

# SOCIAL MEDIA, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING: IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

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## Abstract

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Most of the studies in the field of social media propose that the usage of social media in an organization fosters the employees' social capital and further enhances the process of knowledge sharing. In the higher education sector, knowledge sharing plays a great role in strengthening the education system and enhancing the teaching and research skills of the faculties. Meanwhile, social media is playing a very important role by affecting social capital which is further affecting knowledge sharing. The current study aims to understand the impact of social media usage on social capital, measured by using three variables, i.e., shared vision, trust, and network collaboration. It further measures the impact of social capital on knowledge sharing in higher education using SMART-PLS software. The data has been collected from 80 respondents from higher educational institutions in Northern India. The study reveals that social media is significantly affecting trust and network collaborations among academicians but there is no significant impact of social media on shared vision which further helps in exploring the various ways and platforms for constructive usage of social media in academia.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Social Capital, Knowledge Sharing, Higher Education

**Authors' individual contribution:** Conceptualization — A.S. and A.S.; Methodology — A.S., A.S., and P.B.; Investigation — A.S., A.S., and P.B.; Data Curation — A.S. and A.S.; Writing — Original Draft — A.S., A.S., S.Q., and P.B.; Writing — Review & Editing — A.S., A.S., and P.B.; Supervision — S.Q. and P.B.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years social media has perforated almost all types of organizations. Scholars and practitioners have recently become more aware of the widespread usage of social media, particularly its effects on workplace productivity (e.g., there are around 4.20 billion active social media users worldwide).

According to a recent study, 41% of workers globally have utilized social media for professional purposes (Kemp, 2021). Higher education institutes are also becoming the adopters of this worldwide phenomenon. The teaching and learning process is going through a technological revolution because it is a powerful tool used by administrators and teachers to communicate effectively with students.

The constructive use of social media plays a very important role in the skill enhancement of academicians. The various social media tools used in the higher education system are Wikis, Twitter, Facebook, Blogs, Flickr, SlideShare, Myspace, Podcast, YouTube, LinkedIn, and WIZIQ (Kumi-Yebaoh & Blankson, 2014). Various social media platforms are providing an opportunity for academicians to connect across the globe. As per the study conducted by Seaman and Tinti-Kane (2013), the three-purpose usage of social media by higher education professionals are professional usage, personal usage, and instructional/educational usage. Professional use of social media includes academic involvement, collaboration, and development. Personal use of social media includes communicating for individual needs and self-enjoyment. Instructional usage includes executing social media in teaching and learning activities. Skeel and Grudin (2009) stated that social networking sites lead to strong personal and professional ties along with boosting the knowledge-sharing process in an organization.

Previous studies on social media usage in the workplace highlight some of its negative effects such as declined productivity and workplace distress. However, this study aims to fulfill this gap and focuses on understanding the constructive and positive aspects of social media usage by academicians. The current study also examines the role of social media in building social capital and enhancing knowledge sharing in the higher education sector from employees' perspectives. This study would also emphasize evaluating and explaining the impact of social media on the performance of employees and how they can utilize it better to improve their work process. Based on these discussions, the research questions of the study are as follows:

*RQ1: Does the usage of social media at work improve shared vision among academicians?*

*RQ2: Does using social media at work enhance trust among academicians?*

*RQ3: Does using social media at work strengthen network collaborations among academicians?*

*RQ4: Does sharing vision, trust, and network collaboration enhance knowledge sharing among academicians?*

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 analyses the methodology that has been used to conduct the empirical research on understanding the impact of social media usage on social capital and further how social capital is going to affect knowledge sharing in higher education. Findings and discussion are presented in Section 4 and Section 5, respectively. Section 6 provides conclusions and recommendations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The dictionary meaning of social capital is "the network ties among people to make society work effectively by working together" (Oxford Languages, n.d.). In other words, the term "social capital" refers to the resources that are part of a person's or a group's network of ties,

encompassing both interpersonal connections and resources that are founded in those connections (McFadyen & Cannella, 2004). Utilizing social media applications and platforms has the advantages of recruiting potential clients and employees as well as facilitating communication, knowledge sharing, expression of ideas, and connection building (Ebrahimi et al., 2021). Through mutual interactions, a common sense of identity, a common understanding, shared norms & values, trust, and reciprocity, the expected goals of social groups are achieved. Social capital is a multifaceted term that can be segregated into three major categories: 1) structural, 2) relational, and 3) cognitive (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The total pattern of interpersonal relationships, or the individuals you connect with and how you link them, is referred to as the structural dimension. The relational component describes social connection resources including commitment, reciprocity, and trust. The term "cognitive dimension" refers to a shared environment that improves communication among individuals who are represented by similar language, codes, and objectives. According to McElroy (2002), contrary to other types of intellectual capital, social capital emphasizes the importance of connections inside organizations and between enterprises, including those characterized by trust, reciprocity, shared values, networking, and conventions, which advance knowledge and offer value. McElroy (2002) also stated that the systematic way the whole social systems organize themselves around and take out the generation and unify the new knowledge is referred to as "social innovation capital". The most advantageous aspect of social capital for network members includes free and liberal reach to wider sources of knowledge and opportunities that would not be otherwise available. The most common notion states that people use media to meet not only social but psychological requirements. The desire for social contacts to get support and a sense of belonging is the most obvious reason why people use social media, which primarily serves as a social networking tool, whereas social capital is derived from interpersonal encounters (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). People's social networks shape their behavior (Bandura, 1989), and several studies have looked at how social capital antecedents affect how individuals engage in online communities (Chiu et al., 2006; Ganley & Lampe, 2009). Conclusively, we can state that social ties, shared vision, and trust are sources that might promote the growth and accumulation of human capital. In this article, knowledge transfer — which may be thought of as a process of task-related communication — is examined with social capital usage. According to research by Epple et al. (1996) and Baum and Ingram (1998), one of the key factors in organizational effectiveness is the capacity to transfer information from one person to another. We claim that social media usage may increase an employee's social capital, which therefore helps in sharing knowledge among them. We specifically use network collaborations, shared values, and trust to stand in for the structural, cognitive, and relational aspects of social capital, respectively.

## 2.1. The effectiveness of social media usage at the workplace

Social media, as an efficient platform for social networking, consists of a variety of information and communication technologies that offer several channels for connection in both social and professional settings. Social media is used by employees for more than simply information sharing and searching. These days it is being taken as a place to make friends feel a part of something bigger than themselves, and most importantly build connections with others. The extent and quality of the relationships as well as the frequency of contact among employees are represented by network ties (Chiu et al., 2006). Almost every employee is influenced by social media to varied degrees. However, it shouldn't be assumed that social media has just had a bad effect on the workplace and the employees; rather, social media has also brought about a lot of beneficial improvements at work and in the working habits of the employees, which have greatly enhanced organizational productivity. However, the uncontrolled use of social media for non-work-related reasons at the workplace has presented significant issues for contemporary firms (Ahmad et al., 2022).

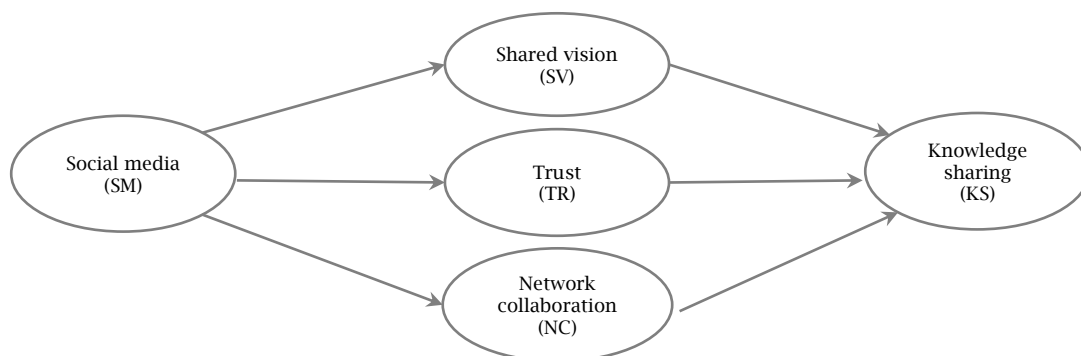
Social media, as opposed to traditional face-to-face interactions, allows for unstructured social engagement across the globe removing physical constraints in organizational settings. Furthermore, organizations are seen to benefit from employee interaction and collaboration on various work-related social media sites (Pekkala & van Zoonen, 2022). In this fast-changing dynamic workplace, where many workers are performing their job roles remotely, maintaining and strengthening network collaborations strongly rely on the online community formed by social media rather than

traditional face-to-face interactions. Social media usage in the workplace facilitates the maintenance of professional networks, establishes links with universities and colleges, and explores possible ties by bringing together professionals with similar interests and backgrounds. There are several shreds of evidence from earlier studies showing that using social media strengthens network collaborations.

Further, the collective goals and objectives of the organization's members are represented by their shared vision, which may be attained via collaboration (Wagner, 1995). Social media's independence from space and time constraints, as well as its very crucial feature of open communication, has led to a new type of collaboration in which participants may participate whenever they want to from wherever they are (Smith, 2009). Social media may be used by professionals as a versatile tool for basic task coordination as well as complicated teamwork. More crucially, social media offers the chance to actively include individuals through casual social interactions that are infused with cooperation, making it simpler for group members to come up with a shared vision.

Lastly, social connections are the source of trust (Gulati, 1995). Social media's online social networks are a very useful addition to offline networks because they allow professionals to learn specifics about their coworkers' backgrounds, personalities, preferences, interests, and hobbies. As a precursor to trust, more mutual understanding can help lessen confusion about the actions and intentions of other people (Valenzuela et al., 2009). We may trust or mistrust somebody more or less depending on how well we know them (Newton, 1999). People who trust one another may encourage connection via social media and other platforms. Figure 1 shows the proposed model of the study.

Figure 1. Research model



This study focuses on investigating the impact of social media on increasing social capital. Consequently, we propose the following hypotheses.

*H1a: The usage of social media at work improves shared vision among academicians.*

Bicen and Uzunboylu (2013) investigated a study focusing on social media usage in higher education, it has been found that there is a positive effect of social media usage on shared vision among academicians. Similar to this, Sung et al. (2017) evaluated the impact of social media in higher educational institutions and found that it promoted a shared vision in academic communities, and thus

enhanced their collective understanding of the vision and mission of the institution. Additionally, Hitchcock and Battista (2013) studied how academics utilize social media for professional development and emphasized how it may help them establish a shared vision by giving them an opportunity for knowledge sharing.

*H1b: Using social media at work enhances trust among academicians.*

According to a study by Nielsen (2004) on social media use in academic settings, it has a positive effect on trust among academicians. They emphasized how social media platforms offer

prospects for increased collaboration, knowledge sharing, and strong communication, which fosters the growth of trusting connections between professionals. Similarly, Zachos et al. (2018) examined how social media usage affected academic trust and found that it promoted communication and knowledge exchange, which in turn helped academics build trust with one another. Nevzat et al. (2016) also investigated the importance of social media in enhancing trust among academicians and found that these platforms promoted trust by fostering free communication and knowledge sharing among academicians.

*H1c: Using social media at work strengthens network collaborations among academicians.*

The development of networked collaborative scholarship has been promoted by the rise of social media as well as online networks which has allowed academics to engage in collaborative and participatory practices (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2012). Mat Salleh et al. (2020) investigate how the usage of social media supports knowledge sharing within virtual spaces of practice, with a focus on its contribution to facilitating network collaboration. According to Rowley et al. (2017), social media can assist academicians in networking and collaboration, facilitating the sharing of knowledge and research. Al-Maatouk et al. (2020) also recognized the power of social media to encourage interaction and cooperation among learners in circles of academia. Al-Rahmi and Othman (2013) also emphasize the crucial role of social media platforms in fostering academic networking and knowledge sharing.

## 2.2. The impact of social media on knowledge transfer

Benefits from social capital may include expanded knowledge sources and higher-quality information. Information transfer, which is defined as the sharing of knowledge from one employee so that it may be learned and implemented by another, is examined in our study as a means of enhancing social capital.

Network collaborations act as conduits for the flow of information and resources, impacting both the persons with whom one might exchange knowledge and the expectation of benefit from such an exchange (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). First, network collaborations promote social interactions among members and shorten the time and effort needed to access information sources, increasing the volume, frequency, and scope of sharing of knowledge (Larson, 1992). Secondly, individuals who have developed strong network relationships would actively participate in knowledge contribution and exchange activities, which is related to social expectations of reciprocity (Chow & Chan, 2008). It is evident from prior studies that network collaborations are positively related to the number and quality of knowledge sharing in virtual communities (Chiu et al., 2006).

A shared vision acts as a unifying force that makes it easier for various organizational divisions to pool their resources (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Due to shared vision among employees, members of virtual communities can appreciate the value of resource exchange and find additional possibilities to take part in such exchange. Additionally, when participants similarly perceive others, they may more readily build a shared understanding in their

conversations, which will eventually encourage knowledge transfer.

When it comes to the transfer of information, trust is the exchange that is ingrained in social connections between the source and the receiver of the knowledge (Levin & Cross, 2004). Since it can be challenging to quantify individual contributions in online communities, trust may be particularly crucial for voluntary actions like sharing and transferring knowledge. Interpersonal trust has been shown in prior research to have a constructive function in knowledge transmission and is seen as a crucial component for knowledge transfer success (Dodgson, 1993). According to empirical evidence, trust improves knowledge exchange (Andrews & Delahaye, 2000), information sharing and knowledge exchange (Zaheer et al., 1998), and the likelihood that knowledge will be effectively absorbed by the receiver (Levin & Cross, 2004). Consequently, we propose that:

*H2a: Shared vision enhances knowledge sharing among academicians.*

Sivakumar et al. (2023) found that a shared vision was essential for promoting knowledge sharing among academicians. They emphasized how a mutual understanding of the objectives, and values promotes a feeling of cohesion, fostering an encouraging environment for knowledge sharing. Similarly, Jerez-Gómez et al. (2005) investigated the influence of shared vision on knowledge sharing in research and development teams and highlighted its positive relationship. They observed that shared vision fosters teamwork, stimulates cooperation, and promotes academics' readiness to share their insights.

*H2b: Trust facilitates knowledge sharing among academicians.*

Cummings and Bromiley (1996) highlighted the significance of trust in encouraging knowledge sharing inside organizations because trust empowers people to do so without worrying about the potential fallout. Furthermore, Wang and Noe (2010) examined the impact of trust on knowledge sharing in groups and concluded that it had a positive effect on people's desire to collaborate and share knowledge.

*H2c: Network collaborations facilitate knowledge sharing among academicians.*

Cross and Cummings (2004) in their study emphasized the crucial role of network collaborations in fostering knowledge sharing among academicians. They concluded that network collaborations encourage informal interaction, idea exchange, and collective problem-solving, which eventually facilitates knowledge sharing. Cummings and Kiesler (2005) investigated how networks may encourage knowledge sharing in institutions and found a positive relationship between network collaborations and the flow of knowledge, expertise, and creative ideas.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Measurement and scale validation

We relied on the survey questions on scales that already exist in the literature to increase validity. From the study of Kankanhalli et al. (2005), the usage of knowledge management systems at work, the independent variable, social media use at work, was adopted. The network collaboration

measurements were taken from Tsai and Ghoshal (1998). The study by Levin and Cross (2004), found a strong correlation between trust and knowledge sharing. Items based on Chiu et al. (2006) were devised to measure shared vision. Dhanaraj et al.'s (2004) study served as the basis for the knowledge-sharing measurement. The alternative research methods that can be used for conducting this study can be understanding the present scenario of social media usage at the workplace by using case studies and archival studies. A case of a particular company can be studied and analyzed to understand the perception of employees towards social media usage at the workplace. The archival study can be conducted by extracting an extensive literature review on the current topic from various industries.

### 3.2. Data collection

We have collected data from academicians working in higher education in the northern region of India. The data was collected by floating questionnaires in the English language through Google Forms. Before taking their responses, they have been made aware of social media and knowledge sharing. They have also been ensured confidentiality of their responses so that they could give their unbiased opinion. The data has been collected over a period of 4 weeks, and a total of 80 responses have been collected out of 110 responses, so the response rate is 72.7%.

## 4. RESULTS

Data analysis has been conducted on Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and Smart Partial Least Square (SmartPLS) software. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the respondents based on gender, age, and work experience. Table 2 shows the percentage of employees using various social media platforms in the higher education sector, where WhatsApp is the highly used media platform (54.4%), followed by YouTube (17.7%), LinkedIn (12.7%), Instagram (7.6%), Facebook (5.1%) and Twitter (2.5%). Table 3 shows the average number of hours spent by employees on social media, where 62% of employees spent an average of 0 to 5 hours on social media followed by 6 to 10 hours (24.1%) and 11 hours or more (13.9%), respectively.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics

Measure	Number	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	48	60.8
Male	31	39.2
<i>Age</i>		
21-30 years old	30	38.0
31-40 years old	33	41.8
41-50 years old	10	12.7
≥ 50 years old	6	7.6
<i>Work experience</i>		
Less than 1 year	7	8.9
1-5 years	25	31.6
6-10 years	19	24.1
≥ 11 years	28	35.4

**Table 2.** Usage of social media platforms among employee

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Facebook	4	5.1
	Instagram	6	7.6
	LinkedIn	10	12.7
	Twitter	2	2.5
	WhatsApp	43	54.4
	YouTube	14	17.7
	Total	79	100.0

**Table 3.** Average hours per week spent on social media

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	0-5 hours	49	62.0
	6-10 hours	19	24.1
	11 hours or more	11	13.9
	Total	79	100.0

The acceptability of the measurement model was tested by convergent validity and discriminant validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Convergent validity was assessed by measuring the average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability. Table 4 shows the value of AVE for all the measures is greater than 0.5 and values for composite reliability also exceed a threshold of 0.7. Hence the convergent validity of the model is established. The discriminant validity of the measures is examined by using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio method. Table 5 shows that all the values are less than 1, proving the discriminant validity of the construct validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

**Table 4.** Convergent validity

Measures	Average variance extracted	Composite reliability	Reference
Social media	0.505	0.729	Hair et al. (2008), Fornell and Larcker (1981)
Shared vision	0.657	0.851	
Trust	0.494	0.830	
Network collaborations	0.616	0.865	
Knowledge sharing	0.750	0.937	

**Table 5.** Discriminant validity

Measures	Knowledge sharing	Network collaboration	Social media	Shared vision	Trust
Knowledge sharing	1.000				
Network collaboration	0.605	1.000			
Social media	0.373	0.498	1.000		
Shared vision	0.438	0.291	0.322	1.000	
Trust	0.471	0.490	0.610	0.832	1.000

After confirming the convergent and divergent validity of the measures, the next step was to assess

the structural model. Figure 2 shows the outcomes of the PLS analysis.

Figure 2. Path model

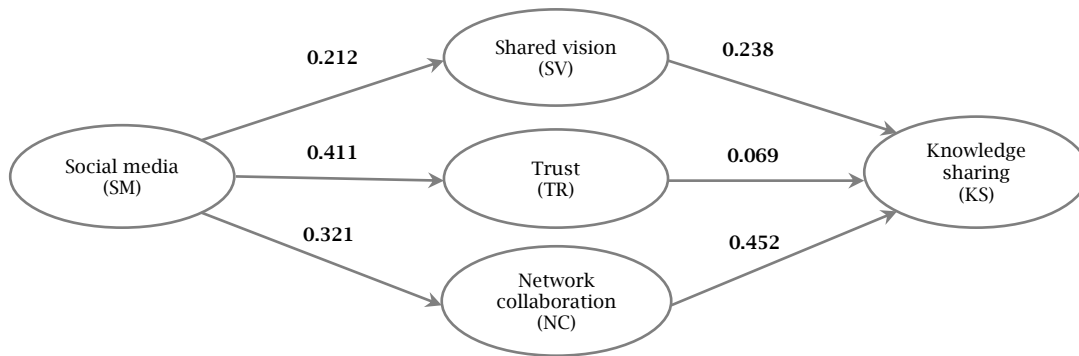


Table 6. Path coefficients

Model path			$\beta$	<i>p</i> -value	Relationship status
Social media	→	Shared vision	0.212	(0.122) ( $p > 0.05$ )	Non-significant positive influence
Social media	→	Trust	0.411	(0.001) ( $p > 0.05$ )	Significant positive influence
Social media	→	Network collaboration	0.321	(0.012) ( $p > 0.05$ )	Significant positive influence
Shared vision	→	Knowledge sharing	0.238	(0.098) ( $p > 0.05$ )	No significant positive influence
Trust	→	Knowledge sharing	0.069	(0.640) ( $p > 0.05$ )	No significant positive influence
Network collaboration	→	Knowledge sharing	0.452	(0.000) ( $p > 0.05$ )	Significant positive influence

Table 6 depicts the path coefficient which shows that social media usage at work in the higher education sector has a significant positive influence on trust ( $\beta = 0.411$ ,  $p = 0.001 < 0.05$ ) and network collaboration ( $\beta = 0.321$ ,  $p = 0.012 < 0.05$ ) but non-significant positive influence on shared vision ( $\beta = 0.212$ ,  $p = 0.122 > 0.05$ ). The influence of social capital on knowledge sharing depicts that, only network collaboration ( $\beta = 0.452$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) has a significant positive influence on knowledge sharing. Both shared vision ( $\beta = 0.238$ ,  $p = 0.098 > 0.05$ ) and trust ( $\beta = 0.069$ ,  $p = 0.640 > 0.05$ ) has a non-significant influence on knowledge sharing. The R-square value is calculated as 0.045 for a shared vision, 0.169 for trust, 0.103 for network collaboration, and 0.357 for knowledge sharing, respectively. The R-square value indicates that social media determines 16.9% and 10.3% variance in trust and network collaboration followed by a shared vision. Social capital, i.e., shared vision, trust, and network collaboration determines a 35.7% variance in knowledge sharing in the higher education sector.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Due to prior research's predominant focus on a particular media, social media have been hardly empirically researched as a whole in the workplace. In this research paper, we have mainly emphasized understanding the impact of social media on social capital where we have found that social media is significantly affecting trust and network collaborations among academicians but there is no significant impact of social media on shared vision. Implicitly, more usage of social media by academicians is going to help them secure trust in each other, and also it is going to help them in making collaborations or tie-ups among them, which is going to be very fruitful in their academic careers. Further, we have also tried to assess the impact of shared vision, trust, and network collaborations on knowledge sharing and found that only network collaborations are positively affecting knowledge

sharing, because when academicians are working together by collaborating from different corners of the globe, then definitely they will be sharing knowledge among themselves. Through this particular study, we can conclude that these days social media is not only being used for personal entertainment rather it has become a common platform for academicians working across the globe, through which they can learn from each other latest teaching pedagogy as well as by forming strong network collaborations they can transfer their knowledge regarding latest research tools, etc. The constructive use of social media will help academicians in overcoming their limitations through synergy gain.

## 6. CONCLUSION

These days almost every sector is integrating social media into their operational tasks to promote the free flow of communication within as well as outside the organization. However, there is a dearth of empirical studies on social media use in the workplace. In this paper, by taking a base of social capital theory, we have developed a model to assess the impact of social media on knowledge sharing in higher education in Northern India. Based on the literature, we have found, that social media helps employees in building their social capital, which is represented by network collaborations, trust, and shared vision. We have found that social capital plays a significant role in knowledge sharing. Trust and network collaborations are very crucial factors in affecting the knowledge sharing of academicians in Northern India. For academicians, social capital is very useful because it helps in developing trust among people associated on social media platforms and also when people meet online, they collaborate from any corner of the globe and help each other in overcoming their limitations in the respective fields. Thus, we have concluded that social capital helps in knowledge sharing among academicians in higher education. Because these days knowledge sharing is not restricted within any

physical boundary. Knowledge sharing is taking place among people sitting in different corners of the globe through social media.

Conclusively, we can say that social media made it easier for academicians to build the social capital indicated through shared vision, trust, and network collaborations, which further help with knowledge transfer. This has proven that social media can help ongoing knowledge management tasks in addition to serving social networking needs. Connecting experts with various social media platforms can successfully complement other knowledge management systems for organizations looking to create knowledge networks at work. Thus, educational organizations can promote social media platforms among their employees so that they can collaborate more, learn more, and work more through enriched knowledge sharing.

There are a few limitations of this study that must be noticed. The participants in this study are mostly higher education institutions from Northern

India, so it is questionable if our conclusions apply to the whole of the nation. Future research may also extend to other nations as well to assess the impact of cultural variations. Secondly, we were able to secure data from 80 respondents only which could be extended in future research to enhance the validity of the results. Thirdly, we only looked into the positive side of social media use at work; obviously, there might be adverse effects as well like disruptions to work and security issues, which have been ignored here. We could have a better understanding of the role of social media in work with further research focusing on both its benefits as well as drawbacks. Further, the variables were assessed at a static moment because our data are cross-sectional. The emergence of social capital is a persistent phenomenon, and social media are always changing. Future studies using longitudinal data may be able to capture the changing connections between these variables.

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