



Leadership and knowledge sharing: What role does servant leadership play?

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Abstract: <p>Contemporary organisations strive for enhanced knowledge sharing. Leadership has been characterised as a central element in building this sought after knowledge sharing. Among various leadership styles, servant leadership stands out for its emphasis on setting the interests of followers at the forefront. More recently, servant leadership has been posited as a leadership style that holds great promise in fostering knowledge sharing within organisations. However, due to the limited number of earlier research this relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing is still somewhat unclear.</p> <p>This study applies both deductive and inductive elements to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Moreover, this study employs primarily qualitative methods to examine the experiences and beliefs of followers to uncover the underlying elements of servant leadership that induce this previously perceived positive relation. This study further attempts to understand how the perceived promoters and barriers of knowledge sharing are influenced by servant leadership. Additionally, a diverse array of social theories including previously applied theories such as social exchange theory, social learning theory and novel theories such as self-efficacy theory, social identity theory, and social capital theory are applied to enhance our understanding of the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing.</p> <p>The findings of this study contribute to the pool of contemporary knowledge in multiple ways. Firstly, this study provides an in-depth understanding of the followers view of the relationship between leadership, servant leadership, and knowledge sharing. Here, four different roles of leaders are identified. These roles are leaders as role models, leaders as facilitators, leaders as teachers, and leaders as friends. This study identifies a number of novel drivers and barriers of knowledge sharing behaviour. The relation between these drivers and barriers and leadership is also discussed.</p> <p>Lastly, this study raises concern for the suitability of the applied numerical servant leadership measures for studying the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing.</p>	
Keywords: human resource management, knowledge sharing, leadership, servant leadership	

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Sammandrag: <p>Dagens företag strävar efter högre nivåer av kunskapsutbyte. Ledarskap har ofta beskrivits som ett centralt element av att bygga detta utsökta kunskapsutbyte. Tjänande ledarskap är en ledarskapsstil som fokuserar på följarnas bästa. Tjänande ledarskap har under senaste åren karaktäriserats som en lovande metod för att fostra kunskapsutbyte inom organisationer. Dock är detta förhållande mellan tjänade ledarskap och kunskapsutbyte fortfarande relativt oklart eftersom endast ett fåtal tidigare studier har fokuserat på detta samband.</p> <p>Den här studien utnyttjar både deduktiva och induktiva angreppssätt för att studera sambandet mellan tjänande ledarskap och kunskapsutbyte. Här används en huvudsakligen kvalitativ metod för att undersöka följarnas erfarenheter och åsikter för att avslöja de element av tjänande ledarskap som skapar detta positiva samband. Den här avhandlingen strävar ytterligare efter att förstå hur de hittade drivande och förhindrande faktorerna av kunskapsutbyte kunde påverkas av tjänande ledarskap. Ytterligare utnyttjas ett urval av sociala teorier för att främja vår förståelse av sambandet mellan tjänande ledarskap och kunskapsutbyte. Sociala teorier som utnyttjas inkluderar redan tidigare utnyttjade teorier så som social utbytesteori och social inlärningsteori, nya teorier som utnyttjas är självförtroendeteori, social identitetsteori och social kapitalteori.</p> <p>Resultaten av denna studie bidrar till samlingen av forskning angående ledarskap och kunskapsutbyte på flera sätt. För det första ger denna avhandling en djupgående förståelse för följarnas uppfattning av sambandet mellan ledarskap och kunskapsutbyte. Här identifieras fyra olika roller för ledare. Dessa roller är ledare som förebilder, ledare som främjare, ledare som lärare och ledare som vänner. Den här studien identifierar också ett antal nya drivare och hinder för kunskapsutbyte. Sambandet mellan dessa och ledarskap diskuteras också.</p> <p>Slutligen uppmärksammar den här studien problematiken angående tillämpningen av numeriska tjänande ledarskapsmått för att studera sambandet mellan tjänande ledarskap och kunskapsutbyte.</p>	
Nyckelord: HR, kunskapsutbyte, ledarskap, tjänande ledarskap	

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1 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is often characterised as the most important competitive asset for contemporary organisations (e.g. Palacios Marqués & Garrigos-Simon, 2006). In the modern, continuously evolving environment, this fundamental knowledge within organisations becomes even more crucial. As a response to these challenges, knowledge sharing has emerged as a potential solution, attracting a considerable amount of research attention over the past decades (Wang & Noe, 2010).

Leadership has consistently been recognised as a crucial driver of knowledge sharing (e.g. Yang, 2006; Wu & Lee, 2017). The field of leadership research has over the past decades continuously evolved, with theories rising and falling out of fashion in response to changing organisations and contexts (Eva et al., 2019). One area of leadership research that has certainly followed a similar turbulent pattern is the topic of leadership styles. Wherein, theories such as the transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1987; Bass, 1985), that have previously been seen as the holy grail of leadership have during more recent years been challenged by new perspectives that redefine what constitutes great leadership.

One such theory that has gained traction during more recent years is the servant leadership theory that has its roots in the writings of Greenleaf (1977). This theory that has later been expanded upon by, most notably, van Dierendonck (2011) and Eva et al. (2019) is in many ways similar to other leadership styles, such as transformational leadership. Wherein, the continuous development and moulding of followers is a core aspect of the frame of thought. However, what sets servant leadership apart from other leadership styles is specifically its emphasis on the needs of the followers. Wherein, the leader is genuinely interested in the wellbeing and development of their followers, rather than solely focusing on their own aspirations or the benefits of the organisation. (Eva et al., 2019)

The rise of servant leadership further stems from the notion that relying solely on charisma (as in transformational leadership), or ethics in their behaviour (ethical leadership) or authenticity in their emotions (authentic leadership) to influence the behaviour of followers is insufficient. While these leadership approaches can foster motivation and commitment, they often fail to promote the overall development of followers. (Eva et al., 2019) Servant leadership offers a promising alternative to these theories, as its emphasis on nurturing and empowering followers for their own sake,

rather than solely for organisational goals, has consistently yielded superior results compared to other value-based leadership styles (Liden et al., 2014a).

While several studies have been conducted to explore the relation between servant leadership and various organisational and individual factors (Eva et al., 2019), only a limited number of studies have specifically explored the connection between servant leadership and knowledge sharing (Tuan, 2016; Nauman et al., 2022; Song et al., 2015; Kadarusman & Bunyamin, 2021). This oversight is noteworthy because servant leadership, with its emphasis on the well-being and development of followers, theoretically aligns closely with the antecedents of knowledge sharing, which include trust, openness, and shared values. The sparse coverage highlights a significant gap in the literature and emphasises the need for further research to better understand and leverage this alignment for organisational benefits.

1.1 Background and problem area

Knowledge and specifically the distribution of said knowledge within organisations, is critical for almost any modern organisation (Wang & Noe, 2010). How this knowledge sharing should be promoted is, however, still somewhat unclear. Investigating the role of leadership is posited as a potential avenue for reducing this ambiguity, as leadership has in previous research been identified as one of the main tenets of fostering knowledge sharing (e.g. Song et al., 2015). Servant leadership has previously been posited as a leadership style that might be able to serve as an effective philosophy for building this desirable knowledge sharing (e.g. Eva et al., 2019; Tuan, 2016; Song et al., 2015). However, only few earlier studies that have inspected the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing (e.g. Song et al., 2015; Tuan, 2016; Kadarusman & Bunyamin, 2021; Nauman et al., 2022). Additionally, it is still somewhat uncertain which specific characteristics and behaviours displayed by servant leaders that foster these knowledge sharing behaviours amongst followers (Eva et al., 2019).

Moreover, servant leadership is still a rather new and unresearched concept in the Finnish context (e.g. Perhoniemi & Hakanen, 2010; Hakanen & van Dierendonck, 2011; Hakanen et al., 2012; Upadyaya et al., 2016; Rytönen, 2019; Hakanen & van Dierendonck, 2011). While no studies in Finland have considered the relation between servant leadership and specifically knowledge sharing, Hakanen et al. (2012) depicted servant leadership as a tool for increasing work engagement, which has been connected

with a heightened tendency for engaging in knowledge sharing behaviour in other studies (e.g. Kim & Park, 2017).

The Finnish work environment, characterised by its unique cultural, organisational, and social dynamics, presents a distinct context that differs notably from regions like Asia, which have enjoyed considerable attention in contemporary research on servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Given the characteristic attributes of egalitarianism, transparency, and collaboration, the Finnish context can function as a fruitful environment for inspecting the complex relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing.

1.2 Aim and purpose of the study

This study aims to answer the call for further research concerning the effect of leadership on knowledge sharing (Eva et al., 2019; Wang & Noe, 2010). More specifically, this research endeavour aims fill in the gap in contemporary understanding regarding which managerial behaviours followers perceive as influential for their knowledge sharing. By qualitatively examining the experiences and beliefs of followers in contemporary organisations concerning the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing, this research aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms that induce this previously perceived positive relationship. Here the qualitative methods are applied to provide an in-depth exploration of the followers' perspectives to generate novel knowledge that can then be used to develop further quantitative studies exploring the connection (Wang & Noe, 2010).

This study further posits an attempt to understand how perceived promoters and inhibitors of knowledge sharing could be expected to be influenced by servant leadership. Drawing from a diverse array of social theories, including theories previously applied to the relationship, such as, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977a), and novel theories like the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997b), social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and social capital theory (e.g. Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986). This investigation seeks to interpret the beliefs and lived experiences of followers regarding the interplay between servant leadership and knowledge sharing to enhance our understanding of this crucial organisational dynamic.

This research endeavour uses the following broad main research question to capture the wide range of emotions and perceptions displayed by informants:

1) *“How do followers in contemporary organisations perceive the relationship between leadership and their knowledge sharing?”*

The main research question has been further split up into two sub-questions. The two sub-questions are:

1.a) *“What specific aspects of the servant leadership philosophy do followers identify as encouraging knowledge sharing?”*

1.b) *“What barriers to knowledge sharing do followers view as resistant to the influence of leadership, including servant leadership?”*

The findings of this study further elaborate on the effective traits of servant leadership that facilitate knowledge sharing; these findings can then be used by practitioners to enhance the leadership in contemporary organisations to foster knowledge sharing. Simultaneously, this study seeks to highlight the barriers to knowledge sharing that are resistant to the influence of servant leadership, so that contemporary leaders and organisations can identify which aspects they can influence with their behaviour and which they cannot.

1.3 Scope and delimitations

This study focuses on examining the interplay between servant leadership and knowledge sharing within contemporary organisational contexts. Wherein, qualitative research methods and the Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2012) are employed to explore followers’ perceptions and experiences regarding the influence of servant leadership on knowledge sharing.

Given the interpretivist qualitative approach adopted in this study, the emphasis lies on understanding the informants’ experiences and beliefs regarding the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Rather than aiming to draw generalisable inferences of the concrete effect of servant leadership on knowledge sharing. Therefore, this study prioritises interpreting the nuanced perspectives within the specific context of this research. Consequently, the findings primarily serve to elucidate how this relationship manifests itself in the context and perceptions of participants.

Additionally, the influence of organisational culture was purposefully considered briefly in this study. When considering this delimitation, it is important to recognise that organisational culture is a factor that potentially influences both leadership and

knowledge sharing fundamentally. However, this decision was made based on the specific aim and purpose of this study, wherein, inspecting the followers' views of the relationship between specifically servant leadership and knowledge sharing was central. As considering the influence of organisational culture would have necessitated a completely different research design and methodology, which could potentially have diluted the depth of the analysis of servant leadership and knowledge sharing dynamics, it was deemed unsuitable.

1.4 Definitions

Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing is “the provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures”. (Wang & Noe, 2010, p. 117)

Servant leadership

The servant leadership style is a leadership style that prioritises serving others as the primary purpose of leadership. In essence, servant leaders place the needs, growth, and wellbeing of followers above their own, and the organisations interests. Servant leadership entails leading with humility, empathy, and trust, enabling followers to reach their full potential. (Eva et al., 2019)

Follower

The term “follower” can generally be defined as a person willingly aligning themselves with a leader to support their vision, goals, and initiatives. Even though the willingness aspect of the leader follower relationship could be argued to not be realised in the context of management research. Wherein, subordinates are generally assigned leaders, rather than them freely choosing who they wish to follow. This study adopts the conventional practice in contemporary servant leadership research of referring to subordinates as followers.

1.5 Structure

This study is divided up into six parts, each focusing on a distinct aspect of the research process. The first part of this study is the introduction, which presents a comprehensive overview of the subject area and background of this study. This overview also presents

the problem area and purpose of this study. The scope, together with delimitations and key definitions relevant for this study, are discussed last in the introduction.

The second part of this study explores previous research within the subject area. This section examines the theoretical foundation of the core concepts and identifies gaps in the existing knowledge that this study will attempt to address. This review is divided up into four parts, the first of which concerns knowledge sharing and its mediators, the second part of the literature review focuses on the servant leadership literature. The third part of the literature review attempts to connect the concepts of servant leadership and knowledge sharing by inspecting it through the lens of a variety of social theories. The theoretical framework that has been developed for this study is presented in the last part of the theory section.

The third part of this study outlines the methodological framework of this study, wherein, the research philosophy and strategy, together with applied methods are presented. Additionally, this section contains a comprehensive description of the data analysis process, together with a discussion of the ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study.

The fourth part of this study presents the findings of this study, the results section follows a similar structure as the literature review section, wherein, the views of the interview subjects concerning their leaders are presented first. Whereafter, the drivers and barriers of knowledge sharing are presented. After this, the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing is discussed. The theoretical model that has been developed for this study is presented last in the results section.

The fifth part of this study is the discussion chapter, which focuses on interpreting the collected results, wherein, the findings are interpreted in light of previous research. The conclusion is the sixth, and last, part of this study. The conclusion, firstly, attempts to answer the research questions, whereafter it contains a brief overview of the limitations of this study together with suggestions for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a comprehensive literature review that delves into the theoretical underpinnings, prevailing models, and empirical findings that serve as the foundation for this study. The review is structured to first systematically explore the existing body of knowledge regarding knowledge sharing, encompassing its conceptualisations, motivations, and antecedents. Whereafter, the concept of servant leadership and its most prominent conceptualisations are presented. Further expanding on the concept of servant leadership, I will present and discuss its main benefits and downsides in the context of this research.

The third part of this review chapter examines how theories that have been used in previous literature could be applied to the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. This part is structured so that the theories that have been used in the limited amount of previous research concerning the relation are presented first. Whereafter, a novel approach using previously unexplored theories is applied to the context of servant leadership and knowledge sharing. The theoretical framework that has been developed for this study is presented in the fourth part of this literature review. This theoretical framework functions as a conceptualisation of the insights gathered throughout this chapter, providing a cohesive framework for understanding the interplay between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. The fifth, and final, part of this section, consists of a concluding section, which aims to synthesise what we have learnt so far, and to further illustrate the relevance of the presented literature for this research.

2.1 Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing describes the actions of disseminating and receiving knowledge taking place between individuals in organisations. Knowledge sharing has been argued to be the primary means by which individuals can support innovation, application of knowledge, and the organisation's competitiveness. (Wang & Noe, 2010) While knowledge potentially exists at multiple levels within organisations (Ipe, 2003), this study focuses on the knowledge that is held by individuals and the elements that effect knowledge sharing between those individuals. Additionally, while knowledge management studies have usually focused on the technological aspect of knowledge management and knowledge management systems (KMS), the people perspective of knowledge management has during the new millennium risen within the field (Wang & Noe, 2010). The people perspective views personal factors together with the connections between individuals as the keys for understanding knowledge management.

Furthermore, the core of the people-centric approach to knowledge management is the assumption that specifically the individuals within organisations have knowledge that has to be transferred to the organisational or group plane for it to be fully utilised. This study adopts the people perspective to knowledge management, inspecting it through specifically the views of individuals, rather than by observing the systems that knowledge sharing occurs in.

2.1.1 Knowledge sharing between individuals

Davenport & Prusak (1998) state that knowledge is “intimately and inextricably bound to people’s egos and occupation” implying that knowledge is inherently difficult to transfer between individuals (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, p. 45). This statement is further emphasised by Stenmark (2001), who argues that individuals are unlikely to engage in knowledge sharing behaviours without strong motivation, be it internal or external.

We can use the perceptions of individuals regarding the value of the knowledge that they hold to further visualise the perceived difficulty of stimulating knowledge sharing behaviours. Knowledge is perceived by individuals and organisations as a valuable resource (e.g. Järvenpää & Staples, 2001). When individuals perceive the knowledge that they hold as a valuable resource, the process of knowledge sharing becomes an activity directed by the individuals’ choices about what, when, and with whom to share. If individuals perceive their knowledge as valuable, they may be more reluctant to share said knowledge as they might claim emotional ownership of their knowledge. Wherein, the knowledge is directly connected to their status, career prospects, and reputation. (Andrews & Delahaye, 2000). This dilemma is highlighted in highly competitive environments, where a contradictory incentive can emerge, as individuals might be set to gain status, career prospects, and reputation by hoarding and withholding information from others. Therefore, making them the sole “owner” of knowledge, which enhances their position as indispensable within their organisation. (Empson, 2001)

2.1.2 Factors that impact knowledge sharing

This chapter delves into the factors that encourage or inhibit knowledge sharing, drawing upon three key areas identified in previous research. These areas of emphasis, deemed relevant to the objectives of this thesis, have been identified based on their relevance to leadership. The areas of interest included in this section are: 1. Trust, 2. Reciprocity, and 3. Individual characteristics.

2.1.2.1 Trust

Trust is one of the most widely studied factors in knowledge sharing research. This popularity in contemporary research is natural, as trust has repeatedly been identified as one of the, if not the most important determinant of successful knowledge sharing. This importance stems from the fact that trust is essential for multiple elements of knowledge sharing. For example, trust is a central for the reciprocity expectation of knowledge sharing, wherein individuals' expectations to receive knowledge back from their community of practice if they contribute to the shared pool of knowledge functions as an important motivator for sharing knowledge. (Yeboah, 2023) Similarly, trust has been found to lessen the perceived costs of knowledge sharing in a variety of contexts and organisations (Kankanhalli et al., 2005).

Additionally, knowledge sharing has been found to be closely intertwined with the quality of the relationship between the involved individuals (Zhang & Jiang, 2015). For example, a deep connection between individuals is essential for the correct interpretation of knowledge between receiver and provider (Jurišević Brčić & Mihelič, 2015). The importance of interpersonal trust for knowledge sharing is further highlighted by the fact that even in multinational corporations characterised by distance and cultural differences, knowledge sharing becomes possible through explicitly trust (Fong & Mar, 2015).

2.1.2.2 Reciprocity

Reciprocity has been identified as the core mechanism behind knowledge sharing. Wherein, individuals can perceive the act of sharing knowledge as an investment, as they anticipate returns in the form of receiving knowledge from others later on (e.g. Hendriks, 1999). In the context of knowledge sharing reciprocal acts are ones in which people assist others and share knowledge "without negotiation of terms and without knowledge of whether or when the other will reciprocate" (Molm et al., 2000, p. 1396). In practice, reciprocity implies that individuals must feel like sharing knowledge is worth the effort, because they are set to gain from the value generated by their participation later on (Ipe, 2003).

Research on the link between knowledge sharing and reciprocity shows that receiving knowledge from others tends to spark a reciprocal flow of knowledge back to the sender (e.g. Schulz, 2001). This relationship has been previously studied in the context of communities of practice, where social capital theory has been used to explain how a norm

of reciprocity can induce participants to engage in knowledge sharing behaviours. In these communities of practice, knowledge sharing behaviours have been found to sometimes be reciprocated by a third party separate from the provider or receiver of knowledge, instead stemming from generalised reciprocation, wherein, the norm of reciprocity guides individuals to share their knowledge even though they might not expect direct reciprocation from the receiver (Wang & Noe, 2010). The results of studies inspecting the relation between a norm of reciprocity and knowledge sharing in communities of practice have been mixed, wherein it has sometimes been found to be positive (e.g. Chiu et al., 2005) or negative (e.g. Wasko & Faraj, 2005). These inconsistent findings suggest that the relation is more complex than it might seem on the surface, where the nature of the relation might be affected by other factors such as the personality or perceptions of participants (Wang & Noe, 2010). For example, perceived reciprocity has been found to be positively related to knowledge sharing under weak sharing norms, suggesting that a strong norm of sharing knowledge can compensate for a perceived low level of reciprocity in a team or community (Kankanhalli et al., 2005).

As previous research has shown that reciprocity is an important motivator for knowledge sharing behaviours (e.g. Schulz, 2001), it becomes important to understand how servant leadership can be harnessed to cultivate a culture of reciprocity. This relation could be expected to be central for this study and I will return to this theme later on.

2.1.2.3 Individual characteristics

Even though several studies have suggested that the work attitudes and behaviours of individuals differ (e.g. Judge & Bono, 2001), only few studies have sought to examine the role that these individual characteristics play in influencing knowledge sharing (Wang & Noe, 2010). Nevertheless, some important findings have been made in the relation between knowledge sharing and individual characteristics. Namely, openness to experience and a high level of curiosity have been found connected with an increased interest in seeking out the ideas and insights of others (Cabrera et al., 2006). Additionally, a higher level of education and more work experience have been linked with positive attitudes towards knowledge sharing (Constant et al., 1994). In a similar vein, the confidence of individuals in their ability to share useful knowledge has been connected with an increased tendency to engage in knowledge sharing and seeking (Cabrera et al., 2006). Conversely, evaluation apprehension, or the fear of being judged negatively, has been found to inhibit knowledge sharing (Bordia et al., 2006).

This description of individual factors echoes the description of the relationship between self-efficacy and knowledge sharing. Wherein, the self-assessment of individuals regarding their own or their team's efficacy has been linked to their tendency to engage in knowledge sharing (e.g. Safdar et al., 2021). This connection between self-efficacy and knowledge sharing stems from the belief that individuals are more willing to engage in behaviours and tasks if they believe that they are capable of achieving desired outcomes (Maddux, 1990).

2.2 Servant leadership theory

When Greenleaf (1977) introduced the concept of servant leadership in the 1970s, he did not provide any empirical definition of the term, this led to the concept having multiple different, and often overlapping definitions within the field (Eva et al., 2019). Van Dierendonck (2011) later tried to identify and mould these multiple different conceptualisations of the term into six core characteristics of what sets servant leadership apart from other leadership styles. These characteristics are: 1. servant leaders empower and develop people, 2. they are humble, 3. authentic, and 4. accept people for who they are. 5. They give guidance and 6. act as stewards who strive for the good of the group as a whole.

Eva et al. (2019) used these six characteristics as a base for their definition of servant leadership, this definition consists of three core features of what constitutes servant leadership, these three characteristics constitute the motive, mode, and mindset of servant leadership. The motive of servant leadership is an "other-oriented approach to leadership" (Eva et al., 2019, p. 114), wherein, servant leadership is set apart from other leadership styles specifically for the inner motivation from which the servant behaviour stems from. The willingness to serve does not come from the leader's own ambitions or agenda, but rather from their inner feelings of altruism and morals.

The mode of servant leadership is "manifested through one-on-one prioritising of follower individual needs, interests, and goals above those of the leader" (Eva et al., 2019, p. 114). This depiction highlights the leaders view of each follower as an individual with their own needs, desires, and strengths. While there are usually systems in place within organisations to ensure equality, the servant leader is interested in that which makes each follower unique and takes those factors into consideration in the leader-follower relationship. A similar distinction between other leadership styles and servant leadership can again be displayed here, as leaders characterised by other leadership styles act for

the benefits of the organisation, servant leaders are instead fixed on the growth of followers on a deeper level, which is in turn in line with the stewardship element of servant leadership.

Finally, the mindset of servant leadership is “outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organisation and larger community” (Eva et al., 2019, p. 114). The mindset of servant leadership displays how servant leaders spread their altruistic motives within the organisation and its environment, wherein, servant leaders move their followers away from a self-serving motivation towards an other-serving direction, in which the followers act similarly to the servant leader and strive for the betterment of their environment. (Eva et al., 2019)

There are some clear similarities and overlaps between these characteristics of servant leadership and other leadership styles, notably, empowering and developing followers is also a core characteristic of transformational leadership, wherein, transformational leaders inspire their followers to achieve great things. Additionally, both leadership styles emphasise the importance of vision, trust, service, influence, and credibility (Bass, 2000). However, the motivation for this type of behaviour differs between these leadership styles, as transformational leaders see the continuous development of followers as the means for achieving organisational goals; servant leaders see serving and developing followers as an end in itself, wherein organisational benefits are merely a byproduct of said empowerment. A similar distinction can be made between the authentic characteristic present in both servant leadership and authentic leadership. While authentic leaders are authentic simply for the sake of being authentic, servant leaders develop this trait through inner altruistic or spiritual motivation, where the inner need to serve and for making a positive difference guides the leader to act authentically. (Eva et al., 2019)

2.2.1 Effects of servant leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership style that many organisations and individuals aspire for (Spears, 2010). Servant leadership has in previous studies been found to have many positive effects on the individual, team and organisational level (e.g. Liden et al., 2014b). The effect of servant leadership is based on the fact that placing the needs and continuous development of followers as the main goal promotes positive organisational outcomes in the long run (Hoch et al., 2018). Examples of the components of servant leadership that foster these outcomes are increased trust between employees and the supervisor,

employee empowerment, self-governing motivation, and employee commitment to supervisor (Liden et al., 2014a).

Servant leadership typically contains a multitude of practices and elements that support the overall productivity of the organisation. Relevant examples in the context of this study are heightened work commitment and attitudes, creating and embedding a shared vision and strategy, developing simplified and standardised practices, ensuring continuous development and growth, and elevated distribution of power and information (van Dierendonck, 2011; Coetzer et al., 2017).

2.2.2 Challenges of servant leadership

All the effects of servant leadership might not be positive, and servant leadership might not be suitable for all leadership situations. First, all organisations and individuals might not see servant leadership as a legitimate way of leading, which can lead to leaders being forced to defend their style of leadership. (Liden et al., 2014a). Additionally, servant leadership might rouse conflicting emotions in followers, as some of them might still expect traditional leadership characterised by clear assignment of tasks and focus on quotas from their leaders. In this sense, some workers might not be used to having the freedom of self-direction and responsibility of making their own choices in their work. (Rytkönen, 2019) Similarly, the emergence of servant leadership has been found to be inhibited by factors such as organisational culture, an incorrect understanding of the philosophy of servant leadership, and fear of change (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011).

2.3 Servant leadership and knowledge sharing

This sub-chapter on the connection between servant leadership and knowledge sharing is structured so that different social theories, and their connection to servant leadership and knowledge sharing is explored. This chapter is commenced with a general discussion concerning the role of trust and justice in the relation. Whereafter, the discussion delves into the two primary theories—social exchange and social learning—that contemporary research has relied upon to explore this relationship. Social identity theory and social capital theory are discussed thereafter. This sub-chapter is concluded with an in-depth discussion concerning the previous application of the social exchange theory and the social learning theory.

2.3.1 Trust and justice

As previously stated, trust is an essential component of successful knowledge sharing (e.g. Wang & Noe, 2010; Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). Servant leadership and knowledge sharing have in previous studies been connected to each other by exploring the enhancing effect of servant leadership to individuals' perceptions of trust and justice (Kadarusman & Bunyamin, 2021). Wherein, servant leaders foster an environment of psychological trust and justice within their group (Van Dierendonck 2011), which in turn helps promote the occurrence of knowledge sharing behaviours. This relation has been proposed to stem from the fact that for knowledge sharing to occur, the individuals must trust that their knowledge sharing behaviour will not be taken advantage of by others, and that their contributions will be adequately appreciated by the organisation and leader (Song et al., 2015). In line with this, Akram et al. (2017) found that positive views regarding various types of justice among followers were connected with an increased tendency to engage in knowledge sharing behaviour. In a similar vein, trust and perceived justice are central parts of many behavioural theories that can be applied to explain the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing, I will now explore a variety of these theories.

2.3.2 Social exchange theory

We can start exploring the possible influence of servant leadership on follower knowledge sharing through the lens of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). The foundation of social exchange theory is in the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), which states that that valuable resources and support are exchanged in the relation between leader and follower in return for previously granted resources and assistance (Eva et al., 2019). Wherein, the followers and leaders tend to reciprocate the favours that their dyadic partner has granted them. This reciprocity then continues until a perceived balance between leader and follower has been reached. In the case of servant leadership, when the leader behaves according to the motive, mode, and mindset of servant leadership, where their actions are not directed by their own ambitions, but rather by their inner feelings of altruism and morals guided by an outward reorientation of their motives. The leader then spreads these behaviours to their followers through the process of reciprocation, wherein the followers return the beneficial treatment received from their leader in the form of extra-role contributions, such as knowledge sharing. (Tuan, 2016). Social exchange theory then further emphasises the importance of the

relationship between the leader and follower, as the followers must view the leaders and their actions positively to feel the need to reciprocate (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005).

Social exchange theory is one of the most widely utilised theories in servant leadership research (Ling et al., 2017). However, critics have argued that behavioural theories that emphasise the long-term growth and development of followers, instead of short-term exchanges, could be a better fit for studying servant leadership. This argument stems from the conceptualisation of servant leadership, wherein servant leadership has a lasting effect on the thoughts and behaviours of followers, sometimes even transforming them into servant leaders themselves. (Eva et al., 2019) Theories such as social learning or social identity theory have been utilised to this end in previous research and they will be discussed in the following subchapters.

2.3.3 Social learning theory

We can use social learning theory (Bandura, 1977a) to further try to shed light into how servant leadership can be used to foster knowledge sharing. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977a) assumes that followers tend to learn by emulating the behaviour of their leaders. Social learning theory holds that followers learn by observing and imitating the attitudes, principles, and conduct of appealing and credible models (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Eva et al., 2019). Followers view servant leaders as appealing because they place the interests of others before their own and share power and chances to grow with their followers (Hale & Fields, 2007). When followers perceive the leader as a servant, they want to emulate those behaviours to be more like them (Mayer et al., 2012). As a result, followers learn and implement servant practices into their own interactions with their environment. According to social learning theory, servant leaders then cultivate a culture of knowledge sharing among their followers, as they foster a heightened understanding of it as a tool to help develop their peers and benefit the group and organisation as a whole. (Tuan, 2016)

2.3.4 Self-efficacy theory

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977b) is another behavioural theory developed by Albert Bandura, which can be used to further understand the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Self-efficacy theory and social learning theory are quite similar theories in the sense that both theories emphasise the importance of observation and experience in learning and motivation. However, self-efficacy theory can be used as a complement to social learning theory, as it focuses on nuancedly different

factors in the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. An example of the subtle difference between these theories is the fact that while social learning theory focuses on the observation and modelling in learning behaviours, self-efficacy theory instead focuses on the motivation of individuals to engage in specific behaviours. Wherein, self-efficacy theory explicitly focuses on how the beliefs of individuals regarding their own ability to succeed with desired actions guides their willingness to engage in said behaviours. (Maddux, 1990)

The relationship between self-efficacy and knowledge sharing has previously been explored in quite some depth. Wherein, these studies have consistently showed a positive relationship between self-efficacy and knowledge sharing (Safdar et al., 2021). However, this relationship has not been explored in the context of servant leadership. Therefore, we can, at this stage, only hypothesise how servant leaders could be expected to enhance the efficacy beliefs of their followers. For example, servant leaders could be expected to enhance the efficacy beliefs of their followers by demonstrating confidence in the abilities of their followers. Alternatively, servant leaders could, in practice, enhance these beliefs by encouraging development and learning among followers. This study will seek to explore this relation further, as this relation, in this context, is still somewhat unclear.

2.3.5 Social identity theory

The core of social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is based on the assumption that individuals define themselves based on the groups they belong in, these group identifications function as a base for the creation of social identities that are separate from their personal identities (Rivkin et al., 2014). The social identities then guide the organisational perception and behaviour of individuals. In terms of servant leadership, social identity theory can be used to explain how servant leaders foster strong bonds with their followers by being authentic and follower-centric, which enhances the follower's identification with the group and organisation (Eva et al., 2019). As a positive identification with the group lies central in the social identity theory, the leader's ability to build a sense of group identification among followers is essential for the emergence of effective knowledge sharing.

The heightened identification with the group and organisation then leads to several beneficial results on the individual, team, and organisational level (Chen et al., 2015), as when the followers identify with the organisation and team, they can be expected to act in accordance with benefiting the group. Some examples of previously perceived

outcomes of increased identification with either leader (Yoshida et al., 2014), team (Chen et al., 2015), or organisation (Chughtai, 2016) that are relevant in the servant leadership and knowledge sharing context, can be summarised as increased trust, support, and belongingness (Haslam et al., 2009), together with increased pro social behaviours such as knowledge sharing (Eva et al., 2019). All of these effects can be seen as central for the occurrence of knowledge sharing within teams, and especially trust has commonly been posited as one of the most important factors for knowledge sharing. The relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing has not been previously explained through social identity theory and it can, therefore, be seen as a novel approach applied in this study.

2.3.6 Social capital theory

Social capital theory (e.g. Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986) has been previously utilised in a variety of different contexts to argue that the social networks of relationships function as valuable resources for the individuals that belong to that community. Further, social capital has previously been defined as “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit” (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 243). To further expand the concept of social capital, we can use Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) definition of the three dimensions of social capital. These dimensions are structural, relational, and cognitive. Wherein, the structural dimension encompasses the overarching network of bonds between individuals (e.g. network ties and their suitability), the relational dimension focuses on the personal connections that individuals have developed during continuous interaction (e.g. trust, norms, and identification). The cognitive dimension then constitutes the resources that facilitate a common understanding and shared meaning among individuals (e.g. language and vision).

We can also follow Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1988) distinction of how these dimensions are related to highlight which aspect of each dimension are relevant for specifically knowledge sharing. The structural dimension relates to knowledge sharing in the sense that it highlights the patterns of connections between individuals, that then influence factors, such as, the availability of knowledge. As the relational dimension focuses on the quality of the relation between individuals, factors such as trust, reciprocity, and shared norms can be highlighted as fundamental factors for successful knowledge sharing.

Finally, the cognitive dimension of social capital pertains to the shared codes, language, and vision of a group.

We can further attempt to discern the potential influence of servant leadership on the social capital of a team to seek to further our understanding of the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Firstly, servant leaders could be argued to shape the structural dimension of social capital by building network ties between followers. In theory, servant leaders could build these ties by facilitating inclusive and open communication channels between team members by highlighting the competencies and needs of individuals. Secondly, servant leaders could influence the relational dimension of social capital by fostering an environment of trust and reciprocity, this effect could be argued to be generated by the servant leaders acting as role models, which then further serves to establish norms of generosity and support in their teams. Lastly, servant leadership could affect the cognitive dimension of social capital by establishing a common purpose and goal within their team, which then serves to align the aspirations of followers with the vision of continuous development.

2.3.7 Previous application of social theories

In the research conducted by Tuan (2016), social exchange theory was used to explain how followers are motivated to engage in knowledge sharing mainly to reciprocate the beneficial treatment that they receive from their servant leaders. Social learning theory was used in the same study to explain how the followers engage in the other-serving behaviours, like knowledge sharing, because they model the servant behaviours of their leaders. As the study performed by Tuan (2016) focused on the mediating role of public service motivation, the author only discusses the variety of social theories that could be applied to the relation briefly, leaving multiple different theories unexplored.

Social learning theory was similarly utilised by Nauman et al. (2022) to explain how collaborative culture and knowledge sharing influence the relationship between servant leadership and project team performance. More specifically, Nauman et al. (2022), similarly to Tuan (2016), hypothesised that employees, directed by servant leaders, would both reciprocate and emulate the beneficial treatment and support, received from their leader, with excellent contributions such as knowledge sharing. However, Nauman et al.'s (2022) study was focused on how servant leadership influences project team performance, rather than the specific relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Wherein, Nauman et al. (2022) found, that the connection between

servant leadership and project team performance was mediated by specifically collaborative culture rather than by knowledge sharing. They, similarly to Tuan (2016), did not consider the variety of theories that could be applied to explore the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing.

Echoing the studies of Tuan (2016) and Nauman et al. (2022), Song et al. (2015) similarly utilised both social exchange theory and social learning theory to investigate the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Notably, while Nauman et al. (2022) found that servant leadership induced knowledge sharing did not mediate the relationship between servant leadership and project team performance, Song et al. (2015) instead found that a “knowledge-sharing climate mediated the relationship between servant leadership and team sales performance.” (Song et al., 2015, p. 1749). Highlighting the complexity of the connection between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Indicating that there is a considerable need to deepen our understanding of this relation through inspecting how different servant leadership behaviours are perceived and enacted within different organisational contexts.

All in all, it could be state that previous research has mainly focused on exploring the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing through the lenses of social learning and social exchange theory. While the applicability of other theories, such as the social capital theory, or the self-efficacy theory have been hypothesised earlier in this chapter, their value remains to be fully explored. Additionally, even though I have chosen to focus on the selection of theories present in this paper, as they have been identified as some of the most prominent theories applied in previous studies exploring servant leadership and knowledge sharing either independently or jointly. There still remain other theories, such as the social cognitive theory or the conservation of resources theory, that have been previously applied to explore either servant leadership or knowledge sharing independently, that could offer similar valuable insights into the relation.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is depicted in figure 1. The theoretical framework illustrates the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing, and the pathways through which servant leadership in theory could influence knowledge sharing among followers. The framework is structured so that servant leadership is displayed in the first column, followed by the social theories that have been used to explain the effect

of servant leadership presented in the second column. The theories that have previously been applied to the relation, such as social exchange or social learning theory are highlighted in green, while novel theories and pathways are colour coded for readability. The third column of the framework presents the mediators of the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing, with previously explored mediators again highlighted in green. The arrows connecting the social theories and mediators illustrate through which social theories the effects of servant leadership on knowledge sharing can primarily be explained. It is important to recognise that some minor relationships between theories and mediators might not be displayed, as to ease readability of the framework. The fourth column of the framework displays the outcome of servant leadership, namely increased knowledge sharing, alongside the intermediary outcome of a knowledge sharing culture, which function as intermediary steps in the causal pathway between servant leadership and knowledge sharing.

To further demonstrate how the theoretical framework can be interpreted, let us consider an illustrative example. The first step in connecting servant leadership to knowledge sharing involves inspecting through which social theories servant leadership has its effect. As an example, we can use social identity theory to explain how servant leadership fosters a stronger sense of identification with the group or team, which then leads to a heightened tendency to engage in internal knowledge sharing.

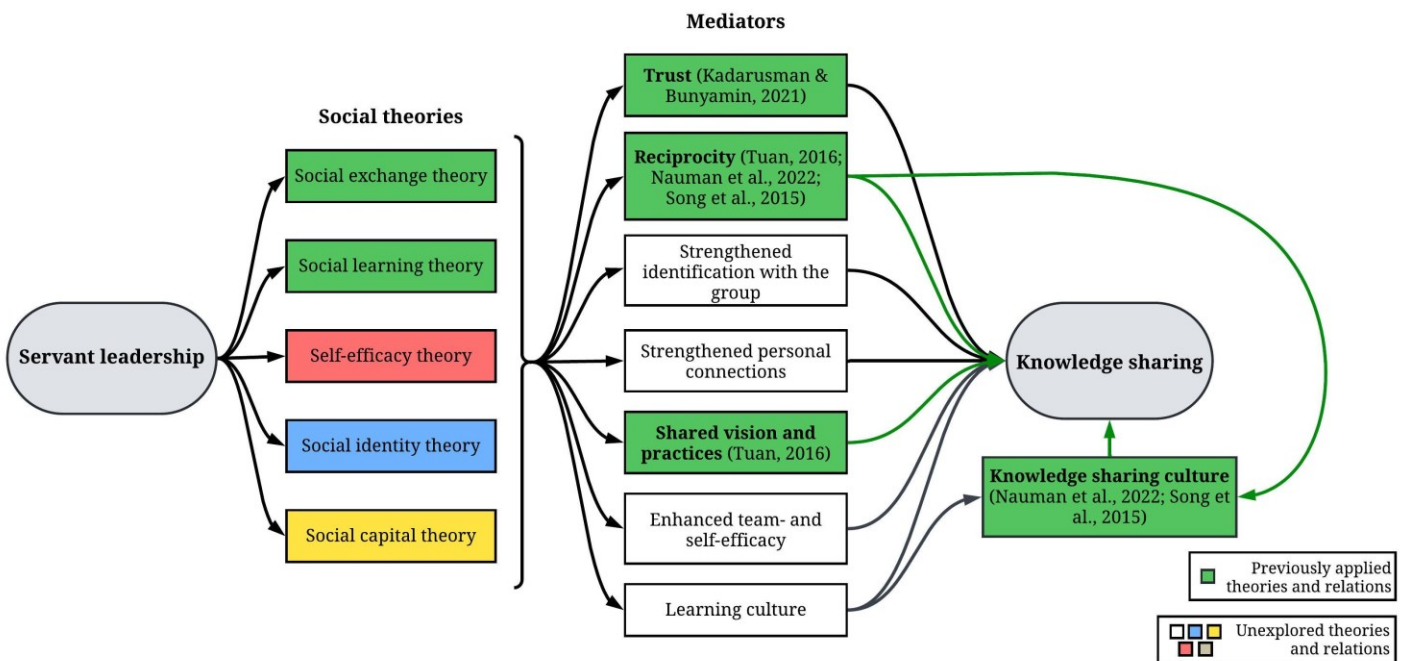


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

2.5 Summary of the literature review

The initial focus of this literature review centred on knowledge sharing, where knowledge sharing was highlighted as both important and difficult to foster. After this, the factors that impact knowledge sharing were discussed, here trust and reciprocity emerged as paramount for successful knowledge sharing. Additionally, the role of individual characteristics was discussed.

Shifting to the exploration of servant leadership, the second part of this chapter revolved around the fundamental characteristics of servant leadership, together with its definitions, challenges, and contributions. In the third part of this literature review I attempted to intertwine the concepts of servant leadership and knowledge sharing to reveal how servant leadership could be expected to interact with knowledge sharing. Here central themes such as trust and reciprocity remained as the most pivotal determinants of the relationship. However, other elements, such as, group identification and self- and team efficacy arose as novel and unexplored pathways in the relation.

The fourth part of this literature review consisted of the theoretical framework that has been developed for this study. The theoretical framework is designed to further our understanding of the interplay between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. This study will use the theoretical framework as a base to attempt to discern how the experiences and beliefs of followers in contemporary knowledge-intensive organisations reflect the descriptions of knowledge sharing and its determinants present in contemporary literature. Simultaneously, it seeks to explore these previously untested pathways for the interplay between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. This will partly be explored inductively as explained in the subsequent chapter on the methodology adopted for this research endeavour.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods of this study. This chapter commences with a discussion of the research philosophy and research strategy that together form the fundamental underpinning of this research. Subsequently, the practical aspects of the study are elaborated on, wherein, the data collection process and the interview guide are presented. This chapter then delves into the approach adopted for data analysis. Finally, a comprehensive discussion concerning the quality of this study is presented, encompassing a consideration of the ethical aspects and trustworthiness.

3.1 Research philosophy

Saunders et al. (2023) define research philosophy as the researchers own understanding of what constitutes knowledge and how the researcher can pursue the creation of knowledge. They similarly portray the research philosophy as the researchers own view of the surrounding world, which is central for deciding the methods and strategy for conducting research. In line with these statements, it is then important for the researcher to assess and understand the underlying philosophical assumptions of their research. (Saunders et al., 2023) This subchapter on the research philosophy of my research, will attempt to answer these questions and display the thought process and reasoning behind the decisions that I have made in regard to my research endeavour.

The discussion around the philosophy of research contains, according to Bell et al. (2019), both ontological and epistemological considerations. The ontological considerations are centred around the contrasting stances of objectivism and constructionism. Wherein, objectivism posits the view in which social phenomena are objective structures which exist separately from social actors. According to this line of thinking, it is then possible to observe social structures and phenomena, such as organisations or cultures objectively and independently from the individuals that they contain. Constructionism, on the other hand, challenges this assumption of objectivity, and instead posits social phenomena as dependent of the individuals that make up them. (Bell et al., 2019)

This study adopts the constructionism position to ontology, as the aim of this study is to explore the individual experiences of followers regarding the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Wherein, uncovering the subjective experiences and beliefs of individuals is the focal point of this study. As the constructionism approach

focuses on how individuals both create and interpret social phenomena, it is important for a researcher who adopts this position to utilise empathy to attempt to put themselves in the position of interview subjects to further their understanding of the world that they reside in (Bell et al., 2019).

After having established the ontology of this research, it is logical to move on to discuss epistemology. Epistemology portrays the researchers understanding of how knowledge is created. Within the domain of business research, three prominent epistemological perspectives prevail, namely positivism, realism, and interpretivism. Epistemology can be argued to be fundamentally underpinned by ontology, wherein, the ontological position directly influences the approach to epistemology. In the case of this study, my adoption of the ontological position of constructionism suggests that the adoption of an interpretivist position is fitting. (Bell et al., 2019)

As the interpretivist position depicts reality as constituted by the actions and interpretations of individuals that is then best understood directly through the experiences and beliefs of said individuals (Bell et al., 2019). Its adoption for this research endeavour could be seen as the most fitting as the focus of my research lies in understanding the subjective experiences and beliefs of interview subjects. This assumption is further strengthened by the fact that even though previous research within the fields of leadership and knowledge sharing have been able to quantify their results, a degree of intricacy and nuance could be argued to have been lost when generalising findings. Further, Saunders et al. (2023) also emphasise the fit of the interpretivist position to studying organisations and leadership.

The challenge with an interpretivist position is, according to Saunders et al. (2023), the fact that the researcher must adopt a sympathetic approach, wherein, the researcher must utilise empathy and insightfulness towards the interview subjects frame of thought and environment, in order to generate valuable insights through understanding them. In the case of this study, this means that the data collected through the interviews must be interpreted with the context and thought processes of interview subjects in mind. Critics of interpretivism often cite the lack of generalisability of its findings as a weakness. However, interpretivists may argue that generalisability is not the primary goal of research of this nature (Saunders et al., 2023). Instead, they seek to understand the specific context of a particular situation or problem. Interpretivism can, however, be used to create generalisable results for a specific context or environment (Bell et al., 2019). As the primary aim of this research is to further our understanding of the

experiences and beliefs of followers in regard to the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing, I see interpretivism as fitting.

3.2 Research strategy

The research strategy is another important are of consideration for any research. The philosophical assumptions of the research endeavour, which were presented in the previous subchapter, lie as the underpinnings of the research strategy presented here. Wherein, the research strategy further describes the relation between theory and empiricism employed in this study. (Bell et al., 2019)

There are two general approaches to generating new knowledge in contemporary research, these are quantitative and qualitative. These strategies differ both in terms of theoretical underpinnings and in terms of the relation between theory and practice. In quantitative research strategies the focus characteristically lies on numerically testing the relationship between different variables, which often involves a deductive approach to examining how theory and research are interrelated. On the other hand, qualitative research, which is often contrasted against quantitative research, is a research strategy that instead focuses on collecting words and meanings, rather than numbers, when generating knowledge. While quantitative strategies are traditionally coupled with the positivist position, qualitative strategies usually reject the existence of natural scientific models and explanations, instead focusing on the subjective interpretations of humans as the tool for creating knowledge. While this description of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research strategies might be somewhat superficial, wherein, there is considerable depth to the contemporary discourse concerning the strengths, weaknesses, and applicability of both approaches. It is outside the breadth of this study to further delve into the related fundamental epistemological and ontological questions or to explore the similarities and differences between these research strategies. (Bell et al., 2019)

It might already be apparent to the reader, based on this short description of these contrasting research strategies, which strategy could be seen as more fitting for this research. Indeed, in line with the above description, I have chosen to adopt a qualitative research strategy for this study, as the inherent subjectivity and nuanced nature of the experiences and beliefs of followers, which quantitative methods would struggle to capture accurately, make a qualitative strategy more suitable for this study. In this sense, as the foundation of qualitative approaches aligns with the focus and philosophy of this

research, wherein, both are underpinned by the assumption that the subjective experiences of individuals be used to interpret reality, adopting a qualitative strategy has been deemed appropriate.

The usefulness of utilising qualitative methods is further emphasised by the fact that most previous research within the fields of leadership and knowledge sharing have been conducted with quantitative strategies, leaving much room for the wide array of qualitative methods to be utilised for the creation of novel insights within these complex phenomena. Wherein, qualitative approaches can, for example, provide a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences, motivations, and nuances that influence leadership and knowledge sharing dynamics. (Parry et al., 2014)

The final consideration that must be made when constructing a research strategy is the fundamental approach to the relation between theory and research. There are three common logics of inquiry that the researcher can utilise in their study, these are deduction, induction, and abduction (Saunders et al., 2023). The decision on which process should be adopted is directed by the nature of the subject or phenomena than is being studied. For example, in fields where there is already large amounts of established theories and literature, it is common to adopt a deductive approach, where the study is conducted to test a pre-existing theory through hypotheses that are either accepted or rejected based on the data and findings of the study. The deductive approach is often contrasted against the inductive approach, wherein, the inductive approach instead takes the inverse approach and uses the data for the creation of new theories. (Saunders et al., 2023) However, Bell et al. (2019) emphasise the fact that the borders between these approaches can often be ambiguous, and there is some clear overlap between them. Wherein, deductive studies often contain inductive elements and vice versa.

This study will incorporate both inductive and deductive elements to qualitatively examine, with a semi-structured interview approach the subjective experiences of followers regarding the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. This study is deductive in the sense that it builds on theories in previous research, and inductive in the sense that it is open to new findings. More specifically, the deductive elements of this study are concerned with, uncovering how the informants of this study perceive that the previously described (e.g. Eva et al., 2019; van Dierendonck, 2011) servant leadership characteristics are manifested in the behaviours of their leaders. On the other hand, the inductive elements of the study are concerned with understanding, first, how the interview subjects describe what kind and how much knowledge sharing

they engage in during their daily work-related activities, and second, how leadership and other factors influence their engagement in knowledge sharing.

Table 1: The philosophical framework of this study

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	
Ontology	Reality is socially constructed
Epistemology	Explorative
Methodology	Qualitative and quantitative
Aim of the study	To understand
Logic of inquiry	Deductive and inductive

Source: Bell et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2023

3.3 Data collection

Gioia et al. (2012) emphasise the fundamental importance of generating rich and contextual data in qualitative research endeavours. This belief is grounded in the view that such data is essential for gaining a deep understanding of phenomena within their natural context, which then facilitates the further development of nuanced and meaningful insights (Gioia et al., 2012). I will now describe the data collection process that I have utilised to this end.

3.3.1 Sampling

To acquire rich and contextually embedded data, I employed a combination of different non-probability sampling methods, which were predominantly purposive in nature. Wherein, a combination of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling were used to generate the sample of this study. In practice, the sample generation process started with defining organisations of interest. Where, I sought out to find organisations that exhibited challenges related to knowledge sharing and a clear interest in improving their knowledge sharing practices. This search was guided by the recommendations of prior knowledge sharing research, wherein, environments where the perceived value of the individual employees is closely tied to the knowledge that they possess tend to exhibit a reduced inclination to engage in knowledge sharing (e.g. Wang & Noe, 2010). For instance, according to previous research, knowledge sharing might be hindered in occupations such as consultancy or other professional services, as knowledge sharing is often challenging to promote in these contexts (e.g. Weiss, 1999).

The first organisation that was included in this sample was selected through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. Where, my affiliation with this organisation and its reported challenges with knowledge sharing strengthened its suitability as a starting point for this study. Subsequently, snowball sampling was utilised to broaden out the sample by identifying additional organisations of interest based on the suggestions and networks of interviewees from the first organisation. This method was used together with purposive sampling to find the remaining two organisations included in the sample of this study. Wherein, I sought out to identify organisations and teams with distinct characteristics, contexts, and experiences from the first organisation, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample. A more comprehensive presentation of the interview subjects and organisations can be found in table 3.

While there are some potential limitations associated with utilising a sampling method of this nature, these sampling strategies ultimately proved themselves as sufficient and fitting to the aim of this study. As the organisations displayed varying characteristics in terms of both the effectivity of knowledge sharing within organisations and in the behaviours, roles, and interactions of leaders. This approach also aligns with this study's focus on generating context-specific insights rather than generalisable inferences. Finally, the fit of these nonprobability sampling methods for this study is further strengthened by the fact that they are useful tools for researchers challenged by time constraints and limited resources. (Etikan et al., 2016)

Table 2: Interview subjects and organisations

Int.	Industry	Tenure	Role	Education	Team size	Team tenure
1	Consultancy	20 yrs	Consultant	Master's	2-4	36 months
2	Consultancy	10 yrs	Consultant	Master's	2-3	24 months
3	Consultancy	33 yrs	Consultant	Master's	2-3	12 months
4	Cybersecurity	1,5 yrs	Analyst	Graduate	15-50	18 months
5	Cybersecurity	5 yrs	Technical specialist	Master's	8	18 months
6	Cybersecurity	5 yrs	Specialist	Master's	3	24 months
7	Cybersecurity	6 yrs	Senior security analyst	Graduate	15-20	72 months
8	Construction	12 yrs	Solutions architect	Graduate	7-10	6-9 months
9	Construction	20 yrs	Development director	Master's	10	6 months

3.3.2 Interviewing

The interviews in this study were conducted with a non-standardised and semi-structured approach, an interview guide was used in the interviews to generate a general structure for the interviews to ease systematic comparison, and to ensure that the focus of the interviews remained within the subject area. The non-standardised approach was also utilised as it allows for a natural flow of conversation during the interviews so that the emergence of individual insights could be encouraged. The flexible interview model was also used as it encourages the spontaneous emergence of new ideas and insights during the interviews and facilitates the inclusion of follow up questions that can be used for deeper exploration of specific areas of interest based on the responses of participants. The suitability of the semi-structured design is also further emphasised by the fact that it has been recommended as a tool for investigating complex and nuanced phenomena, such as knowledge sharing and leadership. (Bell et al., 2019)

The interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams between January 13, 2023, and March 4, 2023. The interviews were primarily conducted in Finnish and were recorded. The interviews started with a brief introductory section concerning the background of informants and their environment to establish a comprehensive context of the interviews. The average length of the interviews was approximately one hour, providing a sufficient timeframe for in-depth discussions and participants insights.

3.3.3 Interview guide

The interview guide employed in this study comprised of four distinct sections, each addressing a specific aspect of the research questions. It is noteworthy to mention that the informants were not told that the study concerned specifically servant leadership. This was done to prevent bias in their responses concerning the role of their leader. The complete interview guide is provided in Appendix 1 of this study.

The first section (questions 9-15) concerned the followers' perceptions of their leaders. In practice, the interview subjects were asked to rate various aspects of their leader's behaviour and character on a 10-point Likert scale, so that the extent of how the interviewees believed that servant leadership principles were manifested in the behaviour of their leaders could be interpreted. These questions were structured based on the 7-item composite of servant leadership (SL-7), developed by Liden et al. (2015). The scale ranged from 1 = "*strongly disagree*" to 10 = "*strongly agree*". While these numerical ratings provided by the interview subjects functioned as a valuable base to

help classify the informants, the qualitative follow up questions, such as “What made you give this number?” or “What would be needed for a higher grade?” asked during the collection of the numerical data, functioned as the primary tool for generating a deeper understating of the beliefs and thought processes of participants. The collection of further qualitative data concerning the role of servant leadership is explained below.

The second section of the interview guide (questions 16-20) was focused on inspecting how the interviewees viewed their own knowledge sharing behaviour. These questions were adapted from previous knowledge sharing studies (De Ridder & van den Hooff, 2004), so that they instead focused on internal knowledge sharing. The participants were asked to rate various aspects of their own knowledge sharing behaviour, similarly to the first section, on a 10-point Likert type scale with the same scaling structure. The focus was again on interpreting, with qualitative follow up questions, why the followers gave their ratings, rather than on the ratings themselves.

The numerical responses of the interview subjects, collected in the first and second sections of the interview guide, were primarily used to confirm the qualitative elements of the study and to categorise and code the participants for further analysis. This process is explained further in section *3.4.5 Utilisation of the numerical elements of the study*.

The third section (questions 21-27) of the interview guide contained questions that related to the knowledge sharing practices in the environment of participants. The questions were designed to encourage the participants to share information about the frequency, methods, and barriers of knowledge sharing in their environment. This section of questions sought to understand the prevailing knowledge sharing culture within the organisation and team, and to then further identify potential obstacles to effective knowledge transfer that might not be directly related to leadership. While all of the information collected in this part of the interview guide might not have been directly related to specifically leadership, it served to provide valuable insights concerning the context and background of the knowledge sharing in the environment of the informants. Examples of questions that were included in part three are No. 24: “Who primarily initiates knowledge sharing in your team?” and No. 25: “What motivates you to share knowledge?”.

The fourth part (questions 28-33) of the interview guide could be seen as the most important part of the study, as it contained questions aimed at linking servant leadership and knowledge sharing together. In practice, participants were enticed to share their

perceptions of the relation between their leader's behaviour and knowledge sharing. Here, it is important to note that the questions concerning the role of the leaders in knowledge sharing were intentionally more inductive, wherein, the informants were not asked about any specific aspects of servant leadership as it has been defined and measured in the literature. They were instead asked to describe how they felt that leadership related to knowledge sharing, so that I could later analyse and potentially connect their responses to servant leadership.

Some examples of questions that were included in this part were No. 27: "In your opinion, what role does your leader play in influencing knowledge sharing within your team" and No. 30: "Thinking further about the challenges with knowledge sharing you mentioned earlier, are there specific challenges that you feel are difficult for leaders to address when it comes to fostering knowledge sharing?". A last point of interest in the interview guide was the final question (No. 35). At the end of the interviews, I presented the leader assessment questions and ratings from the first part of the interviews to the participants and asked them if they felt like any of the described characteristics were related to knowledge sharing. This element allowed informants to individually assess how each component of servant leadership correlates with knowledge sharing, enabling the later identification of the distinct relationship between each aspect of servant leadership and knowledge sharing.

3.4 Data analysis

In this subchapter, I will describe the approach that was used for the analysis of the interview data. The first step in the data analysis process employed in this study was transcribing the interviews. This was done by utilising the automated transcribing function in Microsoft Teams. Following each interview, I listened to the recordings and diligently reviewed the automatically generated transcripts and corrected any erroneous wordings and clarified their overall coherence and clarity. I conducted this revision process directly after the interviews so that the interviews were still freshly in my memory to maintain fidelity to the statements made by the informants. After all the interviews had been completed, I listened to all the recordings and read through the transcripts to prepare for the main part of the analysis.

For the main analysis of the data collected in this study, I have utilised the Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2012). The Gioia methodology could be characterised as a specialised form of a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as it shares the

fundamental goal of identifying themes from the data. However, the Gioia methodology extends upon the thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) by systematically generating a visual data structure, which adds a layer of rigour to the data analysis process, as it transparently maps out the transformation from raw data to conceptual themes and dimensions. In practice, the Gioia methodology entails splitting up the data analysis process into four different steps. These steps are 1. First-order analysis, 2. Second-order analysis, 3. Development of aggregate dimensions, and 4. Constructing of data structure. (Gioia et al., 2012) I will now discuss how each of these steps was performed in this study, the data structure generated as a result of this process is presented at the end of this subchapter.

3.4.1 First-order analysis

The first-order analysis entails, according to Gioia et al. (2012) identifying informant terms, codes, and categories from the data. The primary objective with this step is to break down the raw data into discrete parts, which can then, in later steps, be examined and categorised. In this step, it is, according to Gioia et al. (2012), central to remain faithful to the terms and concepts that the informants themselves use, as to ensure the integrity and credibility of the qualitative analysis, as the analysis is built on what informants actually said, rather than the researcher's interpretation or paraphrasing.

In practice, this process was enacted by listening to the recordings and reading the transcripts simultaneously as to gain a deep understanding of their content and context. During this reviewing process I highlighted sentences or phrases that seemed to be significant to the research questions and aim of this study. These significant statements were then assigned a code that summarised the essence statements. For example, the statements "I have this feeling that in work, and generally in life, when you share something, you also receive something back." and "I think that my knowledge sharing is primarily motivated by the expectation that others will later share their knowledge with me". Were assigned the code "When I share knowledge, I receive it back from others". When assigning codes, each new code was compared to the previous array of codes, so that overlaps, contradictions, or the need for new codes could be amended. During this process, the existing pool of codes was also continuously refined so that similar codes were merged into more comprehensive categories, too broad codes were split up into more specific codes, and redundant or irrelevant codes were scrapped. After all of the transcripts had been coded, related codes were organised into categories that reflected the broader concepts or ideas expressed by informants. These categories then make up

the “first-order concepts” in the Gioia methodology. The first order concepts that I developed for this study are displayed in the first column of the data structure (Figure 2).

3.4.2 Second-order analysis

The primary objective of the second-order analysis is, according to Gioia et al. (2012), to synthesise and elevate the first-order codes into fewer and more abstract themes that reveal deeper insights into the data and begin to form a theoretical framework. In practice, the second-order analysis started with grouping the first-order concepts into themes, wherein, I attempted to identify clusters of first-order concepts that related to a common underlying concept or idea. This grouping involved looking for patterns, similarities, and connections among the concepts. After related first-order concepts had been identified, they were assigned a descriptive title that reflected the conceptual essence of the grouped concepts. I can use the previously described concept “When I share knowledge, I receive it back from others” to offer a practical example of how this process was performed. The concepts “When I share knowledge, I receive it back from others” was grouped with the concept “If I help someone with a problem, they will help me in the future” to form the second-order theme reciprocity. A similar approach was used for identifying second-order themes for the barriers of knowledge sharing and the different leadership behaviours. The second-order themes developed in this study are presented in the second column of the data structure.

3.4.3 Development of aggregate dimensions

The goal with the development of aggregate dimensions is to distil the second-order themes into overarching constructs that capture the essence of the findings of the research and demonstrate how various different concepts are interconnected under a unified data structure. This development of aggregate dimensions is essential for connecting the empirical data with the theoretical contributions of the research. (Gioia et al., 2012)

In this research, I begun this development of aggregate dimensions by inspecting the second-order themes. The goal with this initial inspection was to evaluate how these themes were related to each other. In practice, I looked for patterns and commonalities that linked the different themes. Here, I used the research questions and the aim of the study as a base for identifying the potential groups that the second-order themes could be grouped into. Based on this exploration, I identified the drivers and barriers to

knowledge sharing, together with the different roles of their leaders that informants repeatedly referenced during the interviews as potential aggregate dimensions for the data structure of this study. These potential aggregate dimensions were then inspected in light of the data and previous research on knowledge sharing and servant leadership to assess their suitability. As the dimensions seemed to reflect the data and previous literature rather well, they were then deemed as appropriate for this study.

3.4.4 Development of data structure

The data structure of this study was developed based on the description of the construction of each of its individual part. Wherein, the developed data structure intends to visualise how the first-order concepts feed into the second-order themes, which then further make up the aggregate dimensions of this study. The complete data structure is displayed in figure 2.



Figure 2: Data structure

Source: Gioia et al., 2012

3.4.5 Utilisation of the numerical elements of the study

This study builds upon the approach used by Nordbäck et al. (2024) for the utilisation of the numerical elements of this study. The numerical responses were used to generate an initial understanding of the level of servant leadership and knowledge sharing experienced by informant. The analysis of the numerical elements of this study indicated the presence of an initial relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing, wherein, interviewees who perceived their leaders as more servant also

exhibited generally higher ratings for their own knowledge sharing. However, the outliers in the limited sample of this study suggest that this perceived connection might not always be the case. The interviewees ratings of servant leadership and knowledge sharing are displayed in figure 3. The qualitative analysis conducted in this study offers a deeper understanding of this complex relationship.

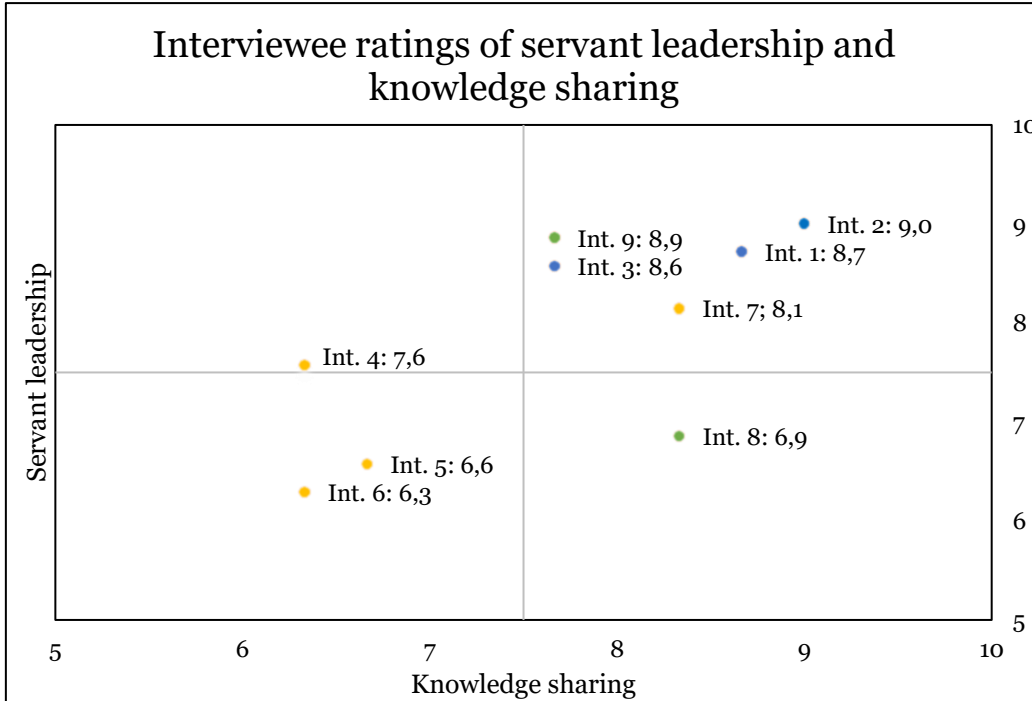


Figure 3: Interviewee ratings of servant leadership and knowledge sharing

3.5 Quality assessment

A common critique of qualitative research is that the generalisability of the findings is limited. However, researchers conducting qualitative research often argue that generalisability is not the aim of qualitative research, but rather, understanding phenomena in specific contexts. (Bell et al., 2019) As this study adopts a qualitative approach, wherein, understanding the lived experiences and beliefs of informants in the context of this study lies in the focus, it is important to keep in mind, when assessing the quality of this research, that the measures of reliability and validity, which are the most common measures for quality in contemporary business research, have been developed for quantitative research, where the generalisability of findings is paramount. In this context validity is closely linked to the notion of measurement, which is not a characteristic of qualitative research (Bell et al, 2019). Additionally, my interpretivist philosophical position further disqualifies the direct use of reliability and validity, as these concepts more accurately align with a realist or positivist perspective. (Bell et al., 2019) In accordance with the recommendation of Bell et al. (2019), I instead adopt the

alternative evaluative criteria originally developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for specifically qualitative research to assess the quality of this research endeavour. These alternative criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bell et al., 2019, p. 363). I will now discuss each of these criteria in the context of this study.

A careful inspection of the material of this study in regard to previous theory has been applied to ensure the credibility of this study. The credibility of this study has also been ensured by recording and transcribing the interviews. The internal validity of this study has further been strengthened by offering the informants ample opportunity to freely voice their beliefs and experiences. Wherein, emergent deviant opinions were actively considered, and the interviewees were encouraged to expand upon them during the interviews. Further, informants were also asked follow-up questions to ensure that they had been correctly understood. As this study attempted to inspect the subjective beliefs and experiences of followers regarding the relationship between (servant) leadership and knowledge sharing, the term “servant leadership” was actively avoided to not influence the responses of followers and allow them the freedom to describe leadership as they saw it themselves, so that the emergent results could later be connected to specifically servant leadership by the researcher.

To enhance the transferability of findings, participants were drawn from diverse teams across various organisations. However, the relatively modest sample size might constrain the breadth of insights provided, limiting the study's overall transferability. Nevertheless, this might not present a significant constraint for this study, as the generation of considerable depth and detail, in the specific context of this study, is of characteristic interest for qualitative research. We can, however, make an argument for the transferability of the findings of this study, as a detailed description of the context of this study has been provided, which readers can then use to assess the transferability of the findings of this study to various contexts on their own. (Bell et al., 2019)

In striving for a high degree of dependability, I have provided a transparent and thorough description of this research process and the decisions made in its various phases. This methodology chapter is the main source for this dependability as all of the different stages of this research, such as, sampling, data collection, and data analysis have been described in great detail.

Lastly, to ensure the confirmability and objectivity of this research, I strived to stay neutral during the interviews, wherein, I sought to not let my attitudes and personal

biases impact the responses of informants. Additionally, to enhance the confirmability of the findings of this study, I have refrained from asking any leading questions during the interviews, therefore, reducing the risk of the questions affecting the informants' responses. In this sense, the informants were free to answer the questions in any way that they saw as appropriate. It is, however, important to recognise the potential existence of biases in the confirmability of the findings of this study, as the relational proximity between some of the interviewees and the researcher might influence their responses.

3.5.1 Ethical considerations

Saunders et al. (2023, p. 239) define research ethics as: "...the standards of behaviour that guide your conduct in relation to the rights of those who are subject of your work, or are affected by it". As the informants of this study were asked to discuss relatively sensitive facets of their work, such as their perceptions of their leader, or the quality of their work environment, it was important to carry out this research in a respectable manner. Accordingly, it was central to acknowledge that the informants might have been enticed to withhold some information or discuss some topics in a more favourable manner for their leader or group if they did not experience the interviews situations as safe and feared that others would be able to discern that they were the source of some information. To this end, measures were taken to ensure that the collected information would not be possible to connect to certain individuals. For example, pseudonyms were used to identify individual informants both in the storage and presentation of the results of the interviews. Additionally, only limited background questions (role, education, work experience, team tenure, and team size) were asked of the interviewees. Additionally, the voluntary nature of the participation in this study was emphasised both when recruiting informants and during the interviewing itself. Informants were also provided with the opportunity to pause the recordings during the interviews if they wished to exclude parts of their statements from the study.

All the data collected during this study was handled according to both GDPR and Hanken's instructions. The collected data has been stored securely in a cloud service provided by Hanken, accessible only to the author. All the data will be erased no later than twelve months after the thesis has been graded and approved. The consent for recording the interviews was obtained at the start of each interview. Additionally, to ensure informant anonymity, some of the job titles have been modified to describe broader areas of work and assignments.

4 RESULTS

In this chapter, I will present and analyse the results of the nine semi-structured interviews conducted as a part of this research. This analysis is guided, like this thesis as a whole, by the core aim and research questions of this study, namely, furthering our understanding of the perception of followers regarding the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Specifically, I will inspect: 1) *“How do followers in contemporary organisations perceive the relationship between leadership and their willingness to share knowledge?”* 1.a) *“What specific aspects of servant leadership philosophy do followers identify as encouraging knowledge sharing?”* 1.b) *“What barriers to knowledge sharing do followers view as resistant to the influence of leadership, including servant leadership?”*

This results section is structured so that I will begin by delving into the informants’ perceptions of the character and behaviour of their leaders. After this initial exploration of the leadership related experiences and context of the followers, I will move on to discuss the drivers and barriers to knowledge sharing that emerged in the interviews. This discussion is primarily set on exploring the leadership related barriers and promoters of knowledge sharing. However, attention is also given to factors tangential to leadership that may still contribute to understanding the overall context of knowledge sharing dynamics.

In the fifth part of this results section, I will revisit the perceived connection between leadership and knowledge sharing, wherein, I will uncover how the informants in this study felt that leadership and knowledge sharing are related. This subchapter is structured so that the leadership behaviours described by the informants are divided up into the different roles that they saw that their leaders had in their knowledge sharing.

The last part of this results section entails connecting the different roles of leadership with the various drivers and barriers of knowledge sharing. Here, I will also discuss the different knowledge sharing barriers that arose as resistant to the influence of leadership. The theoretical model that displays this relationship is also presented here.

4.1 Informants’ perceptions of their leaders’

The informants in this study offered rather surprising views on the role of the leader and leadership as a whole. Most informants felt that their work was largely self-directed, wherein, their leader mainly functioned as support for their completion of their work:

“Even though we interact with our leader on a daily basis and the interactions are mainly work related, I wouldn’t really say that they try to direct us that much, they mainly focus on their own work and being there for us if we need them.” Informant 4

As suggested by informant 4, their leader had their own work tasks that were not necessarily related to leading their followers. Suggesting that the leaders might only be able to offer limited time to leading their followers. Therefore, implying that contemporary leaders might face challenges related to their dual responsibilities of both team direction and management, together with individual tasks and projects unrelated to their leadership duties. Such challenges could, for example, be conflicting interests, as leaders find themselves torn between catering to the needs of their followers and their individual duties.

Echoing the self-directed nature of the work environments of informants and the disconnect between the capabilities of leaders and followers, some interviewees even felt like their leader did not make any significant impact on their ability to complete their work tasks:

“I don’t feel like they (talking about their administrative manager) really even lead me, they mainly only take care of the mandatory administrative tasks and if I would need help with something work related, I wouldn’t get that help from them.” Informant 8

As indicated by informant 8, there existed a significant disconnection between the work of informants and the capabilities of their respective leaders. This disjunction seemed to prompt leaders to adopt a hands-off approach, recognising that their expertise lay in areas distinct from those of their team members. Consequently, team members were entrusted with a considerable degree of autonomy, as they possessed the specialised knowledge and skills required to execute their tasks effectively. This sentiment resonated with others, indicating a broader trend within the observed team dynamics. Informant 6’s description functions as a relatively extreme example of how traditional leadership structures might be diluted or non-existent in some contemporary teams:

“We don’t really even have an official team lead, in practice our most senior team member kind of acts as the point of contact between our team and upper levels, but they don’t really direct others.” Informant 6

As indicated by informant 6, their team operated without a formal designated leader. Instead, the leadership role had fallen upon their most senior team member, who primarily served as a point of contact between the team and upper management without significantly leading others. The decentralised approach to leadership in place in informant 6’s team further sheds light on the evolving nature of leadership in contemporary organisations, wherein, fluidity and distributed responsibility are

increasingly valued over rigid hierarchical structures. However, it is important to note that informant 6 expressed significant reservations regarding the effectivity of this approach to leadership, as they felt that their team struggled with significant challenges related to both team cohesion and knowledge sharing, caused by the absence of a designated leader. Indicating that there exists a balance to be reached between self-direction and leadership to foster effective teamwork and knowledge sharing.

The informant's frequency of interaction with their leaders also varied greatly between interview subjects, as some interviewees stated that they were in contact with their leaders multiple times each day, while others reported only weekly or even monthly meetings as the average frequency of interaction. This had some quite clear implications for the relations that the informants had with their leader, as informants repeatedly attributed the frequency of contact with their leader as one of the key determinants of the quality of their relationship.

“If your leader is not involved in your work and doesn't ask how you are doing, they can't really be there for you when you need them.” Informant 8

This quotation encapsulates the sentiment held by many informants that consistent interaction and engagement with their leaders was essential for fostering a supportive and effective working relationship. Moreover, informants described how this regular interaction with their leaders was essential not only for facilitating a smoother workflow but also promoted a sense of trust, transparency, and mutual understanding. Indicating that the frequency of contact was one of the key determinants in shaping the overall quality and effectiveness of the leader-follower relationship.

4.2 Drivers of knowledge sharing

In this study, I inspected the drivers of knowledge sharing from the perspectives of the interview subjects. The first aspect of consideration was where the underlying motivation to share knowledge arose from, this aspect was inspected directly with question number 22 (interview guide; Appendix 1). The second area of consideration were the methods and procedures that informants felt as drivers of knowledge sharing. This aspect of knowledge sharing was interpreted by collectively inspecting the questions related to the knowledge sharing in the environments of informants (questions 21-27, interview guide; Appendix 1). This analysis revealed that the motivation to share knowledge primarily arose from three different sources according to informants, I will now discuss each of these areas independently.

4.2.1 Common good

Engaging in knowledge sharing for the sake of the common good of the team and organisation arose as a central motivator for the informants to engage in knowledge sharing. Practically all informants stated that their knowledge sharing was in some form motivated by the success of the organisation. In this sense, their views aligned with the social identity theory, highlighted in the theory section, which predicts that the individuals' perceptions of their own success are tightly connected to the success of the organisations and groups that they belong to.

“I would say that my primary motivation for sharing knowledge is the common good of the organisation, especially in a smaller organisation, there is the feeling that the success of everyone is also everyone's own success.” Informant 1

Informant 1 encapsulates this sentiment by emphasising the interconnectedness of individual and organisational success, particularly in smaller organisations, where the impact of each individual contribution was more tangible.

“When we were able to slowly return to the office after the corona pandemic, I think that our leader kind of acted as this yhdistävä tekijä (sic; unifying factor) sort of bringing us all together and getting us to know and work with each other again.” Informant 7

Regarding the role of the leader, informant 7 highlighted how their leader had unified their team and their goals after they had been working remotely during the corona pandemic. Moreover, both statements underscore the importance of aligning individual goals with those of the organisation as an important element on the path to successfully utilising the benefits of knowledge sharing. In the context of this study, servant leadership emerged as a promising approach for aligning these individual aspirations with those of the organisation, as interviewees characterised their leaders' emphasis on community building and shared responsibility as fundamental ways in which their leaders could encourage knowledge sharing among followers.

4.2.2 Reciprocity

Similarly to the concern for the common good of the group, the reciprocity expectations emerged as a central element behind the informants' motivation to share knowledge.

“I have this belief both in my work and generally in life that if you share knowledge, then you also receive it back. Even if you think selfishly, you gain benefits in the form of others sharing knowledge back to you.” Informant 8

While only two of the informants explicitly stated that their knowledge sharing was motivated by reciprocity, most of the informants' descriptions of their motivation to share knowledge were related to reciprocity. Wherein, other motivations, such as the

continuous development of the team, hinged on the reciprocal expectation that other would contribute to the knowledge that informants shared. Indicating a deep-seated understanding that by contributing one's own knowledge to the collective pool, there exists an implicit expectation to receive knowledge in return. This reciprocal exchange could then be argued to form the base for collaborative endeavours, which foster a symbiotic relationship among individual employees in an organisation.

Further, it could be stated that interviewees seemed to recognise that by sharing their expertise and insights with their peers, they not only contributed to the collective knowledge, but also positioned themselves to benefit from the knowledge of other in the future. Suggesting that the reciprocal flow of knowledge was not only motivated by altruism, but also by a pragmatic understanding among individuals that their own learning and growth were empowered by actively sharing and exchanging knowledge with others.

4.2.3 Continuous and collective learning

Similarly to reciprocity, continuous and collective learning was another theme that arose as a pivotal element in the motivation to share knowledge among informants. The concern for collective learning reflects the informants care for the shared output of the whole organisation and team. Further emphasising how the common good can encourage employees to engage in extra role behaviours. This sentiment also reflects the informants' feelings of shared accountability for the performance of the team, indicating that their own learning and experiences are not only valued for their individual benefits, but also for the good of the group.

“The quality of our collective work is important to me; in this sense it is important to share the knowledge. If I for example learn about some new cybersecurity threat, I need to share it so that others know to look out for it in the future.” Informant 5

Moreover, collective learning also functions as a strategy for mitigating risks and addressing challenges within the organisation. As exemplified by the sentiment expressed by informant 5, the disseminating of critical knowledge, such as cybersecurity threats, serves as a collective defence mechanism. Wherein, by sharing knowledge about emerging threats and opportunities, empower and bolster their team and organisation.

Additionally, collective learning also serves as a catalyst for enhancing the efficacy of the team and organisation. The belief in the collective capabilities to accomplish shared tasks and goals is, in this sense, inherently tied to the exchange of knowledge. In practice, as individuals contribute to the shared knowledge, they not only improve their own

knowledge but also serve to enhance the overall efficacy of the team and organisation. This element can be viewed as another central motivator for knowledge sharing among informants, as previous studies have shown that a strong belief in one's own efficacy and the efficacy of the team is central for individuals to be willing to engage in knowledge sharing.

Furthermore, collective learning represents a shift in paradigm from individualistic notions of knowledge as power, towards a collaborative culture, wherein, the pursuit of knowledge is inherently linked to collective wellbeing. This sentiment was also further emphasised by the fact that some interviewees viewed that there was no real benefit to be gained by hiding knowledge. However, even within the same organisations, other informants still held on to the traditionalist view that knowledge most certainly was power in their organisation, indicating the existence of yet another polarising aspect of knowledge sharing.

Another related motivator for sharing knowledge and improving the shared knowledge was described by informant 7:

“One of my primary motivators for sharing knowledge is that if I simultaneously teach everyone in my team how something can be done, I don't later need to go and teach that same thing to everyone individually, because they already know how to do that, so they can instead do it on their own.” Informant 7

In the interview, informant 7 described how knowledge sharing can also foster individual benefits by reducing the total workload of more senior employees in teams with varied competencies and capabilities. As informant 5 was a part of a team where most others had worked for between 0,5 to 1 year while they had worked there for 6 years, they characterised their knowledge sharing to be primarily motivated by needs to enhance the shared knowledge, so that they were no longer the sole carrier of more advanced knowledge. This also further serves to strengthen the view that the sentiment among professionals might be moving away from knowledge being viewed as power.

On the other hand, the collective learning was not viewed as a solely altruistic motivator for knowledge sharing by some of the informants. Informant 6 offered quite an interesting insight into how fostering collective knowledge can emerge from somewhat selfish processes.

“I think one quite central motivator that comes, for me at least, from a somewhat selfish origin, is the fact that I tell other team members after a meeting where only I was present, about what I said and learned during that meeting, I then get to kind of check with them if they agree with my thoughts and in a sense give them the chance to correct me if they think that I'm in the wrong so that I can go and correct myself. Then later they can't accuse me of having said something wrong

or misunderstanding, as I already gave them the chance to correct and help me earlier. In this sense I can kind of relieve myself from some of the responsibility” Informant 6

As stated by informant 6, knowledge sharing can also be motivated by a desire for shared accountability, stemming from selfish origins. As individuals share their knowledge and retell what they have said and done, they can give others the opportunity to chime in and correct their knowledge. While this example might display these feelings from a selfish standpoint, they can also emerge from altruistic motives, as informant 6 also stated that this kind of behaviour was to some degree motivated by a will to improve the collective knowledge of the team.

4.3 Barriers of knowledge sharing

A wide array of different challenges and barriers to knowledge sharing could be interpreted from the interviews of this study. While the leader could according to the informants affect multiple different aspects of their work and behaviour, there were still some substantial challenges that it would, according to the interviewees, be difficult for their leaders to address. I will now discuss the challenges of knowledge sharing generally and then return to the leaders influence on them in the subchapters *4.4 Leadership and knowledge sharing*, and *4.5 Elucidation of the theoretical model*.

4.3.1 Unsuitable knowledge sharing norms

One of the fundamental aspects of knowledge sharing that all of the informants in this study stated was either a key driver, or barrier for successful knowledge sharing. That is the presence, or lack of effective norms and channels for knowledge sharing. This appeared during the interviews as a rather broad topic with multiple different procedures and experiences appearing. A central element for successful implementation of knowledge sharing channels was the fact that their success hinged on the perceptions of the users.

“I think there are two central reasons for why people don’t participate in knowledge sharing in our channels, either they don’t see the channels as fitting, or they might have some other better ways of getting that knowledge” Informant 3

Returning to the theme of team and self-efficacy, it seemed to be central for the informants to view their other team members as competent, for them to be interested in sharing their thoughts with them. As expressed by informant 3, if individuals see other channels as better or if they do not see other team members as able to offer any valuable contributions to their knowledge, they could be reluctant to share what they knew and

thought. Which highlights the importance of individual perceptions in the structuring of knowledge sharing norms and tools.

A further example of defective knowledge sharing norms and procedures was highlighted by informant 6:

“The communication from upper levels of the organisation usually goes through our most senior team member, the problem with this is that they might not always share everything to us others in our team.” Informant 6

The example provided by informant 6 highlights how spreading information through the grapevine, rather than collectively with the whole team can degrade the knowledge sharing culture present in the organisation and team. As later stated by informant 6, organisational higher ups relying on informal channels to spread relevant knowledge was experienced as ineffective as it commonly made them feel excluded from the decision making and work of their team, while simultaneously, according to them, serving to signal the leaderships mistrust in their performance. Informant 6 also further stated how this kind of unstructured spreading of knowledge served to significantly reduce the clarity of their work, which they experienced as one of the main challenges of their work. This example highlights the importance of leaders possessing a thorough understanding of the knowledge sharing norms within their team, together with the knowledge needs and capabilities of each team member. It also further serves to exemplify how the structuring of a team can lead to major challenges related to both specifically knowledge sharing, and general work satisfaction.

4.3.2 Confidentiality of knowledge

The theme of confidentiality emerged prominently during the interviews as a crucial factor influencing knowledge sharing. Within organisations 1 and 2, the importance of the confidentiality of knowledge was evident, as both organisations were involved in industries that are characterised by a high degree of confidentiality (consultancy and cyber security respectively). In organisation 1 (consultancy) the interview subjects often stated the presence of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) as a central challenge for successful knowledge sharing. However, informants 1, 2, and 3 noted that the agreements acted more as protection for the interests and internal knowledge of customer, rather than inhibiting consultants from sharing proven procedures and techniques from previous customer projects.

“We need to be able to utilise previously learnt knowledge. Consultancy is basically utilising and applying knowledge that has been slowly collected over the years from previous projects.” Informant 3

Hence, it is crucial for skilled consultants to grasp the nuances of confidentiality and to be able to navigate the boundaries of the NDAs by, for example, not going into unnecessary detail when sharing knowledge from previous projects with colleagues, or when utilising learnings from previous projects in new customer projects.

Similarly, the cybersecurity specialists in organisation 2 also stated that the confidentiality of knowledge was a central theme of their daily work. They also highlighted the importance of understanding what could and could not be openly shared. However, they underscored a different aspect of knowledge confidentiality. As they were a part of a much larger organisation than the consultants, they emphasised the confidentiality of the knowledge that their organisation held, rather than individual expertise. In this sense, ensuring that all knowledge and information that was shared stayed “in house” was of paramount importance to the cybersecurity specialists. While the confidentiality of this type of knowledge was certainly of similar importance in all three organisations, it was particularly emphasised in the statements of the informants in organisation 2.

4.3.3 *Insufficient trust*

The previous subchapter on confidentiality is closely related to one of the core elements of knowledge sharing, namely, trust. Trust emerged during all the interviews as one of the pivotal factors in knowledge sharing. Returning to the theme of confidentiality, informants often stated that they needed to be able to trust that others would handle their shared knowledge discreetly. Related to this, informant 8 provided an intriguing perspective on why such trust was crucial.

“There is a real chance that if you casually present an idea without really thinking that deeply about it, you might then later be forced to go through with that unrefined idea if someone has overly shared that thought forward.” Informant 8

In this example, informant 8 recounted an instance where they had been forced to go through with a design that they had mentioned during a meeting because that idea had quickly circulated and reached the upper levels of the organisation, where it had been misunderstood as the finished design, which had then forced informant 8 to use that preliminary design as their finalised version, fostering hesitancy to share their ideas in the future. This example effectively illustrates the detrimental effects of inadequate confidentiality in knowledge sharing, highlighting the importance of discretion and trust in knowledge sharing relations and interactions.

Further expanding on the topic of trust, some informants highlighted that they needed to be able to trust that others would not appropriate their knowledge:

“I think that it’s important that the credits [for sharing knowledge] go to the right place internally, basically, no one should share the knowledge of others as their own.” Informant 3

In this sense, some interviewees were concerned that others could take their knowledge contributions and later present them as their own, depriving them of the benefits that were to be gained by sharing that knowledge.

However, not all participants shared this concern, and some, even within the same organisation, expressed indifference when directly questioned about such behaviour:

“I don’t really care that much about who gets the credit for our work, of course it is nice to be appreciated, but in the end we’re all working to the same end.” Informant 1

Indicating that there were some fundamental differences in how informants valued knowledge ownership which were not directed by organisational culture and norms.

4.3.4 *Insufficient meta-knowledge*

The knowledge of what other team members know and need to know, or meta knowledge as informant 9 put it, arose as a central theme during the interviews. When discussing various challenges related to knowledge sharing with the informants, the inadequate knowledge of what knowledge coworkers had and needed appeared as a central source of many of the challenges with knowledge sharing. Challenges such as difficulties related to finding relevant knowledge and differing knowledge needs and capabilities could, to some degree, be contributed to the lack of knowledge or understanding of the capabilities and needs of others.

“Knowledge sharing is always at a low level in the employee satisfaction surveys, which I think can be attributed to the fact that everyone has different needs, and even though the knowledge would be available somewhere, people rarely seek the original source of that knowledge. This becomes increasingly problematic, as the own responsibility of individuals in sharing and seeking knowledge is highlighted in our organisation.” Informant 1

Further, as stated by informant 1, the fact that knowledge sharing is usually directed by individuals seeking knowledge to serve their knowledge needs, rather than employees proactively sharing their knowledge without specific requests, heightens the significance of meta-knowledge, as it enables individuals to identify and approach the most suitable sources when seeking knowledge.

4.3.5 Subjectivity and individual differences in knowledge sharing

Another central challenge for knowledge sharing, as proposed by informants, was the fact that knowledge sharing was described to be highly contingent on the attitudes and behaviour of individuals. Informant 8 emphasised the subjective nature of knowledge sharing, remarking:

“I think knowledge sharing really depends on the person, in a sense these things are really subjective. I mean that some people might share knowledge openly, while others just give out crumbs.” Informant 8

As expressed by informant 8, the knowledge sharing behaviour of individuals could be highly varied, even within the same organisation. This sentiment was echoed by informant 1, who stated that they had seen widely varying knowledge sharing behaviours and attitudes during their career.

“I think that the feeling that one does not receive enough knowledge originates from the thinking and knowledge needs of that individual, in this sense, it’s impossible to build knowledge sharing that satisfies everyone.” Informant 1

Informant 1’s insights into the subjectivity of knowledge sharing were enriched by their prior experiences in overseeing the building of knowledge sharing. Informant 1 retold how the multiple different approaches to knowledge sharing that had been tested at their previous employer had always received contrasting feedback from employees.

“Despite diligent testing of varied types of events and systems for sharing knowledge, there always seemed to be someone who was disgruntled by the models.” Informant 1

In this sense, it was according to them impossible to build knowledge sharing that would satisfy everyone. This sentiment also resonated throughout this study as when the informants were asked about how knowledge sharing could be improved (questions 23.b and 34, interview guide; Appendix 1), they displayed widely varying solutions and opinions. For instance, informants 8 and 9, while working within the same organisation, displayed contrasting views regarding the functionality of after-hours events with coworkers aimed at fostering a sense of community and non-work-related interactions. While informant 8 viewed this type of interaction as the prime way in which knowledge sharing could be indirectly built:

“I think that it’s sad that we don’t really have those (after-hours) informal events with coworkers anymore. This is because I see those as fun and useful for getting people to know each other better, which I think is really important for informal knowledge sharing and the general quality of cooperation.” Informant 8

Informant 9 instead expressed scepticism, stating that they felt like these events would not be particularly useful or enjoyable.

“We have had some events that were okay, for example we have previously had these imaginary customer case exercises that were kind of fun, but then again, I don’t really miss recreational events outside of working hours.” Informant 9

Further emphasising the subjectivity of knowledge sharing, some informants recounted instances of perceived knowledge hiding within their environment. These feelings primarily emerged when informants were asked to describe knowledge sharing in their environments (questions 21-27, interview guide; Appendix 1).

“The knowledge that we receive is often somewhat lacking, which means that we usually have to ask for the knowledge we need, this kind of makes me feel like people are hiding things from us.” Informant 4

As stated by informant 4, commonly having to ask others for the knowledge that they need, rather than it being shared with them spontaneously, led to them feeling like knowledge was being withheld from them. Informant 4 further emphasised how these feelings were mainly related to knowledge sharing from upper levels of their organisation, simultaneously stating that knowledge sharing within their team was at an overall higher level. However, even within the same organisation, others stated that they felt like they had never seen or experienced any knowledge hiding in their environment:

“I think that we have this culture where knowledge is shared really openly, or there is no knowledge hiding culture in our organisation.” Informant 7

Informant 1 offered a compelling explanation for where these differences might stem from, suggesting that it is often difficult for others to know what knowledge others need or want. In this sense, individuals might feel like they are not being told something simply because others don’t realise that they would need or care about that knowledge. This also serves to further emphasise that knowledge sharing needs to be based on an open exchange of knowledge in an environment where everyone is comfortable with asking questions and sharing their knowledge.

4.3.6 Unfit organisational structure

Related to the subjectivity of knowledge sharing, the structural challenges within organisations present another significant hurdle for knowledge sharing. This challenge was particularly visible in organisation 3, where the organisation had undergone a fundamental restructuring relatively recently and still struggled with adapting to the new composition. Similar challenges were to some degree visible in organisation 1, as organisation 1 was also in the middle of a similar restructuring at the time of the interviews. However, the challenges were not as pronounced there, as interviewees in organisation 1 found the structure to be reasonably fitting for their work.

“I think it might suggest that our organisation has failed in the creation of the team structure, as I don’t know if it really serves the purpose of the work.” Informant 8

As suggested by informant 8, the structuring of their work environment might have been fundamentally flawed as they felt like it did not fit their work tasks. This stemmed from the fact that informant 8 did not view their primary team as particularly helpful for their work. For example, as a solutions architect, informant 8 found limited synergy with their primary team members, who predominantly served as application managers. Therefore, informant 8 recounted how they usually preferred to interact with other members of the organisation, rather than with their primary team, leading to their involvement in a wide variety of specialised teams. Consequently, their interactions with their primary team were rarely more than mere check-ups of what everyone was working on, without any substantial knowledge being shared internally.

Informant 8’s experience also further serves to exemplify the challenge with structuring the collaborative work within organisations.

“I really like working with the architect team, people there are on the same wavelength and have similar ideas and understandings of everything which makes sharing knowledge over there much easier. Conversely, in the structural team, where people have widely different backgrounds and mindsets, it’s quite hard to share something as it might not be as relevant to them.” Informant 8

As stated by informant 8, it is central for the spontaneous occurrence of knowledge sharing that individuals share a common understanding of their work and have similar competencies for knowledge sharing to not feel strenuous for the participants. However, it is important to recognise that diverse perspectives can simultaneously function as an effective source for knowledge, as the unique perspectives that individuals bring to the table can function to enrich the shared knowledge. As depicted by informants in organisation 1, where the widely varying competencies serve to enrich the shared knowledge as the collaborative culture entices individuals to engage in knowledge seeking from more knowledgeable sources.

While informant 8’s experience serves as a rather extreme example of how the organisational structure can inadvertently discourage knowledge sharing. Organisation 1’s challenges reflect the common issues prevalent in contemporary workplaces. As informants in organisation 1 also saw the structure of their organisation as a fundamental challenge for knowledge sharing, as it often left them working on their own with client work. Reducing the frequency of knowledge sharing with coworkers, as they, similarly to organisation 3, had widely varying tasks and expertise, making it challenging to organically share knowledge.

4.3.7 Lack of time

A significant challenge highlighted during the interviews was the reported lack of time for knowledge sharing. Practically all informants cited the lack of time as one of, if not the primary obstacle for engaging in knowledge exchange. This barrier was particularly pronounced in organisations like the consultancy firm (organisation 1), where directly billable work, was prioritised over dedicating time to knowledge sharing endeavours. Similarly, informants in other organisations also shared this sentiment as many of them stated multiple times that their work is extremely busy, and that people therefore rarely have time to engage in “extra role behaviours”.

The perceived shortage of time allocated for knowledge sharing activities stemmed from various potential underlying causes. For example, some informants explicitly stated that they felt like knowledge contributions were not appropriately encouraged or valued in their organisations, which is certainly in line with the fact that knowledge sharing was viewed as an “extra role task” instead of one of the core aspects of their work. Conversely, it is also crucial to acknowledge that attributing knowledge sharing challenges to the lack of time might have been a more tactful approach for informants, as it allowed them to preserve professional integrity while discussing their experiences. Therefore, they might have been inclined to use more palatable terms to describe their experiences of knowledge sharing during the interviews instead of stating factors such as differences in individual preferences or character of coworkers, which came up later during some of the interviews, as potential barriers for knowledge sharing. Nonetheless, it can certainly be stated at this point that a perceived lack of time is one of the primary barriers for knowledge sharing the sample organisations of this study.

Inspecting the perceived lack of time for engaging in knowledge sharing also hints towards the existence of an intriguing paradox in contemporary organisations. While many informants repeatedly stated that knowledge sharing is one of the fundamental aspects of their work:

“Everything we do here is either directly or indirectly connected to knowledge sharing, be it within our team or organisation, or with the customers, it is central for the output of our work and our image.” Informant 1

they still later acknowledged that they were fundamentally hindered by time constraints when engaging in said essential practices. This discrepancy could suggest that there are some deeper underlying challenges, like deficiencies in work design or the organisational structure, which might stem from organisations not truly valuing knowledge sharing at

the level they claim. Even though they might on the surface emphasise its importance and encourage employees to engage with it, the constraints of time imply a disconnect between rhetoric and practical implementation.

“I don’t think that our [busy] schedule is really the problem for knowledge sharing, as we usually manage to make time for sharing knowledge.” Informant 5

Accordingly, Informant 5 hinted towards exactly this, as they stated that they did not feel like a lack of time was a central hinderance to knowledge sharing, instead implying that knowledge sharing was more complex than that. When later asked about how they thought that their organisation valued knowledge sharing, they expressed that they felt like knowledge contributions were undervalued in their organisation, hinting at the existence of the previously described paradox.

This paradox highlights a substantial challenge that contemporary leaders face in their work. While organisations might claim to prioritise knowledge sharing, they often fail to provide their leaders with the necessary resources to facilitate it. In such environments servant leadership emerges as a promising avenue for fostering knowledge sharing among followers. As leaders can with their own example and attitude, seek to shift the organisational status quo and foster an environment where knowledge sharing is actively valued and encouraged.

4.4 Leadership and knowledge sharing

In this section, I will discuss the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing. This section on the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing is split up into four parts in accordance with the different roles that the influence of leadership on knowledge sharing manifested itself according to the informants. These four roles are: leaders as role models, leaders as facilitators, leaders as teachers, and leaders as friends.

Analysis of the interviews suggested that the leader could, through their actions and behaviour, influence the knowledge sharing of their followers fundamentally. While the informants’ experiences with and relations to their leaders varied greatly between informants, they unanimously agreed that their leaders were one of the pivotal elements of their knowledge sharing. Even if some informants felt like their leaders had failed in fostering knowledge sharing within their teams, they still saw clear ways in which their leaders could improve and foster knowledge sharing.

This section also includes short descriptions of how each of these roles is related to servant leadership principles. It can already be stated at this stage that while the perceived leadership roles were not particularly well aligned with any specific aspect of servant leadership, it could be stated that they embodied the general ethos of servant leadership.

4.4.1 Leaders as role models

The first theme concerning the leaders influence on knowledge sharing was the fact that the informants' felt like their leaders' predominant influence on knowledge sharing, and the teams' culture and norms as a whole, was through their own day to day behaviour and example. At its base level, informants characterised the leaders influence on knowledge sharing as being responsible for creating a culture transmissive of knowledge sharing.

“I think the leader's role is to create that culture and environment, where everyone feels safe and is comfortable. So that others don't roll their eyes at your ideas and people don't feel like others think that you are stupid.” Informant 6

As described by informant 6, this could be in the form of creating a psychologically safe environment for followers. This could, according to informants, be done in quite a few ways, for example, the leader could simply value the contributions and knowledge of everyone equally, as to combat people feeling that they did not have anything valuable to contribute with to the shared knowledge. This also acted to make knowledge sharing events feel enjoyable for followers, increasing their willingness to participate in them. And as simply getting people to be present in situations where knowledge sharing could spontaneously occur increased the likelihood of knowledge sharing organically emerging, getting the followers to like such knowledge sharing occasions then emerged as important.

A slightly different aspect on the role of the leader was also provided by informant 3:

“I think it is most important for the leader to serve as a role model for the team, if the leader acts on a need-to-know basis, so that they only share knowledge that is central for only that specific task, it gives the example that we shouldn't share anything. Contrastingly, if the leader widely shares their own knowledge, others will follow.” Informant 3

As stated by informant 3, the leaders own example of how they shared knowledge played a pivotal role in how informants themselves shared what they knew. In a sense, informants saw open knowledge sharing by the leaders as a sign to similarly share their own knowledge.

In a similar vein, informants also saw the leaders' involvement in the daily knowledge sharing as central for its success. In practice, interviewees stated that if the leader showed little interest in knowledge sharing, by for example, not contributing or following the internal knowledge sharing channels, followers would similarly lose interest in using them, further highlighting the importance of leaders acting as role models.

A further challenging aspect, related to the role of leaders as role models, that emerged during the interviews could be characterised as knowledge appropriation. Knowledge appropriation was previously described in this study in the context of trust (4.4.3 Trust, p. 50), wherein, informants expressed concern, or indifference, towards receiving credit for their knowledge contributions. In the context of leadership, informants conveyed concerns related to how specifically their leaders dealt with attributing the knowledge contributions to the correct sources. In a sense, some interviewees felt that it was important for the leaders to recognise who had initially shared the knowledge so that people would get recognition for their contributions, signalling that individual contributions were valued and encouraged. However, it is again important to note that this type of recognition was not viewed as relevant by all participants.

“If the leader takes your knowledge and presents it as their own, people become hesitant to share knowledge. This is not really the case in our organisation because when something is presented to the customers, it is presented as the work of our organisation. However, it is important for the leader to be knowledgeable of where that knowledge internally comes from and how it has been shared.” Informant 3

As stated by informant 3, while outward-facing presentations typically credited the organisation or team as a whole, internally, there was a need expressed by individuals to feel acknowledged for their knowledge contributions. The leaders' recognition served, in this case, not only to validate individuals' efforts, but also to foster a culture of trust and fairness within the organisation and team. Wherein, it is of paramount importance for servant leaders to set the example of how knowledge sharing is valued within the team and organisation.

4.4.2 Leaders as facilitators

One aspect in the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing that emerged during the interviews was the informants' views of the role of the leader as a facilitator of knowledge sharing. Again, returning to the theme of meta-knowledge, all of the informants saw behaviour that could be characterised as facilitating knowledge exchange as one of the primary ways in which leaders could encourage knowledge sharing in their teams. At its core, this type of behaviour was characterised as the leader serving as a

bridge between followers seeking knowledge and those possessing the desired expertise. In practice, this involved the leader encouraging followers to seek assistance from other followers on topics where they faced challenges.

“The leader needs to know what someone needs and what someone knows, in this sense they need a great understanding of the meta-knowledge in their team.” Informant 2

As aptly described by informant 2, the leader’s awareness of both the knowledge needs and capabilities of followers emerged as pivotal for effective facilitation. In this sense, this understanding of the meta-knowledge of the team allowed the leaders to direct knowledge sharing activities, by matching individuals with complementary expertise and needs.

Additionally, informants described that this facilitative behaviour could be empowered by their leaders leveraging encouragement:

“If a leader tells someone that they know a lot about something, or that they are really good at something, then that encourages them to share with others as they sort of get that slight nudge of affirmation that they need.” Informant 1

Informant 1 explained how they felt that leaders could emphasise the expertise of their followers when encouraging them to share knowledge. Informant 1 highlighted how this method could be especially effective for followers with low self-efficacy as it might get them to realise how valuable their knowledge could be for others.

Further, this facilitative approach to knowledge sharing extends beyond just matchmaking, as it exemplifies the leader’s commitment to fostering a culture of continuous and shared learning within the team and organisation. Wherein, by actively promoting knowledge sharing among followers, leaders can empower their followers to leverage the benefits of the collective knowledge.

When further asked to explain why this type of behaviour was important in their environments, informants stated that this kind of influence became increasingly important in situations and organisations where it was difficult for the employees themselves to know what their peers are working on and what they know.

“When you are constantly working on your own and just focusing on you own tasks, you don’t really think about the fact that something might be useful for others to know.” Informant 1

This importance was exemplified in organisation 1, where the employees spent most of their days working with clients where they were the only representative of their organisation, making it challenging to know what other were working on. In this

environment all three informants felt like it was the responsibility of the leaders, who were invested in multiple different projects and with many different employees to find and make those connections between needs and capabilities. However, this sentiment was also shared by informants in other organisations, where the informants work, at least on the surface, was more interconnected with the work of their peers.

“I know what others are generally doing but if you were to ask me for ideas about how some challenge in their work could be resolved, it would be hard for me to provide an answer.” Informant 6

As highlighted by informant 6, even though they were a part of a small team of just three members, their tasks were sufficiently distinct and separated, that they felt like they would not be able to contribute substantially to the work of others. Highlighting how the importance of the leader in connecting the capabilities and needs of followers remains relevant, even in teams that appear to have high cohesion on the surface.

Lastly, concerning the leader’s role as a facilitator, the importance of organising events where knowledge sharing could occur can be highlighted. Putting their followers in situations where they can freely exchange knowledge with their peers was perceived as one of the most effective ways in which leaders can build knowledge sharing in their environment. As exemplified by the “morning coffee” and “knowledge sharing” meetings formalised in organisation 1, leaders can effectively encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among their followers by organising events where the participation of everyone is actively valued and encouraged.

4.4.3 Leaders as teachers

Related to the role of the leader as a facilitator, informant 9 stated that they often went to their leader to ask who they should be in contact with to learn more about something. Informant 9 stated that, as they were still a relatively new addition to the team, they lacked the necessary meta-knowledge to seek knowledge independently. Highlighting how servant leaders can act as a mentor and guide for junior members to integrate them into the team’s knowledge sharing pathways.

Further expanding on the role of leaders as teachers, it can be highlighted how the informants in this study retold how they had continuously learnt from their leaders through collaboration.

“Because I have been actively working together with my leader on a shared project, there has been a lot of spontaneous discussion about the work. In this case, as my leader has a much better understanding of the customer and their procedures, they have then regularly shared that

knowledge with me. Therefore, it has become a lot easier for me to work with the customer organisation.” Informant 3

This collaborative dynamic, described by informant 3, exemplifies the leaders’ role as a teacher, leveraging their expertise to educate and empower their followers. Through this individual consideration and direct engagement with the work tasks of team members, leaders can foster a culture of continuous learning within their team.

Informant 4’s account provides a further valuable insight into how leaders can function as teachers and foster learning and skill development within their team through task delegation and guidance.

“Last week there was an update to our systems, my leader delegated the responsibility to share information about that with the rest of the team. My leader gave me some instructions about how and what I should share with everyone. In a sense I wouldn’t really have done this without the encouragement by my leader. However, my leader failed to recognise the fact that I had practically no prior knowledge of the things that I was supposed to share, in this sense the task became quite stressful.” Informant 4

This example illustrates how leaders can act as stewards of the continuous development of their followers by enticing them to learn new skills and concepts by directly assigning new tasks and roles to team members.

However, when directly asked, informant 4 stated that they did not feel that their future knowledge sharing behaviour was negatively affected by this experience of inaptitude, signalling that challenging tasks might serve as effective tools for expanding the knowledge and competencies of followers in the long run. This example also serves to display how leaders can seek to create long-term knowledge sharing channels between followers by directly tasking them to share knowledge with specific individuals.

This example also further demonstrates how this kind of hands-off direction can nurture a dynamic and thriving learning culture within the team by allowing followers to organically develop effective pathways for knowledge sharing. However, it is important to recognise that informant 4 later stated that this kind of task would have been impossible without the guidance of their leader, indicating that there exists a careful balance to be found between direction and freedom in this kind of teaching.

4.4.4 Leaders as friends

When discussing the role of leaders as a friend, it became evident that the dynamics of the leader-follower relationship often mimicked those found within genuine friendships. Several insights perceived from the interviews highlight the multifaceted nature of the relationship between the interviewed followers and their leaders.

We can start inspecting the complex role of leaders as friends by interpreting how one informant described the role of empathy and shared experiences in their relationship with their leader:

“My leader worker earlier as my coworker and got then moved up to the managerial position, I think that (the earlier experience working the same job as informant 7) has made them understand our work much better.” Informant 7

As described by informant 7, their leader had previously worked as their coworker before being moved up to their current managerial position. Informant 7 described how their leader’s previous experience had played an important role in empowering their leader’s understanding of the work that their subordinates were doing. This understanding was according to informant 7 central for various aspects of their leadership. For example, informant 7 noted how this experience led to their leader having a heightened understanding of their work, which could be perceived in multiple ways in their day-to-day leadership. Informant 7 described one such example of how their leader’s heightened empathy and understanding of their work could be perceived:

“I really get this feeling that our leader is on our side, for example, when upper management has some wild ideas about changing our work, our leader then kind of stands up for us and doesn’t automatically just accept their decisions.” Informant 7

Informant 7’s example serves to exemplify how leaders can defend and support their followers in the face of adversity. Informant 7 described how their leader had continuously displayed a heightened understanding for their work and needs as they had stood up for their followers and put themselves on the line in front of their superiors. Which, according to informant 7, showed that their leader cared more about the wellbeing of their followers than their own career, and in this sense acted as their friend and protector. While informant 7’s description serves as one potential way in which leaders can serve and befriend their followers, a more general statement can be made about how leaders can foster fruitful relationships with their followers by understanding and caring for their followers as individuals.

Further expanding on the role of leaders as friends, informant 6 described their leader as a coach for their team, highlighting how their leader could leverage their high-quality relationships with their followers to motivate and guide them individually.

“I think that the leader is also kind of a coach, in the sense that they know how to encourage their followers in the ways that works best for everyone individually. In a sense, they know everyone’s strengths and weaknesses” Informant 6

The importance of the quality of the relation between followers and leaders was highlighted in the interviews of this study. As many of the informants indicated that the primary role of their leader was to act as support for their completion of their work, it became of paramount importance that the leaders maintained high quality relations with their followers, to be able to influence their behaviour through indirect influence while maintaining the hands-off approach that was perceived as effective.

However, it is important to acknowledge the inherent challenges with fully meeting the individual needs of every team member:

“Of course this is kind of an utopistic view, or I think that it is an impossible task to ever truly recognise the individual needs and capabilities of everyone.” Informant 6

As stated by informant 6, while leaders can strive to understand and support each follower on a personal level, it is important to understand that it can be a time consuming and difficult, if not impossible, task to generate and maintain high quality relationships with all followers. As each follower is in the end an individual with their own preferences and behaviour, personalities are bound to not match at times.

4.5 Elucidation of the theoretical model

The theoretical model developed for this study is depicted in figure 4. The theoretical model displays the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing as it was perceived from the interviews of this study. The model is structured so that the different roles that leaders could embody, based on the perceptions of followers, are depicted in the first column. The four different roles that could be interpreted from the interviews were: leaders as role models, leaders as facilitators, leaders as teachers, and leaders as friends. The leadership roles have been colour coded for readability of the model.

The second column displays the core drivers and challenges of knowledge sharing that could, according to informants, be affected by their leaders. The arrows connecting the roles of leaders and the drivers and barriers in the second column display the relationship between the different roles and the drivers and barriers. The hypothesised relation between the different leadership roles and barriers in the second column has been perceived based on the informants' descriptions of these barriers. The third column in the model comprises of the barriers of knowledge sharing that followers did not perceive to be influenced by their leaders.

To further demonstrate how the theoretical model has been structured, I can provide an illustrative example of how the model can be interpreted. Beginning from the left of the model, we can observe that leadership manifested itself in four primary roles that the leaders of this study's informants could take. We can focus on, for example, the leaders' role as a role model to inspect how leadership might be connected to knowledge sharing. Role modelling behaviour displayed by leaders could be argued to, for example, heighten their followers' concern for the common good of the team and organisation. Leaders could be expected to induce this heightened concern for the common good with their own example, as they display continuous concern for the performance of the team as a whole, together with prioritising the wellbeing of followers over their own benefits. Leaders can then be argued to spread these altruistic concerns to their followers who then begin to similarly care for the wellbeing of others and the team over their individual goals and aspirations. This heightened concern for the wellbeing of others and the performance of the team as a whole then induces followers to exhibit extra-role behaviours such as knowledge sharing at a higher level.

Furthermore, I can also illustrate how the role modelling behaviour of leaders can be expected to reduce the barriers of knowledge sharing. Leaders can increase the level of trust within their team and between their followers both by openly displaying their own high trust in their followers, and by exhibit trust building behaviours such as transparency, integrity, and authenticity. These behaviours can then be expected to heighten the degree of trust within the team as followers mirror their leader's behaviour. This increased level of trust both between leaders and their followers and between individual followers, then serves to build a culture of trust in the teams which was perceived as fundamental for effective knowledge sharing.

On the flipside, we can discern how the barriers that were experienced as resistant to the influence of leaders, displayed in the third column in the theoretical model, could counteract the connection between leadership and knowledge sharing. I can expand on the previously provided example of the effect of role modelling behaviour of leadership to argue why these barriers might be resistant to the efforts of leaders. While leaders can strive to build an environment conducive to knowledge sharing within their team by highlighting the importance of the common good of the team or by increasing the level of trust within the team, leaders might find it challenging to instil this altruistic concern for the team's wellbeing, or the high level of trust, among all of their followers as the perceptions of individuals and interpersonal dynamics are highly subjective and

complex. For instance, if two followers have incompatible personalities and struggle to establish the trust necessary for effective knowledge sharing, leaders might face significant challenges when remedying the situation.

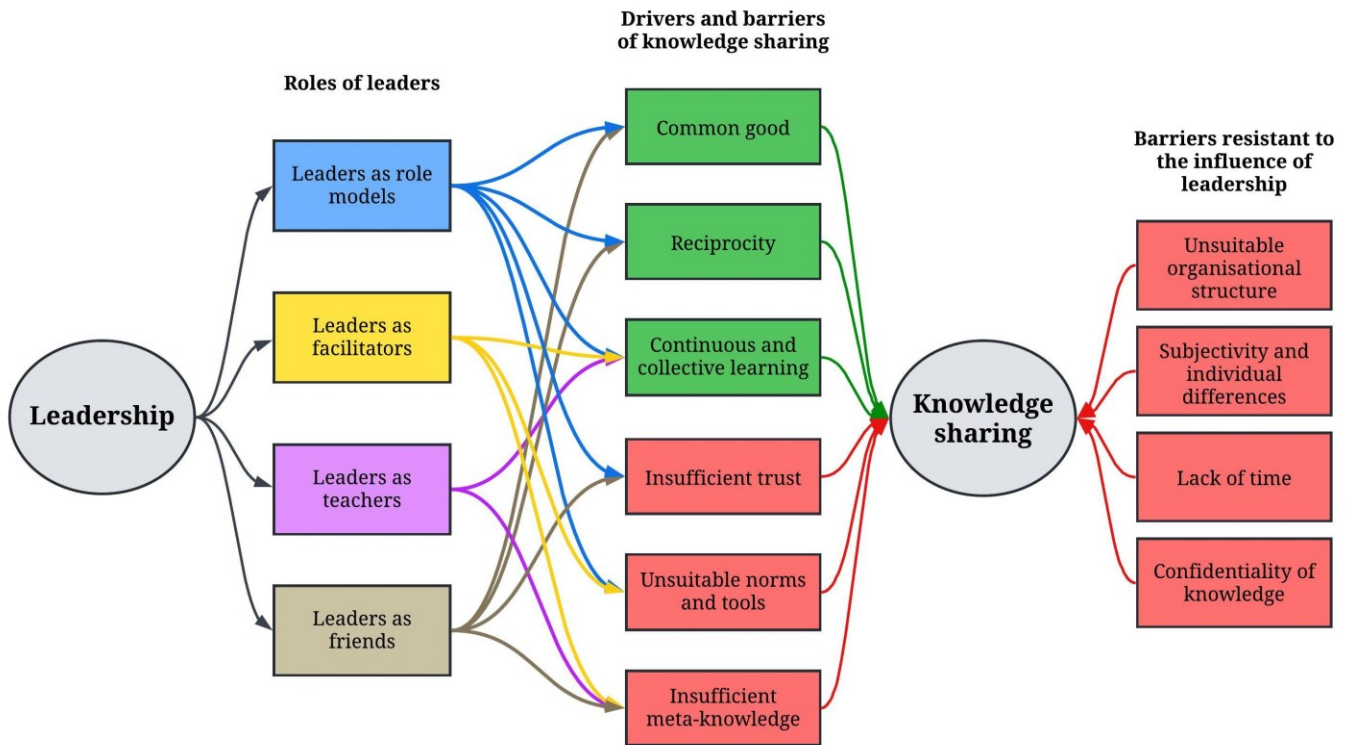


Figure 4: Theoretical model

4.6 Summary of results

This results section was structured so that I started by inspecting the informants' perceptions of their leaders and the general nature of their relation and interactions with them. Here, I highlighted the widely varying experiences and beliefs that the informants had of their leaders, together with the surprising leadership structures present in the teams of the informants.

The second part of this results section consisted of the identified core drivers of knowledge sharing. These drivers were identified based on the informants' descriptions of their own knowledge sharing. Three core drivers emerged in this inspection, these drivers were: concern for the common good of the team and organisation, reciprocity expectations, and continuous and collective learning.

After discussing the drivers of knowledge sharing, I moved on to present the main barriers of knowledge sharing. These barriers were: unsuitable knowledge sharing norms, confidentiality of knowledge, insufficient trust, insufficient meta-knowledge, subjectivity and individual differences in knowledge sharing, unfit organisational

structure, and lack of time. These main barriers of knowledge sharing were then later divided into two groups based on if informants perceived them as amendable by leaders or not.

The fourth part of this results section concerned the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing, where the interpreted influence of leaders on knowledge sharing was divided up into four distinct roles that leaders took in the knowledge sharing of informants. These four roles were: leaders as role models, leaders as facilitators, leaders as teachers, and leaders as friends.

The fifth part of this section then concerned the theoretical model that has been developed based on the results of this study. In this part, I discussed how leadership interacts with the main drivers and barriers of knowledge sharing. Here, I also presented the main barriers to knowledge sharing that informants saw as challenging for their leaders to address. In the following discussion section, I will attempt to further interpret the results of this study.

5 DISCUSSION

Even though both knowledge sharing and servant leadership have previously received considerable interest from researchers. The connection between these themes has rarely been studied directly. I developed the following research questions to fill in the gap in knowledge related to their interplay:

1) *“How do followers in contemporary organisations perceive the relationship between leadership and their knowledge sharing?”*

1.a) *“What specific aspects of the servant leadership philosophy do followers identify as encouraging knowledge sharing?”*

1.b) *“What barriers to knowledge sharing do followers view as resistant to the influence of leadership, including servant leadership?”*

Below I discuss the findings of the study and answer the research questions.

5.1 Followers’ perception of the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing

This study identified four different roles of leaders as the primary ways in which leaders could influence the knowledge sharing among their followers. These roles were leaders as role models, leaders as facilitators, leaders as teachers, and leaders as friends. These identified roles somewhat resemble the findings of the limited number of previous studies. For example, Yang (2007) characterised the roles of leaders in knowledge sharing as facilitator, mentor, and innovator. I can further expand on the role of leaders in knowledge sharing by interpreting it through the different core drivers of knowledge sharing identified in the study.

The role of leaders as role models highlights how the leaders could with their own example fundamentally influence the knowledge sharing in their team. Here the leaders leveraging role modelling behaviours to create a culture that is conducive of knowledge sharing, along with exemplifying open and continuous knowledge sharing in their own behaviour, rose as predominant elements of the connection between leadership and knowledge sharing.

The role of leaders as facilitators underlined the leader’s role as a bridge between the knowledge needs and capabilities of individual followers. When leaders leverage their understanding of the knowledge needs and capabilities of followers and the organisation

as a whole, leaders can strengthen the knowledge sharing within their teams which can further serve to enhance the collective knowledge of the organisation.

The role leaders as teachers highlights how leaders could both share their own knowledge and create learning opportunities for their followers. The role of leaders as teachers is somewhat connected to both leaders as role models and facilitators. The role of leaders as teaches primarily manifested itself in leaders creating learning opportunities for their followers by tasking them with challenging tasks that enticed them to learn. These learning opportunities also acted to strengthen the network of connections within the teams which further empowered the knowledge sharing in the teams.

The role of leaders as friends highlights their ability to utilize principles of individual consideration and cultivate high-quality relationships with their followers to facilitate knowledge sharing. Furthermore, by possessing a comprehensive understanding of their followers' tasks and responsibilities, leaders can actively shape the work environment and team dynamics to better facilitate knowledge sharing in their teams. This proactive approach not only fosters a culture conducive to knowledge sharing but also contributes to ongoing development and refinement of team practices and norms to align with organizational goals.

5.2 What aspects of servant leadership philosophy do followers identify as encouraging knowledge sharing?

I can use the previously described roles of leaders in knowledge sharing together with the perceived core drivers of knowledge sharing to identify which aspects of servant leadership foster knowledge sharing. I will start of by discussing how the different roles are related to servant leadership, whereafter, I will present how servant leadership could be argued to interact with each of the core drivers of knowledge sharing to deepen the understating of the relation.

5.2.1 *Servant leaders as role models*

While no specific aspect of the servant leadership philosophy directly aligns with the perceived role of leaders as role models, several arguments can be made to illustrate how this role align with the general spirit of servant leadership. Firstly, the notion that leaders are responsible for creating a culture conducive to knowledge sharing reflects the overarching emphasis on empathy and concern for the collective well-being of all team members inherent in servant leadership. Similarly, leaders acting as role models, openly sharing and encouraging knowledge sharing resonates with the emphasis on the

empowerment, support, and continuous growth of followers, characteristic of servant leadership. Additionally, the idea that leaders should refrain from claiming ownership of their teams' knowledge highlights the other oriented approach of servant leadership, where the leaders are not concerned with their own aspirations, instead prioritizing the wellbeing and growth of followers.

5.2.2 Servant leaders as facilitators

The perceived role of leaders as facilitators aligned quite well with the individual consideration aspect of servant leadership. Specifically, the importance of the leaders possessing a fundamental understanding of their followers needs and capabilities, together with them leveraging personalised encouragement, highlights how servant leadership can foster knowledge sharing. Servant leaders can leverage their understanding of individual capabilities and needs to foster knowledge sharing among their followers by tailoring their support and development efforts to meet the unique needs of each individual team member.

Moreover, the organisation of knowledge sharing events exemplifies the individual appreciation and consideration aspects of servant leadership. By ensuring that all followers can contribute with their valuable knowledge, these events underscore the leader's appreciation of the knowledge of each individual. Which then further empowers the followers to share their knowledge as they feel valued and appreciated.

5.2.3 Servant leaders as teachers

The role of leaders as teachers aligns quite well with the spirit of servant leadership. While the act of leaders sharing their own knowledge with their followers does not directly relate to any specific aspect of servant leadership, it could be argued to reflect the overarching theme of fostering the growth of followers inherent in servant leadership. Conversely, the practice of assigning followers with new and challenging tasks while understanding their needs and capabilities aligns quite well with the individual consideration aspect of servant leadership, as leaders demonstrating empathy and understanding towards followers' capabilities and workload is crucial in ensuring that tasks remain engaging and manageable. Similarly, leaders directly tasking followers with sharing knowledge with their peers aligns with the empowerment and collective advancement principles of servant leadership.

5.2.4 *Servant leaders as friends*

Similarly to the earlier discussed roles of leaders, the role of leaders as friends aligns somewhat well with various aspects of servant leadership. Firstly, the highlighted importance of leaders understanding the work of followers aligns well with the awareness of needs aspect of servant leadership. Secondly, leaders standing up for their followers aligned with the general theme of serving present in servant leadership. Lastly, leaders maintaining high-quality relationships with their followers to influence them similarly aligns with the general theme of humility and freedom for followers.

A final note can be made concerning the indirect influence highlighted by informants. It is a central element of servant leadership as it aligns with the philosophy of serving others first. As servant leaders prioritise the needs of their followers and focus on empowering them to achieve their full potential, by harnessing indirect influence, servant leaders guide and support their followers without directly imposing their will or authority. All in all, it could be said that high quality personal relations with followers is a pivotal factor for nearly all aspects of the servant leadership philosophy. Factors such as trust and psychological safety together with empowerment and support hinge on the servant leaders possessing high quality relations with all of their followers for them to be able to influence their behaviour and attitudes without being overly reliant on their authoritative position.

5.3 Leadership, servant leadership, and barriers of knowledge sharing

A number of barriers for knowledge sharing emerged in this study. These barriers include unsuitable norms, confidentiality of knowledge, insufficient trust, insufficient meta-knowledge, subjectivity and individual differences, unfit organisational structure, and lack of time. I will now discuss how leadership and servant leadership interact with the different drivers of knowledge sharing.

5.3.1 *Leadership and insufficient trust*

Firstly, it can be stated that trust, or the lack of trust, played an essential role in the knowledge sharing of informants. This sentiment echoes the findings of previous research, wherein, trust has been found to be a central factor in knowledge sharing. For example, trust has been found to be essential for reciprocity, as individuals need to be able to trust that others will reciprocate their knowledge sharing. (e.g. Yeboah, 2023) The findings of this study closely resemble these findings, as informants repeatedly

stated that their reciprocally motivated knowledge sharing hinged on them being able to trust that others would later reciprocate their knowledge sharing efforts.

Leadership was characterized as an essential element in the creation of this kind of trusting and safe environment, as many of the informants saw this kind of culture building as both one of the best ways in which their leaders could build an environment conducive for knowledge sharing and as one of the primary tasks of their leaders. We can return to the core tenants of servant leadership to inspect how insufficient trust can be amended by servant leadership. For example, when servant leaders demonstrate authenticity, integrity, and transparency, their followers can be expected to both mirror and reciprocate these positive contributions, both towards their leader and peers.

5.3.2 Leadership and unsuitable norms

Informants in this study perceived unsuitable norms as central for their knowledge sharing. Earlier studies have offered considerable attention to the effect of norms on knowledge sharing (e.g. Tan, 2016; Ramayah et al., 2013). However, unsuitable norms and knowledge sharing has not been directly studied in the context of leadership. The informants of this study felt that leadership played a central role in creating the norms of the team, wherein, they were responsible for ensuring that the norms were conducive for knowledge sharing. Unsuitable norms are a barrier that could be described to not be tightly connected to any aspect of servant leadership and has more to do with general leadership.

Additionally, it can be stated that a significant challenge for servant leaders in contemporary organisations is the fact that a focus on the needs and capabilities of individuals might not be a suitable approach to changing the surrounding organisation that the leader and follower reside in. In practice, while servant leaders might seek to develop and nurture the capabilities and beliefs of followers, their efforts might be undone by other leaders in the organisation who do not possess the same characteristics or aspirations as the servant leaders.

5.3.3 Leadership and insufficient meta-knowledge

Similarly to unsuitable norms, insufficient meta-knowledge was perceived as a central barrier for knowledge sharing in this study. The role of insufficient meta-knowledge has been offered limited previous research attention (e.g. Engelmann & Hesse, 2011). Additionally, only few studies have inspected the facilitative role of leadership in building

this meta-knowledge (e.g. Yang, 2007). In this study, insufficient meta-knowledge was found to be closely related to leadership, similarly to Yang (2007) the role of leaders as facilitators was found as the prime way for leaders to strengthen the meta-knowledge of their followers. Here, the individual consideration and emphasis on the continuous growth of followers aspects of servant leadership could be highlighted as the core elements of the relation between servant leadership and meta-knowledge.

5.3.4 Leadership, subjectivity, and individual differences

As highlighted earlier in this study, subjective nature of knowledge sharing along with differences between individuals pose a significant challenge for knowledge sharing. Previous studies have explored the implications of several factors related to the subjectivity of knowledge sharing. For example, the effect of self- and team-efficacy has been explored by many scholars (e.g. Safdar et al. 2021). This study found this connection as similarly relevant for the knowledge sharing of informants.

Leadership was found in this study to be able to affect the self- and team-efficacy of followers quite significantly. For example, leaders could utilise encouragement to heighten the follower's efficacy beliefs. Here, the individualised consideration, characteristic of servant leadership could be particularly fitting. This could be argued as the heightened knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of followers could allow servant leaders to tailor their encouragement to better fit the individual followers.

In addition to individual differences, this study underscores the importance of the quality of relationships between individual followers. As previously mentioned, informants expressed that if interactions with others were not enjoyable, they would be less inclined to engage in knowledge sharing. This lack of enjoyment often stemmed from conflicting personalities or opinions, making it challenging to find common ground for open exchange. While leaders can influence subjective feelings to some extent, there are areas where informants felt leadership intervention was limited.

Overall, this study highlights the intricate interplay between leadership, subjectivity, and individual differences in the context of knowledge sharing. While servant leadership shows promise in addressing some of these challenges, there remain areas where further exploration and intervention are warranted.

5.3.5 Leadership, unfit organisational structure, lack of time, and confidentiality of knowledge

The last three knowledge sharing barriers that appeared to be resistant to the influence of leadership could be characterised as being caused by factors outside the control of the leader. For example, the character of the work of followers was posited as a factor resistant to the influence of leaders. Firstly, Unfit organisational structures arose as quite central challenge for knowledge sharing in this study. While some informants felt that their leaders could affect the structure of their organisation greatly, others felt that these challenges were outside of the reach of their direct managers. While it could be stated that it is certainly characteristic of servant leadership to seek to improve the work environments and structure of the work of followers, servant leaders might find themselves unable to significantly change these fundamental aspects of the work of their followers.

Secondly, lack of time appeared as a central challenge for knowledge sharing. As previously stated, the perceived lack of time for engaging in knowledge sharing might not be fully attributable to the busy schedules of informants, but rather be caused by an overall lack of appreciation for the value of knowledge sharing on an organisational level. While leaders might be able to affect the quality and enjoyability of knowledge sharing within their team, they might be restrained by organisational norms and beliefs of the value of knowledge sharing. Wherein, the followers might have other tasks that are higher in priority than knowledge sharing, which in practice limits the time that followers might be able to dedicate to knowledge sharing.

Similarly, the confidentiality of the knowledge that the informants of this study sometimes dealt with posed a relevant challenge for their knowledge sharing. Similarly to the lack of time, informants felt that confidentiality was a natural part of their work and could therefore not be substantially influenced by their leaders.

5.4 Notes on the drivers and barriers of knowledge sharing

A multitude of drivers and barriers of knowledge sharing were identified in this study. These drivers and barriers generally reflected the findings of previous research, wherein, reciprocity expectations were identified as one of the core drivers of knowledge sharing (e.g. Hendriks, 1999; Schulz, 2001; Ipe, 2003; Wang & Noe, 2010). However, the altruistic motivators of a concern for the common good of the organisation and team, together with and continuous and collective learning were identified as core elements of

knowledge sharing motivation in this study, which has not been the case in previous studies.

Additionally, some of the previously perceived barriers of knowledge sharing were not perceived as relevant by the informants of this study. For example, internal competition was perceived as central when inspecting previous research on knowledge sharing research (e.g. Tjosvold et al., 2003; Wang & Noe, 2010). However, it was not seen as a relevant barrier for knowledge sharing by any of the informants of this study, even when directly asked, informants stated that they did not feel that internal competition between team members influenced their own knowledge sharing. However, the truthfulness of this sentiment could be questioned as the informants often used language such as “*my* knowledge” when talking about their knowledge sharing. Indicating that they would in reality have been affected by internal competition and knowledge ownership but were reluctant to share those sentiments with the interviewer.

Similarly to internal competition, rewards and incentives were not felt as relevant for the knowledge sharing of informants. While previous knowledge management research has depicted the aligning of material rewards and incentives with knowledge sharing as an essential tool for building knowledge sharing (e.g. Kim & Lee, 2006; Yao et al., 2007; Wang & Noe, 2010), informants in this study did not share this sentiment. Informants instead highlighted the importance of intrinsic motivations in driving knowledge sharing behaviours. Here the perceived motivators of common good, reciprocity, and continuous learning can be highlighted as examples of such intrinsic motivators.

5.5 Notes on the social theories as explanations of the leaders’, and servant leaders’, role in knowledge sharing

A variety of social theories have been applied to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. The two most used theories in contemporary research are the social exchange theory and the social learning theory. This study expanded on these theories and proposed a number of further theories that could be applied to understand the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. In the following subchapters, I will start by discussing how the findings of this study resemble and expand on social learning and social exchange theory. Whereafter, I will move on to discuss how self-efficacy theory, social identity theory, and social capital theory could be applied to the relationship between leadership and knowledge sharing. However, before this discussion, it is relevant to note that even though a range of social theories could be applied to understand the relationship between servant leadership and

knowledge sharing, they could be argued to be overly abstract and broad for capturing the effect of particularly servant leadership as opposed to leadership in a more general sense.

5.5.1 Social exchange theory

As previously stated, social exchange theory (Bandura, 1977a), in the context of servant leadership and knowledge sharing, posits that employees engage in knowledge sharing to reciprocate the beneficial treatment that they receive from their servant leaders (e.g. Tuan, 2016; Nauman et al., 2022; Song et al., 2015). In this study, this reciprocity between leaders and followers was somewhat visible. For example, informants commonly stated that they felt that the freedom that their leader provided them with choosing how they wanted to perform their work, led to them reciprocating by seeking to perform their work to the best of their abilities and engaging in extra role tasks. Knowledge sharing was then described as one of these extra-role behaviours that informants retold themselves to be inclined to perform.

However, the importance of this reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers was not as high as suggested by previous research. Instead, the informants of this study highlighted the importance of the reciprocal relationship between followers and their peers as the primary avenue for the influence of the norm of reciprocity on their knowledge sharing. Indicating that while servant leaders could, to some degree, foster knowledge sharing among their followers by offering them support and valuable resources that the followers then reciprocated in the form of knowledge sharing with their peers. Suggesting that social exchange theory, and the related norm of reciprocity, might not be the most suitable theory for explaining the influence of servant leadership on knowledge sharing. Further echoing the arguments of previous critics of utilising social exchange theory in this context, wherein, other theories might be better suited to explain the lasting effects that are characteristic of servant leadership (e.g. Eva et al., 2019).

5.5.2 Social learning theory

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977a) has previously been argued to be the main tool for explaining how servant leaders foster knowledge sharing in their environments. This influence has been argued to manifest in the form of followers learning and emulating the knowledge sharing behaviour of their servant leaders. The experiences of the informants of this study resembled the assumptions made in social learning theory as

they repeatedly stated that their leader acting as a role model for their knowledge sharing was the primary way in which their leader could foster knowledge sharing. As exemplified earlier, respondents felt that their leader openly sharing their own knowledge encouraged followers to do the same, which echoes the assertions made in earlier research.

Similarly, social learning theory can be applied to explain the facilitative role of leaders that informants viewed as a prominent avenue for the influence of servant leadership on their knowledge sharing. Informants highlighted how their leaders could act as a bridge between the knowledge needs and capabilities of individuals. Social learning theory could be used to highlight how this facilitative behaviour could act to build the channels for knowledge sharing in teams, as it serves to build knowledge sharing pathways in the teams as leaders direct the knowledge sharing in their teams which the followers then emulate.

Related to social learning theory, the assumption that the influence of servant leaders hinges on the followers viewing them as a creditable role models can be highlighted. This contingent emerged as a central element in how the followers of this study perceived the influence of their leader. This argument is based on the fact that many of the informants described their leader's involvement in their work as indirect support, rather than direct supervision and control. Highlighting how the leaders primarily utilised indirect influence, such as the followers emulating their behaviour, to direct the behaviour of their followers. In previous studies, servant leaders have been argued to foster these positive emotions among their followers by giving their followers power and opportunities for growth, which then serves to heighten the followers view of their leader. Which was also somewhat echoed by the informants of this study.

5.5.3 Self-efficacy theory

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977b) argues that the actions of individuals are dependent on the individuals view of their ability to succeed in performing in particular actions. While self-efficacy theory had not been utilised in previous research to inspect the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing, it could be used to argue that the followers' engagement in knowledge sharing hinges on their efficacy beliefs regarding themselves and their team. Wherein, a low level of self-efficacy reduces willingness to engage in knowledge sharing, as followers do not realise the value of their own knowledge for others. The low team-efficacy, on the other hand, can be argued to

lead to followers not perceiving their coworkers as credible or useful sources of knowledge, reducing their interest in seeking knowledge from them.

In the context of this study, informants noted how their leaders could encourage knowledge sharing in their team by utilising encouragement and praise to heighten the self-efficacy of individual followers. By for example highlighting the competency of a follower, leaders could heighten their willingness to share that knowledge, as their beliefs of their own competency and its value for others was increased. Regarding team-efficacy, informants highlighted how their leaders played an essential role in strengthening the team-efficacy beliefs of followers. As exemplified by one informant, leaders could do this by highlighting the knowledge that other team members held and, in this sense, act as a facilitator of the knowledge sharing in their team. Both of these examples highlight the importance of the individual consideration and continuous development aspects of servant leadership, as they are central for the leader to possess the knowledge of the competencies, needs, and preferences of followers, which are necessary for them to engage in this efficacy-building behaviour.

5.5.4 Social identity theory

Social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1979) hinges on the assumption that followers define themselves based on the groups that they belong to. In the context of servant leadership and knowledge sharing, social identity theory can be used to explain how followers engage in behaviour benefiting the group as a cause by the heightened identification with the team and its purpose and wellbeing. In this study, this heightened identification with the group was fostered by, for example, the servant leaders building strong bonds with their followers and improving the quality of the relationships between individual followers. Similarly, leaders seemed to build this identification by emphasising the shared goals and challenges of the team.

The importance of the identification with the group for knowledge sharing rose as central in the interviews of this study. Therefore, the leaders' ability to build a strong sense of identification with the team among their followers appeared as a fundamental element of the influence of servant leadership on knowledge sharing. This importance was visible in, for example, how the followers commonly stated that their knowledge sharing was primarily motivated by their concern for the common good of the team.

5.5.5 Social capital theory

Social capital theory (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995) posits that the social networks of individuals function as valuable resources. We can revisit the three dimensions of social capital to inspect how servant leaders influenced knowledge sharing in this study. Informants in this study saw their leader's facilitative behaviour as one of the main channels for their influence on their knowledge sharing. This facilitative behaviour, where the leaders could act as a bridge between the knowledge needs and capabilities of followers exemplifies the structural dimension of social capital. Wherein, servant leaders, could according to informants, in this sense build and bolster the networks and channels for knowledge sharing in their teams. This facilitative behaviour primary took shape in the form of the leaders encouraging followers to seek knowledge from their peers who the leader knew were knowledgeable about some topic.

Additionally, the relational dimension of social capital was highlighted in this study in the form of the informants describing how their leaders could build an environment of trust and safety within their teams. Informants repeatedly described their leader acting as a role model, openly sharing their own knowledge and offering support for their followers as the fundamental aspect of their leaders influence on knowledge sharing in their teams.

Lastly, the informants' views of how their leaders influenced their knowledge sharing could be interpreted in the context of the cognitive dimension of social capital. One possible interpretation is that the followers again saw their leaders acting as role models as one of the fundamental ways in which leaders could establish a shared vision and aspiration for the common good of the team among their team members. In practice, informants described how their leaders could encourage and ease the transfer of knowledge in their team by establishing common norms and procedures. For example, informants noted how their leader utilising the team's shared channels for knowledge sharing, formalised those channels in the procedures of the team, while simultaneously displaying the leader's interest and valuation of knowledge sharing.

5.6 Implications

This study contributes to the research on servant leadership and knowledge sharing in a number of ways. The theoretical and practical implications of this study are presented in the two following subchapters.

5.6.1 Theoretical implications

This study primarily expands upon previous research concerning the relationship between (servant) leadership and knowledge sharing by offering an expanded understanding of the previously perceived positive relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. By interpreting the beliefs and experiences of followers, this study has identified the core drivers and barriers of knowledge sharing. Here, a concern for the common good of the team and organisation, together with reciprocity expectations, and continuous and collective learning, were identified as the core drivers of knowledge sharing behaviour in contemporary organisations. Out of these, the concern for the common good of the team, together with continuous and collective learning emerged as novel motivators for knowledge sharing, while reciprocity echoed the findings of earlier research in this context.

Additionally, some of the identified barriers of knowledge sharing could be characterised as relatively novel concepts in the pool of knowledge sharing research. These novel barriers include confidentiality of knowledge, insufficient meta-knowledge, unfit organisational structure, and lack of time. As previous research has primarily found insufficient trust, unsuitable norms and tools, and subjectivity and individual differences to be significant barriers of knowledge sharing. This study extends on this contemporary understanding by highlighting these novel barriers and their interplay with leadership.

Concerning the social theories utilised in this study, the novel theories applied to the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing (self-efficacy theory, social identity theory, and social capital theory) could be seen as a valuable contribution of this study, as they highlight new mechanisms for the influence of both leaders generally, and specifically servant leaders.

For example, the self-efficacy theory was applied to explain how (servant) leaders can foster knowledge sharing among followers by heightening their efficacy beliefs related to either their own efficacy or their team's efficacy.

Additionally, the social capital theory was utilised in this study to explain how (servant) leaders can enhance knowledge sharing in their teams by increasing the social capital of their followers, by acting as facilitators of the knowledge sharing, building the networks and connections in their team, (servant) leaders can build on the structural dimension of their followers' social capital. Further, the relational dimension was used to explain

how their leaders fostered knowledge sharing by building trust and safety within their teams.

Concerning the numerical elements of this study, it can be noted that applying the SL-7 scale to measure servant leadership, wherein, informants were asked to rate specific aspects of servant leadership (e.g. my leader can tell if something work related is going wrong, or my leader makes my career development a priority) may not be ideal for studying the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. This observation arises from the fact that informants expressed only weak or no connections between the specific aspects present in the SL-7 and their knowledge sharing.

However, some informants noted that these questions were collectively indicative of general leadership behaviour that would be conducive of knowledge sharing. This raises the question of how effectively the measures used in this study and in previous research concerning the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing measure the effect of servant leadership.

It could, for example, be argued that informants in previous studies might have mixed qualities possessed by generally “good” leaders, such as leading by example, with aspects measured by various servant leadership scales. Consequently, researchers might have inadvertently attributed these qualities to servant leadership. For instance, informants in studies might have associated seemingly unrelated attributes, such as “my leader would NOT compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success” with the qualities exhibited by effective leaders who naturally foster knowledge sharing.

This realisation underscores a critical issue: contemporary measures of servant leadership, when applied to the context of knowledge sharing, could incorrectly indicate a strong connection between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. When in reality, qualitative, in-depth exploration of this relationship reveals that characteristics which are only loosely connected to servant leadership, such as leading by example, are much more important than traits typically attributed to servant leadership.

5.6.2 *Practical implications*

This study can offer a multitude of practical implications. These implications can be divided up into ones concerning knowledge sharing generally and more specifically leadership.

5.6.2.1 Practical implications for knowledge sharing

The perceived primary drivers of knowledge sharing offer a number of valuable implications for practitioners seeking to foster a culture of knowledge sharing in their organisation. The perceived importance of intrinsic motivation, embodied in the informants' concern for the common good, reciprocity expectations, and commitment to continuous and collective learning suggests that effective knowledge sharing should be built by leveraging intrinsic, rather than extrinsic motivators, such as rewards and incentives. These identified primary drivers of knowledge sharing behaviours similarly highlight how the altruistic tendencies of individuals can function to effectively foster knowledge sharing. However, the fact that many informants reported that knowledge sharing in their organisations was not at a sufficient level suggests that organisation need to develop further systems for incentivising knowledge sharing, that are not solely based on intrinsic motivation.

The identified core challenges for knowledge sharing similarly underscore the areas where leaders can and cannot influence the knowledge sharing in organisations. For example, other strategies outside leadership interventions seem to be better suited for addressing challenges such as unfit organisational structures or lack of time, that instead seem to stem from organisational and work characteristics that the organisation collectively needs to solve. Additionally, this study questioned the relevance of internal competition and rewards and incentives in the context of this study.

5.6.2.2 Practical implications for leaders

The different roles that servant leadership behaviours were embodied in the findings of this research offer multiple practical implications for leaders. First, the perceived importance of the leaders acting as role models, embodying the values and behaviours that they wish to cultivate in their teams. Highlights how leaders can foster knowledge sharing in their environments by demonstrating their commitment to serving the needs of others first and promoting their growth and development, this positive behaviour can then be expected to spread to others in the organisation by effects such as reciprocity and modelling behaviours.

Second, the leaders' role as facilitator is highlighted by the perceived barrier of insufficient meta-knowledge, wherein, leaders should focus on identifying the knowledge needs and capabilities of individual followers. So that the collective

knowledge of the team can be strengthened by leaders creating the networks and pathways of knowledge sharing.

Third, the leader's role as teacher, recognises the importance of the leader acting as a steward for the continuous learning and development of followers as a source for heightening knowledge sharing among followers. Here behaviour such as hands-off direction and task delegation can be highlighted as ways in which leaders can foster knowledge sharing among followers. From a servant leadership perspective, this role can be used to highlight how leaders leading with humility and the continuous growth and development in mind, can entice followers to engage in knowledge sharing as they adopt this concern for the continuous development of themselves and their team.

Fourth, the role of servant leaders as friends can be used to highlight how leaders can leverage a fundamental understanding of the work and character of followers to foster knowledge sharing in their environment. Here characteristics such as individual consideration and focus on the wellbeing of followers can be used to highlight how leaders can inspire their followers to engage in knowledge sharing by appealing to each individual in the way that works best for specifically them. Additionally, this fundamental understanding can also be leveraged to influence other aspect of the behaviour of followers outside of knowledge sharing, signifying it as a fundamental characteristic of effective leadership.

Lastly, while most of the findings of this study directly relate to specifically servant leadership, they are, much like most research in the field of leadership and leadership styles, not solely connected to servant leadership but can be utilised by leaders and organisations of any shape or form as a set of principles to improve their leadership and knowledge sharing practices.

6 CONCLUSION

This concluding part of this thesis presents a summarising discussion concerning the findings and contributions. Additionally, the limitations of this research, together with suggestions for future research are presented.

6.1 Summary of findings and contributions

This study aimed to further our understanding of the relationship between (servant) leadership and knowledge sharing. This endeavour was undertaken by qualitatively examining the experiences and beliefs of followers regarding the relationship. The four different roles of leaders (role models, facilitators, teachers, and friends) were developed in this study to better understand how leadership influences knowledge sharing. Here, as follower perceived the leaders' primary channel of influence on the team as the leaders own example, leaders acting as role models emerged as the most influential role.

The underlying drivers and barriers of knowledge sharing were also uncovered in this study. The informants in this study offered a diverse description of the drivers and barriers of their knowledge sharing. Key drivers included concern for the common good, reciprocity, and a commitment to continuous and collective learning. While the main barriers affected by (servant) leadership consisted of insufficient trust, unsuitable norms and tools, and insufficient meta-knowledge. The relation between these drivers and barriers and (servant) leadership emerged as multifaceted and complex.

Additionally, this study identified four persistent barriers that were perceived as resistant to the influence of (servant) leadership. These barriers include an unsuitable organisational structure, subjectivity and individual differences, lack of time, and confidentiality of knowledge. Informants noted that meaningful and effective organisational restructuring initiatives led by their leaders would be challenging to implement without the necessary leverage and organisational support. Overcoming the challenges related to subjectivity required changing the fundamental thinking of individual followers, which informants saw as extremely challenging for their leaders to achieve. Time constraints and confidentiality concerns were perceived as similarly challenging topics, as they were perceived to be natural and unavoidable parts of their work. These persistent barriers underscore the complexity of fostering knowledge sharing in contemporary organisations, highlighting the fact that even widely recognised strategies such as servant leadership face challenges in modern organisational contexts.

All in all, the findings of this study illustrate how the servant leadership philosophy can be utilised by contemporary organisations and leaders to promote knowledge sharing. By understanding the interplay between the drivers, barriers, and roles of (servant) leaders, organisations and leaders can develop targeted strategies to cultivate knowledge sharing.

6.2 Limitations of the study

This study has a number of limitations that have to be considered. Perhaps the most evident limitation is the sample size of this study. As the scope of a master's thesis is characteristically quite limited, the sample size is often the first area where compromises must be made. However, the small sample size could be argued to be sufficient as the qualitative elements of the study allowed for in-depth exploration and rich insights into the perspectives and experiences of participants.

Another central limitation of this study, is that it focused on perceiving the relationship between knowledge sharing and specifically servant leadership, advertently leaving the discussion concerning other factors that could affect the knowledge sharing of informants rather brief. However, while this narrow scope may seem restrictive, it does not discount the significant insights that can be gleaned from the study. Instead, these findings offer a valuable springboard for future research endeavours, prompting deeper exploration into the multifaceted dynamics of the relation between servant leadership and knowledge sharing.

Further, the fact that this study considers the concept of knowledge quite superficially, wherein, considering the difference between knowledge and information, or the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge were left out. Highlights the fact that a more in-depth exploration of the specific kinds of knowledge that followers share because of servant leadership could be valuable.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

The previously presented limitations of this study can be used as a base for the suggestions for future research. Firstly, a similar study, with a larger sample size or in a different context could offer considerable value for furthering our understanding of both servant leadership and knowledge sharing. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to track the lasting effects, characteristic of servant leadership, on knowledge sharing.

Further, incorporating the perspectives of leaders could potentially be a prominent method for enriching our understanding of the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing, as it could offer us with insights regarding both how leaders see their own leadership and its effect on knowledge sharing, and the decision-making process that leaders undertake when processing how they behave and lead their followers. This could then offer further valuable insights into how servant leadership, manifests itself in the behaviour of practitioners.

Additionally, studies employing comparative analysis of different organisational contexts and cultural settings could be applied to identify contextual factor that influence the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. For example, cross cultural studies could be conducted to examine how cultural values and norms, such as, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity (Hofstede, 2011) influence the realisation of servant leadership in the context of knowledge sharing. Similarly, studies considering the influence of organisational culture on the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing could be fruitful.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, it is necessary to acknowledge the perceived disconnect between quantitative and qualitative research concerning the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing. This disconnect highlights the need for further research applying either qualitative or mixed methods to inspect this relationship, as these methods can offer valuable new insights regarding the intricate effects of servant leadership on knowledge sharing.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Basic information:

1. Position/Role within your organisation:
2. Educational background:
3. Work experience (years within current field):
4. Team tenure:
5. Team size:

Background questions:

6. Can you provide a brief description of your current responsibilities and how they relate to knowledge sharing?
7. Could you describe the nature and goals of the teams that you are a part of?
8. In your experience, how would you characterise the leadership within your team?

Please rate your immediate supervisor/leader based on the following questions on a scale from 1-10 (1: Strongly disagree – 10: Strongly agree):

9. My leader can tell if something work-related is going wrong.
10. My leader makes my career development a priority.
11. I would seek help from my leader if I had a personal problem.
12. My leader emphasises the importance of giving back to the community.
13. My leader puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.
14. My leader gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that I feel is best.
15. My leader would NOT compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success.

Please rate your own knowledge sharing behaviours on a scale from 1-10 based on these questions (1: Strongly disagree – 10: Strongly agree):

16. I share the information I have with colleagues within my department.
17. I share my skills with colleagues within my department.
18. When I've learned something new, I see to it that colleagues within my department/team can learn it as well.
19. I know what the other members of my team are doing at any given time.

20. I know what information my coworkers need.

General questions about knowledge sharing:

21. How would you rate the frequency of knowledge sharing within your team? (1: Extremely infrequent – 10: Very frequent)
22. What type of knowledge sharing activities are common within your team?
23. Are there some knowledge sharing activities that you find clearly lacking in your team?
 - 23.b How could these activities be encouraged?
24. Who primarily initiates knowledge sharing in your team?
25. What motivates you to share knowledge?
26. What obstacles do you face when trying to share knowledge with your coworkers?
27. How do you think that trust influences knowledge sharing in your environment?

Connection between leadership and knowledge sharing:

28. In your opinion, what role does your leader play in influencing knowledge sharing among team members?
29. Can you share some examples of your leader's indirect influence on your team's knowledge sharing (i.e. not through direct encouragement)?
30. Can you share some concrete examples of situations where your leader directly influenced your knowledge sharing?
31. Are there some instances where your leader's actions hinder, rather than encourage knowledge sharing within your team?
32. Think (again) of the challenges with knowledge sharing, how do you feel that your leader can address these issues with their behaviour? Can you provide some examples?
33. Thinking further about the challenges with knowledge sharing you mentioned earlier, are there specific challenges you feel are difficult for leaders to address when it comes to fostering knowledge sharing?
34. Do you have innovative ideas for addressing challenges related to knowledge sharing, or what do you believe is needed to overcome these challenges?
35. Do you feel like any of the described leadership characteristics are related to knowledge sharing? Why/why not?