training on short-term and longer-term interventions for embracing KS.

The second theme concerned participants' attitude on the use of OIC, which encompasses the use of OIC tools in their daily activities and their ability to interact online as part of their internal communication to promote KS. The participants confirmed the availability of OIC tools and most of them indicated that they had no problem accessing and using some of the OIC tools at their workplace. One participant commented: *"To say the truth, I wouldn't say that I have any issue accessing the tools in our SACCO. Most of my work is done online."* However, they had no impetus on using them for KS. This was reinforced by a substantial number of senior managers who indicated that OIC provided employees with an array of tools that were suitable for social interaction in the respective organisations as suggested by SNT. One senior manager commented that: *"Online tools are available in our SACCO, but our employees do not use them as they do with their phones and I don't know the reasons why."* This was an indication that the employees had full access to the available OIC tools and were actively using them to carry out their duties but were not utilizing them for KS. The findings further showed that employees' use of specific OIC tools was influenced by their personal perceptions of those tools, (namely the usefulness, ease of use and standpoints on OIC tools as proposed in TAM), the services offered by their SACCOs, the envisaged use of those tools, their involvement in the implementation of the tools and their ability to integrate those tools for KS. This suggests that the low utilisation of OIC tools in the SACCOs for internal interactions was influenced by employees' negative attitudes of OIC tools for KS, thus affecting their perceptions on online networking ability in their organisations.

5. Discussion

Both the quantitative and the qualitative findings indicated that all levels of KS affect the use of OIC in SACCOs, that is from the personal/individual, technological and managerial/organisational perspectives. The need of training is one of the most important factors that was identified which confirms the importance to share tacit knowledge on both the personal/individual level through relationship building and the need for processes and structures at managerial/organisational level to empower individuals to change implicit knowledge to explicit knowledge which is accessible to all employees. This is evidenced in viewpoints from the participants that they did not possess the competencies needed to use OIC for KS. It was evident that most of the participants were not very proficient in using OIC tools for KS despite having long exposure to computer technology which could be achieved through the technology perspective by using new digital tools for explicit knowledge creation and sharing as posited by TAM. Most senior managers cited a lack of training as one contributor to employees' apathy towards KS. However, it was apparent that most participants and respondents were cognisant of the importance of training on KS and the potential benefits of being competent in the use of OIC tools beyond their current uses. This finding shows that both the senior managers and employees are fully aware of, and actually appreciate, the role of capacity building in enhancing their online relationships in their respective organisations as earlier suggested by Chau (2018), Du et al. (2019) and Eshak et al. (2022. Most of them agreed that having sound and relevant training programmes is critical for modifying employees' perceptions towards adopting KS and subsequently enhancing the trust-based relationships. Consequently, the findings place training and development in a pivotal position in the promotion of OIC for KS. This viewpoint confirms those of Chau, (2018), Lee, (2018) and Tajpour et al. (2022), namely that the introduction of innovation should always be complemented with relevant training as a way of ensuring that employees grasp the necessary skills and pose positive attitudes for coping with change.

It was established from the findings that OIC tools were readily available and accessible to employees for enhancing service delivery in the SACCOs in Kenya. The participants confirmed the availability and most of them indicated that they had no problem accessing the OIC tools at their workplace. However, most of them indicated that they were not enthused to use them for KM. This implies that availability and accessibility of OIC tools does not automatically lead to their use for KM. In this regard, organisations need to implement processes and structure through new strategies to modify employees' perceptions that will motivate them to adopt new innovations for KM. The findings concur with those of Page et al. (2015) and Asiedu et al. (2022), who assert that despite most organisations having indeed implemented multifaceted technological systems for online communication, users need to be motivated to utilize them for the various purposes.

Both the literature and the findings of this study imply the need to modify employees' perceptions towards the use of innovations for KS in the SACCOs. The findings show that employees had a negative perceptions towards the use of OIC for online KM and there were no sufficient online forums available to motivate employees to engage and share knowledge. However, some participants recognised that some conditions in their workplace had an impact on their desire to adopt OIC tools for KS. They emphasised the need to build their work capacity in order to enhance their ability to use OIC to collaborate and interact with other employees. Hence, more efforts should be orientated towards behaviour modification of employees' perceptions and to impart new knowledge and skills on online KS. As indicated by Mallasi and Ainin (2015) and Omotayo (2015), the implementation of sound KS is still a challenge in many organisations owing to a lack of appropriate strategies and guidelines, resulting in unfavourable attitudes by employees. It is therefore proposed that a strategy for modifying personal/individual employees' perceptions towards online interactions while using OIC tools for KS is necessary for enhancing sustainable competitive advantage in the competitive global environment.

Based on the findings, it is posited that the eight selected deposit-taking SACCOs had not fully built the capacity of their employees to overcome barriers to the adoption of OIC for KS. It is suggested that the management of the respective SACCOs must equip their employees with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to implement and adopt OIC in the context of KS. Consequently, it is concluded that capacity building may address employees' individual determinants of KS, such as the adoption and integration of new technologies in the workplace, personal mastering of innovations, motivation, empowerment, open communication, free online exchange of information, online interactions, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitudes, credibility and trust. This links to results from a recent study conducted by Anand et al. (2021) who emphasise the need for a strategic focus on human resources (organisational learning, relationship building, etc.); innovation, trust and performance central to human factors linked to KS; and the need for KS based practices leading to a better understanding of strategies that enable the long-term storage and retrieval of tacit and explicit knowledge in the organisation.

6. Limitations and Strengths

The main limitations of the study are that its findings are bound to be affected by the issue of transferability, since they were generated from employees' perceptions and experiences in a specific context and the study was cross-sectional in design as data were collected at a particular point in time. However, Louw (2018) acknowledges that the worthiness of any research is determined by the extent to which it contributes to knowledge, both theoretical and in practice. Hence it is posited that this study is new and unique and contributes to the existing body of knowledge in communication research and organisational communication practice in several ways.

Owing to the technological advancement leading to numerous innovations and the rapid inclination towards the knowledge-based economy, there is a need for similar studies to be carried out in other sectors of the economy using similar or different study approaches and population strata. Further research in this area, for example longitudinal studies, is also recommended to determine the use of OIC for KS across the board.

7. Conclusion

In this research, the lack of research into the adoption of OIC for KS on a personal/individual level was addressed, specifically in the context of deposit-taking SACCOs in Kenya. It was posited that for SACCOs to leverage their full KS potential, they must understand their employees' perceptions of KS in order to address the factors affecting the KS process as a whole. In summary, it was found that that despite the availability and accessibility to OIC tools, most employees lacked the required knowledge, skills and attitudes for adopting OIC for KS. Thus, the above factors can be considered to be affecting employees' personal/individual opportunities for adopting OIC for KS that are critical to the success of any knowledge-based organisation. This scenario needs to be remedied if the SACCOs are to attain a competitive edge in the knowledge economy. The study is, therefore, expected to assist the management in improving the adoption of OIC for KS among employees in the SACCOs industry in Kenya and supports the following argument by Lauring and Selmer (2011, p.1):

> *Promoting knowledge creation and knowledge sharing within organisations is an essential challenge in today's business environment. Knowledge sharing is argued to lead to better performance due to improved decision making and better coordination.*

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