

# Linking organizational justice and knowledge sharing: An empirical investigation of SMEs in Vietnam

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The current study aims to investigate the mediating role of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Employee Satisfaction (ES) on the relationship between Organizational Justice (OJ) and Knowledge Sharing (KS) in Vietnamese Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The framework and hypotheses were examined using SEM on SPSS and AMOS software to analyse the data after receiving 489 valid responses from 73 SMEs in Vietnam.

**Findings:** Findings confirmed that OJ positively affects POS, ES and KS. POS and ES played a partly mediator role in the relationship between OJ and KS. Moreover, the relationship between POS and KS is mediated by ES.

**Conclusion:** OJ is a crucial and persistent concern for individuals especially within modern organizations. It is one of the key factors shaping the behavior of individual employees. Furthermore, KS behavior is a significant driver of organizational competitiveness and growth. It predicts higher organizational performance, innovation capabilities and fosters a sense of enjoyment and happiness in aiding others. However, most studies have only examined the direct relationship between OJ and KS. Consequently, the methods by which leaders affect people continue to be unclear and mostly hypothetical. Thus, it becomes essential to analyze the empirical impact of OJ on KS by considering the intermediate influence of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Employee Satisfaction (ES).

**Practical Implications:** This study provides knowledge about the reality of POS and ES and their mediating role in the relationship between OJ and KS which contributes to enriching the library overall and Vietnamese in particular in this subject.

**Contribution to the Literature:** The mediating effect of POS and ES between OJ and KS is one of the initial topics to be addressed in this study focusing on SMEs.

**Keywords:** Employee satisfaction, Knowledge sharing, Organizational justice, perceived organizational support, SMEs, Vietnam.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are placing greater emphasis on treating their employees as employee rights and government regulations receive increased recognition (Singh, 2008). Fairness remains a significant and ongoing concern for individuals particularly in contemporary organizations. It is one of the key organizational determinants that profoundly influence the actions of individual employees (Usmani & Jamal, 2013). According to Greenberg (1990), Organizational Justice (OJ) or fairness in organizations refers to “the extent to which the employees consider that the organizational decisions are fair”. Researchers have focused on OJ which includes distributive, interactional

and procedural justice for almost 50 years (Colquitt, 2001). Although the three forms of organisational justice are interconnected, research shows that they have separate relationships with workers' views towards their jobs (Colquitt, 2001). The importance of organizational justice lies in the fact that fair treatment results in improved social interactions and overall organizational effectiveness (Heidari & Saeedi, 2012). On the other hand, there is a high demand for fairness in the business environment because of the knowledge and innovation-driven nature of the current economy. Businesses must rely on the expertise and knowledge of their employees to survive in order to remain competitive in technology-led and highly competitive markets. As a result, it is essential to identify the elements that either encourage or impede information exchange inside organizations. Businesses can promote knowledge-sharing, improve employee performance and gain a competitive edge in the marketplace by fostering a culture of fairness (Llopis & Foss, 2016). Many studies on organizational behavior have emphasized how to motivate employees to share knowledge with their colleagues. There have been relatively few researchers that have examined the impact of OJ on Knowledge Sharing (KS) among employees (Moon, 2015). Furthermore, although many studies have investigated the impact of OJ on various organizational and individual outcomes, there has been limited attention paid to the relationship between OJ and KS (Yeşil & Dereli, 2013).

Knowledge Sharing (KS) behaviour is a key factor in the competitiveness and expansion of organisations and it stands out in the field of organisational behaviour (Mayastinasari & Suseno, 2023). It indicates strong organizational performance, inventive skills and the growth of contentment and joy in assisting colleagues. If incentives to enhance KS behaviors exist, employees would still be reluctant to share knowledge. According to existing literature, the long-term sustainability of organizations is ensured by successful team-based knowledge management techniques and the promotion of active employee interactions (Kim & Park, 2017). The definition of KS encompasses the act of providing information, skills and expertise with the overarching goal of collaborating and supporting others in resolving issues, generating innovative ideas or implementing policies and procedures (Cummings, 2004; Wang & Noe, 2010). According to Akram, Lei, Haider, Hussain, and Puig (2017), the absence of knowledge sharing can pose a substantial impediment to an organization's survival. Consequently, organizations must give priority to identifying the factors that influence and hinder knowledge transfer among employees. Effective knowledge management is widely acknowledged as a paramount organizational priority due to its profound impact on the overall performance of businesses across various sectors (Akram et al., 2017). Most studies have predominantly focused on examining the direct relationship between Organizational Justice (OJ) and Knowledge Sharing (KS) (Akram et al., 2017). A few people have tried to investigate this relationship using mediating factors such Perceived Organizational Support (POS) (Hameed et al., 2019) and Employee Satisfaction (ES) (Al-Douri, 2020). OJ, POS, ES and KS have favourable relationships that are well-known. However, there have only been a few practical investigations into the complex interactions between these four ideas particularly in the Vietnamese context. Furthermore, a comprehensive understanding of the combined effects of all these variables remains elusive despite the apparent influence of POS and employee satisfaction on the OJ-KS relationship. Additionally, DeConinck (2010) has underscored the dearth of knowledge and the largely speculative nature of the mechanisms through which leaders exert their influence. We opted to empirically analyze the effect of OJ on KS, taking into account the intermediary effects of POS and ES based on the aforementioned fundamentals and recommendations.

According to Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986), POS is "the extent to which employees believe their contributions are appreciated by their organization and that the firm actually cares about their well-being". POS theory is rooted in a fundamental aspect of social exchange theory specifically the norm of reciprocity. Eisenberger and his colleague have emphasized a strong relationship between POS and fair treatment. When resources are distributed fairly, employees tend to believe that the organization is deeply committed to their well-being. This perception has a significant impact on POS. According to Maan, Abid, Butt, Ashfaq, and Ahmed (2020); Asgari, Mezginejad, and Taherpour (2020) and Côté, Lauzier, and Stinglhamber (2021), empirical research confirms the positive relationship between POS and Employee Satisfaction (ES).

Employee satisfaction (ES) has been a prominent area of study and continues to attract the interest of scholars and researchers. One essential component of every workplace that fosters success is ES. According to Aziri (2011), ES pertains to an individual's overall attitude towards their job and reflects their sentiments about it. Empirical research has also yielded evidence supporting the positive relationships among OJ, ES and KS.

The literature emphasizes the key role that POS and ES play in enhancing KS. Therefore, our study has been conducted to explore OJ's impacts on KS through the mediating role of POS and ES. We expect that the study will contribute new knowledge on how organizational justice may affect the concept of KS ( see Figure 1).

This research aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1. Does OJ influence KS?

RQ2. Do POS and ES play a mediating role between OJ and KS?

RQ3. Which factor has a greater influence on KS?

489 respondents from SMEs in Vietnam were surveyed and structural equation modeling was employed to examine the extent of influence each variable has on the others in order to address these questions. Through this investigation, the primary objective of the study is twofold: firstly, to analyze and present empirical evidence on the correlation between OJ, aspects of POS, ES, and KS. Secondly, the study goes beyond simply estimating direct influences by delving deeper into the indirect impacts of mediating variables on knowledge sharing. As a result, the paper aims to offer specific and pragmatic solutions for directors or managers seeking to enhance KS within their organizations.

The paper's structure encompasses four key sections to fulfill these aims. The first section entails a literature review of OJ, POS, ES, and KS from which hypotheses were derived. The second section outlines the research methodology implemented for the study. Following this, section three presents a comparative analysis of the field study relative to the findings presented in the literature review. The final section is dedicated to presenting the study's outcomes including strengths, weaknesses and research implications as well as offering suggestions for potential future research.

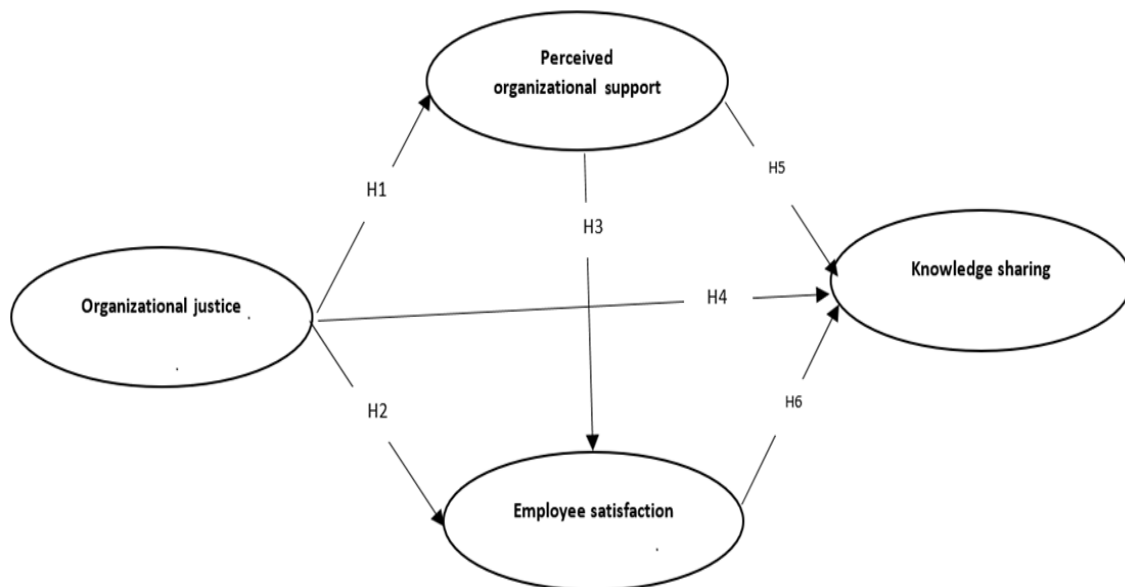


Figure 1. The hypothesized model.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. The Influences of Organizational Justice on Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Satisfaction

The concept of "organisational justice" in the field of organisational studies relates to how members of an organisation perceive fairness. This perception shapes an individual's assessment of whether the organization operates equitably from their standpoint. There are three types of justice that fall under this concept: distributive, procedural and interactional (Al Muala, Al-Ghalabi, Alsheikh, Hamdan, & Alnawafleh, 2022; Mengstie, 2020). Each type of justice pertains to a particular aspect of how justice (or injustice) is perceived. An individual's view of what they get whether in the form of tangible or intangible resources is relevant to distributive justice. Procedural justice focuses on how individuals view the fairness of the organizational procedures implemented to decide on outcomes that affect them. Lastly, interpersonal justice refers to an individual's perception of how they were treated during the decision-making process that led to a particular outcome. OJ has been linked to a range of

attitudes in research. However, the relationship between OJ and POS or ES both of which are elements of social exchange theory has only been briefly studied (DeConinck, 2010). The following section of the paper delves into the connection between OJ and POS as well as ES.

Eisenberger et al. (1986) put forward the idea that POS is closely tied to the concept of fair treatment. The perception of fairness in the allocation of resources significantly influences POS by shaping employees' belief that the organization genuinely values their well-being (Shore & Shore, 1995). Empirical studies consistently reveal a positive relationship between OJ and POS. For instance, Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli (2001) report a robust relationship between POS and both procedural justice ( $r=0.59$ ) and interactional justice ( $r=0.55$ ). When it comes to organizational justice, there's a prevailing notion that procedural justice particularly within organizational interactions is intricately linked to POS (DeConinck, 2010). According to theoretical perspectives, distributive justice which primarily evaluates the fairness of results does not appear to develop an immediate relationship with perceived support. Nonetheless, Roch and Shanock (2006) along with Camerman, Cropanzano, and Vandenberghe (2007) present a counterargument to this assumption. They propose a direct relationship between distributive justice and outcome satisfaction although this connection does not extend to perceived support. Intriguingly, both studies revealed a substantial correlation between POS and distributive justice. Camerman et al. (2007) reported a correlation of  $r=0.67$  while Roch and Shanock (2006) reported a correlation of  $r=0.36$ . Similarly, Loi, Hang-Yue, and Foley (2006) also found a significant relationship between POS and distributive justice providing some level of support that distributive justice may indeed be related to POS.

*H1. Organizational justice is positively related to perceived organizational support.*

ES considered as a crucial factor has received considerable attention from scholars and researchers. ES plays a crucial role in retaining and attracting highly qualified personnel. It is an attitude that individuals hold towards their jobs and the organizations in which they are employed (Misener, Haddock, Gleaton, & Ajamieh, 1996). It has been observed that the majority of studies have reported a positive and significant relationship between OJ and ES. OJ plays a vital role in enhancing ES and can contribute to its improvement and growth among staff members (Ghran, Jameel, & Ahmad, 2019). A high level of OJ results in increased job satisfaction among employees and indicates a greater willingness to achieve the organization's objectives (Bayarçelik & Findikli, 2016). Theoretically, all aspects of OJ are considered predictors of ES (Abekah-Nkrumah & Atinga, 2013). However, according to empirical research, work satisfaction and justice-related factors have varying interactions with and effects on one another. For example, Abekah-Nkrumah and Atinga (2013) and McAuliffe, Manafa, Maseko, Bowie, and White (2009) reported that distributive justice has greater importance and predictive power for job satisfaction compared to procedural and interactional justice. On the other hand, Viswesvaran and Ones (2002) found that only procedural justice has an impact on ES while distributive justice has a non-significant impact.

*H2. Organizational Justice is positively related to employee satisfaction.*

## *2.2. The Influence of Perceived Organizational Support on Employee Satisfaction*

According to Armstrong-Stassen (1998), individuals' behavior is influenced by their opinions about the fundamental processes within their organization and POS is one of these processes. Numerous scholars have established a substantial relationship between POS and ES (Erdogan & Enders, 2007). In long-term research, it was shown that managers with higher levels of POS reported higher levels of ES than managers who were predicted to have lower levels of organizational support. This outcome can be explained by the fact that POS has the potential to boost individuals' trust and belief that their employer acknowledges and rewards their efforts to achieve exceptional performance (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Research suggests that POS initiates a social exchange process wherein individuals feel an obligation to support the organization in accomplishing its objectives. When an employee fosters a positive relationship with their job and organization, it reinforces the principles of social exchange theory resulting in various forms of support for the organization and heightened job satisfaction (Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013). As a result of the aforementioned discussion, it is clear that employees who experience good organizational support have a desire to be socially and emotionally devoted to their jobs and organization. Furthermore, they display high levels of loyalty and work satisfaction (Gillet, Colombat, Michinov, Pronost, & Fouquereau, 2013). The following proposition is made in light of these insights:

*H3. Perceived organizational support is positively related to employee satisfaction.*

### *2.3. The Influences of Organizational Justice, Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Satisfaction on Knowledge Sharing*

KS involves the act of providing task-related information and expertise to assist others in collaborative problem-solving, idea generation or the implementation of policies and procedures (Akram et al., 2017; Wang & Noe, 2010). It encompasses the process of conveying, receiving, exchanging and transferring work-related information and practical expertise with the aim of fostering cooperation and aiding others in addressing various work-related challenges (Wang & Noe, 2010). KS can be divided into two key components: knowledge donating where individuals voluntarily share their intellectual capital and knowledge collecting which involves encouraging others to share their knowledge. KS plays a pivotal role in strengthening and sustaining relationships among those engaged in knowledge donating and collecting. In this study, we consider KS to encompass both knowledge donating and knowledge collecting. The subsequent section explores the theoretical relationship between OJ, POS, ES and KS.

Prior research has consistently shown positive relationships between justice dimensions and KS (e.g., (Ibragimova, Ryan, Windsor, & Prybutok, 2012; Yeşil & Dereli, 2013)). Employees tend to reciprocate past acts of kindness (Fehr & Gächter, 2000) that they perceive as mutually beneficial (Hsu & Lin, 2008) or advantageous for their future knowledge development (Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei, 2005). Consequently, employees are motivated to share their knowledge with one another (Hsu & Lin, 2008). Bock, Zmud, Kim, and Lee (2005) identified mutual relationships as a key factor influencing attitudes towards KS. Moon (2015) argues that organizational justice plays a pivotal role in knowledge sharing. According to social exchange theory, employees who perceive organizational justice are more inclined to engage in cooperative behaviors as part of a reciprocal exchange. Employees who believe in organizational justice (including distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal, and spatial justice) are expected to share knowledge more effectively because sharing knowledge involves actions like donation and collection that are viewed as cooperative exchanges (Moon, 2015). They not only encourage the collection of knowledge from their co-workers but also willingly share their valuable knowledge without hesitation. Motivation theory provides another theoretical basis for supporting the hypotheses of this study suggesting that individuals are more likely to exhibit specific behaviors when they are motivated. The following hypotheses are formulated based on the literature review in the previous section and the theoretical arguments presented in this section:

*H4. Organizational justice is positively related to knowledge sharing.*

In the workplace, employees establish social relationships with their coworkers and nurture these relationships through mutual assistance (He, Qiao, & Wei, 2009). These social bonds extend beyond mere interpersonal interactions as employees can also cultivate social ties within the organizational framework (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Organizational support theory (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) posits that employees internalize the organization's values, forming a generalized belief regarding the organization's appreciation of their contributions and concern for their well-being. Organizations provide various forms of support to their employees, including financial, career-related and adjustment support (Baranik, Roling, & Eby, 2010). However, employees evaluate organizational support based on their overall perception of the support provided by the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The POS is associated with enhanced psychological well-being, a more favorable attitude towards the organization and positive behaviors that contribute to the organization (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). For instance, when employees feel valued and supported by their organization, they are more likely to embrace the organization's values and reciprocate this support by fostering positive attitudes toward the organization. According to a social exchange perspective, Knowledge Sharing (KS) behaviors can be seen as employees' direct response to the organization: employees engage in knowledge sharing as a way to reciprocate the positive support they receive from the organization. Employees make it possible for the company to use knowledge and information which are its most important asset in a knowledge-intensive economy (Jeung, Yoon, & Choi, 2017). Researchers have suggested that the quality of social exchange relationships within organizations serves as a motivator for employees to engage in KS behaviors (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Employees who perceive support from their organizations tend to develop positive attitudes towards the organization as part of the social exchange process. Consequently, these employees are more inclined to share knowledge with their colleagues (Jeung et al., 2017). The following proposition is made in light of the aforementioned discussion:

*H5. Perceived organizational support is positively related to knowledge sharing.*

The relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction plays a paramount role in empowering employees to actively contribute to organizational goals. Employees often seek knowledge not only to fulfill their

job responsibilities but also to efficiently address various routine needs. Existing research highlights that employees are more motivated and engaged in pursuing organizational objectives when they experience elevated job satisfaction (Bontis, Richards, & Serenko, 2011). This implies an innate link between job satisfaction and knowledge sharing. As a result, researchers have delved into investigating the relationship between job satisfaction and knowledge sharing in academic research (Jacobs & Roodt, 2007). The core idea is that employees who are content and satisfied are more inclined to participate in knowledge-sharing endeavors, ultimately promoting enhanced collaboration and overall organizational achievement.

Prior research has witnessed numerous scholars exploring the relationship between job satisfaction and knowledge management. Teh and Sun (2012) have proposed a favorable link between job satisfaction and knowledge sharing. The ramifications of knowledge management have been illuminated across various domains, encompassing processes, personnel, organizational performance and products (Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal 2014). Other studies have also demonstrated a positive relationship between job satisfaction and knowledge sharing Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal (2014). However, despite these findings, earlier research has not provided complete data on how information sharing practices affect individuals through job satisfaction, extrinsic motivation and knowledge sharing intents (Hsu & Lin, 2008). Consequently, further research becomes imperative to delve more profoundly into the intricate relationship between job satisfaction and knowledge management. The literature concerning the interrelationship between job satisfaction and knowledge sharing remains a field in development. Numerous studies have predominantly focused on job satisfaction to elucidate its link with performance outcomes. Oshagbemi (2000) has also contended that the link between knowledge management and job satisfaction lacks comprehensive exploration in the existing literature. Liao, Fei, and Chen (2007) have delved into the relationship between knowledge sharing and job satisfaction within Taiwanese organizations. Their research findings have shed light on the pivotal role of the quality of working relationships between subordinates and supervisors in fostering knowledge-sharing behavior within organizations. Furthermore, they have underscored the significant contribution of technological resources in facilitating successful knowledge sharing practices. In a nutshell, the relationship between job satisfaction and knowledge-sharing practices is rather challenging and needs additional examination.

*H6. Employee Satisfaction is positively related to knowledge sharing.*

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### *3.1. Samples and Procedures*

This study is based on empirical data gathered from employees of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Vietnam. The data collection process used a survey method, employing a questionnaire as the primary instrument. We initiated contact with SME representatives through phone and face-to-face meetings to elucidate the study's objectives and solicit their willingness to participate. Out of the 500 SMEs listed in the 2023 Vietnam report and Vietnamnet magazine, we randomly selected 100 SMEs for inclusion in our research. Consequently, 73 of these enterprises agreed to participate in the study.

The measurement items employed in this study were adapted from existing scales found in the literature to establish an initial set of items. We conducted a pilot test to ensure the questionnaire's validity before commencing formal data collection. This pilot test encompassed in-depth interviews with five distinguished academic scholars from two universities who possessed extensive knowledge in the field of organizational behavior. Additionally, we engaged 25 participants from five SMEs in this process. During the formal data collection phase, we distributed a total of 850 questionnaires. Of these, 528 fully completed questionnaires were returned resulting in 489 valid responses. This yielded a validity rate of 57.53%. We adhered to the recommendation of Armstrong and Overton (1977) and compared the first 100 respondents with the last 100 respondents considering demographic variables such as gender, age, tenure and level of education to assess the potential presence of non-response bias. The results of this comparative analysis revealed no significant differences between the responses of the two groups ( $p > 0.05$ ), thereby indicating that common method bias was not a concern in this study.

The descriptive statistics for the sample demographics are presented in Table 1. Out of the total 563 respondents, 267 (54.6 per cent) were male and 222 (45.4 per cent) were female. These respondents provided answers to questions pertaining to various study variables, including OJ, POS, ES, and KS within their respective firms.

**Table 1.** Sample demographics.

Characteristics	Frequency	%
Gender	489	100
Male	267	54.6
Female	222	45.4
Experience	489	100
Below 1 years	84	17.2
<5 years	181	37.0
5 to <10 years	164	33.5
≥10 years	60	12.3
Age (Years)	489	100
<25 years	80	16.4
25 to <35 years	168	34.4
35 to <45 years	143	29.2
≥45 years	98	20.0
Education	489	100
High-school degree	71	14.5
Some college or diploma	148	30.3
University degree	211	43.1
Post-graduate	59	12.1

### 3.2. Measures

The survey's format and questions were developed through a thorough analysis of existing literature. Two bilingual scholars independently translated the survey from English to Vietnamese and then back again in order to ensure proper translation and maintain consistency in meaning. Each measure used a Likert scale ranging from 1, indicating "totally disagree" to 5 indicating "totally agree". The following measures were operationalized as follows:

### 3.3. Organizational Justice

We used a set of 16 items that were adapted from the research conducted by [DeConinck \(2010\)](#) in order to evaluate OJ. These items, originally crafted by DeConinck and his associates were divided into three specific subgroups: Interactional Justice which focuses on supervisors' actions (consisting of 4 items), procedural justice (comprising 7 items) and distributional justice (comprising 5 items). Illustrative items included statements like "Supervisors' actions are in line with their statements" (interactional justice), "coworkers have a definite impact on the decisions taken" and "the amount of my remuneration corresponds with the amount of my responsibility" (distributional justice). Each sub-scale demonstrated adequate internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha of distributional justice =0.878, procedural justice =0.947, interactional justice =0.833, and the overall organizational justice question =0.929). The fit indicators for the three-factor model of organizational justice were Chi-square=2.858, IFI=0.889, GFI=0.831, TLI=0.867 and CFI=0.888.

### 3.4. Perceived Organizational Support

We used 5 items from the Survey of POS scale developed by [DeConinck \(2010\)](#) to measure POS. These items are adapted to the present research. Sample items included: "My organization takes great pride in accomplishments". The authors conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the validity of the organizational support which yielded good fit indices (Chi-square=1.555, IFI=0.998, GFI=0.994, TLI=0.996, and CFI=0.998). They also demonstrated that the scale was unidimensional and had high validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.903).

### 3.5. Employee Satisfaction

We incorporated 7 specific items derived from the [Al-Zu'bi \(2010\)](#) survey of the ES scale to assess Employee Satisfaction (ES). These items were thoughtfully adapted to align with the context of our current research. A few illustrative statements from this scale include "I find that my viewpoints receive recognition in my workplace". A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in order to affirm the validity of our employee satisfaction

measurement. The authors conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the validity of employee satisfaction which yielded good fit indices (chi-square=1.530, IFI=.997, GFI=0.988, TLI=0.995, and CFI=0.997). They also demonstrated that the scale was unidimensional and had high validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.923).

### *3.6. Knowledge Sharing*

We used 7 items adapted from the research of Akram et al. (2017) to measure KS. Akram and colleague's items were split into two sub-categories: knowledge donating (3 items), and knowledge collecting (4 items). Sample items included: "I always exchange information, knowledge and skills with my colleagues at work" (knowledge donating), and "encourage others to speak up at meetings" (knowledge collecting). Each sub-scale demonstrated adequate internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha of knowledge donating =0.879, knowledge collecting =0.896, and the overall KS question =0.881). The fit indicators for the three-factor model of KS were, chi-square=2.287, IFI=0.899, GFI=0.902, TLI=0.822, and CFI=0.898.

### *3.7. Control Variables*

Several possible factors were considered in our research. These variables encompassed age, with categories ranging from 1 (less than 25 years) to 4 (46 years and above), gender (coded as 1 for male and 2 for female), education level (coded as 1 for high-school degree, 2 for some college or diploma, 3 for university degree and 4 for post-graduate), and tenure which was categorized from 1 (0-5 years) to 4 (10 years and above). Previous studies have indicated significant associations between knowledge sharing (KS) and demographic factors such as age, marital status and years of professional experience.



**Table 2.** Item loading of the latent constructs.

Latent variable	Items	Factor							Cronbach's alpha
		Procedural justice	Interactional justice	Distributional justice	Perceived organizational support	Employee satisfaction	Knowledge donating	Knowledge collecting	
Procedural justice	PJ1	0.792							0.947
	PJ2	0.981							
	PJ3	0.89							
	PJ4	0.756							
	PJ5	0.929							
	PJ6	0.785							
	PJ7	0.739							
Interactional justice	IJ1		0.873						0.878
	IJ2		0.681						
	IJ3		0.801						
	IJ4		0.739						
Distributional justice	DJ1			0.607					0.833
	DJ2			0.992					
	DJ3			0.787					
	DJ4			0.619					
	DJ5			0.51					
Perceived organizational support	POS1				0.655				0.903
	POS2				0.684				
	POS3				0.927				
	POS4				0.907				
	POS5				0.798				
Employee satisfaction	ES1					0.776			0.923
	ES2					0.772			
	ES3					0.831			
	ES4					0.795			
	ES5					0.759			
	ES6					0.836			

Latent variable	Items	Factor							Cronbach's alpha
		Procedural justice	Interactional justice	Distributional justice	Perceived organizational support	Employee satisfaction	Knowledge donating	Knowledge collecting	
	ES7					0.837			
Knowledge donating	KD1						0.829		0.879
	KD2						0.820		
	KD3						0.858		
Knowledge collecting	KC1							0.844	0.896
	KC2							0.807	
	KC3							0.768	
	KC4							0.811	

Note: (1) Extraction method: Principal axis factoring.

(2) Rotation method: Promax with Kaiser normalization.

### 3.8. Data Analysis Methodology

Frequency analysis was employed to assess the demographic characteristics of the sample, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the control and study variables and the reliabilities of the scales were calculated. Additionally, a correlation matrix was computed. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the construct validity of the measurement model while SEM was used to examine the direct, mediation hypotheses and the validity of the model.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Convergent and Discriminant Validity

We conducted an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring with promax rotation to examine whether the observed variables loaded together as expected, demonstrated adequate correlation and met the criteria for reliability and validity. The results showed that both the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test were significant and the commonalities for each variable were sufficiently high (KMO = 0.919). Additionally, all factor loadings are highly significant at the 0.001 level (all exceeding 0.5) providing strong evidence of discriminant validity (see Table 2). This firmly establishes that the selected variables exhibited substantial correlations suitable for factor analysis. The Cronbach's alpha for the identified factors is also displayed in Table 2 with all alphas surpassing 0.87 indicating a robust level of internal consistency. Moreover, all factors exhibit reflectivity since their indicators display strong correlations and can be largely considered interchangeable.

We used Harman's one-factor test to evaluate the potential for common technique bias as all data was collected using a single survey instrument. We included the following items in a principal component factor analysis: 4 items for interactional justice, 7 items for procedural justice, 5 items for distributional justice, 5 items for perceived organizational support, 7 items for employee satisfaction, 3 items for knowledge donating and 4 items for knowledge collecting. The results of the analysis indicated that the first factor in the model accounted for 30.82% of the variance. Therefore, based on these findings, we can confidently conclude that concerns regarding common method bias were unfounded in this study. Additionally, Table 3 displays the mean, standard deviation and correlations among all the study variables along with the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The correlations observed align with the expected directions. However, it's crucial to keep in mind that these correlations do not take the hierarchical structure of the data into account. Therefore, we used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test our hypotheses.

Moreover, in our quest to ascertain discriminant validity, we employed the method established by Chin, Marcolin, and Newsted (2003) to test the discriminant validity of our model. This technique involved contrasting the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each latent construct (represented in the matrix's diagonal elements) with all inter-factor correlations. Our analysis confirmed that all factors maintained substantial discriminant validity. To elaborate, the square root of the AVE for each latent construct surpassed the correlation between that construct and the others, as depicted in the matrix below.

**Table 3.** Correlations and average variances extracted from the constructs.

Latent variable	Mean	Std. deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ProJus	3.78	0.72	0.850										
InterJus	3.66	0.76	0.513**	0.815									
DisJus	3.76	0.64	0.514**	0.555**	0.723								
POS	3.70	0.66	0.461**	0.561**	0.516**	0.812							
EmSatis	3.63	0.62	0.196**	0.234**	0.238**	0.210**	0.795						
KnoDo	3.72	0.78	0.222**	0.247**	0.355**	0.322**	0.237**	0.841					
KnoCo	3.67	0.77	0.239**	0.340**	0.253**	0.385**	0.208**	0.489**	0.826				
Age	2.53	0.99	0.266**	0.241**	0.221**	0.170**	0.124**	0.151**	0.212**	1			
Gender	1.45	0.50	-0.221**	-0.282**	-0.234**	-0.207**	-0.069	-0.114*	-0.144**	-0.169**	1		
Education	2.53	0.89	0.214**	0.248**	0.341**	0.270**	0.135**	0.189**	0.150**	0.307**	-0.256**	1	
Tenure	2.41	0.91	0.215**	0.207**	0.236**	0.240**	0.037	0.148**	0.117**	0.223**	-0.161**	0.227**	1

**Note:** ProJus - Procedural justice; InterJus- Interactional justice; DisJus-Distributional justice; POS-Perceived organizational support; EmSatis-Employee satisfaction ; KnoDo-Knowledge donating; KnoCo- Knowledge collecting. Diagonal elements (in italics) are the square root of the AVE; and off-diagonal elements are the correlations among constructs.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

To assess the suitability of the seven-factor model, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted as a preliminary step before hypothesis testing. The seven-factor model comprised variables related to interactional justice, procedural justice, distributional justice, perceived organizational support, employee satisfaction, knowledge collecting and knowledge donating. The results of the CFA for the measurement model produced the following statistics:  $\chi^2(539)=1552.112$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $GFI=0.844$ ,  $CFI=0.920$ ,  $IFI=0.921$ ,  $TLI=0.912$ , and  $RMSEA=0.062$  (refer to Figure 2). These results indicate a good fit between the measurement model and the collected data.

Chi-square=1552.112 ; df=539 ; P=0.000  
 ;Chi-square/df=2.880; IFI= 0.921  
 ;GFI=0.844; TLI=0.912 ; CFI=0.920; RMSEA= 0.062

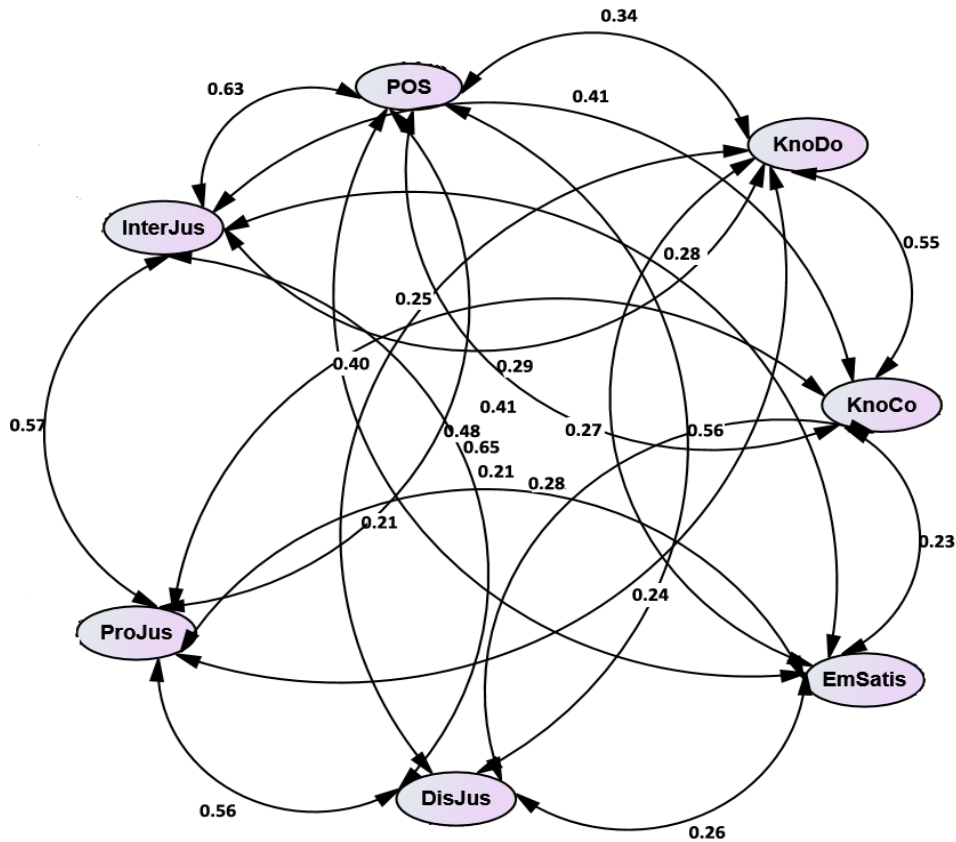


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis.

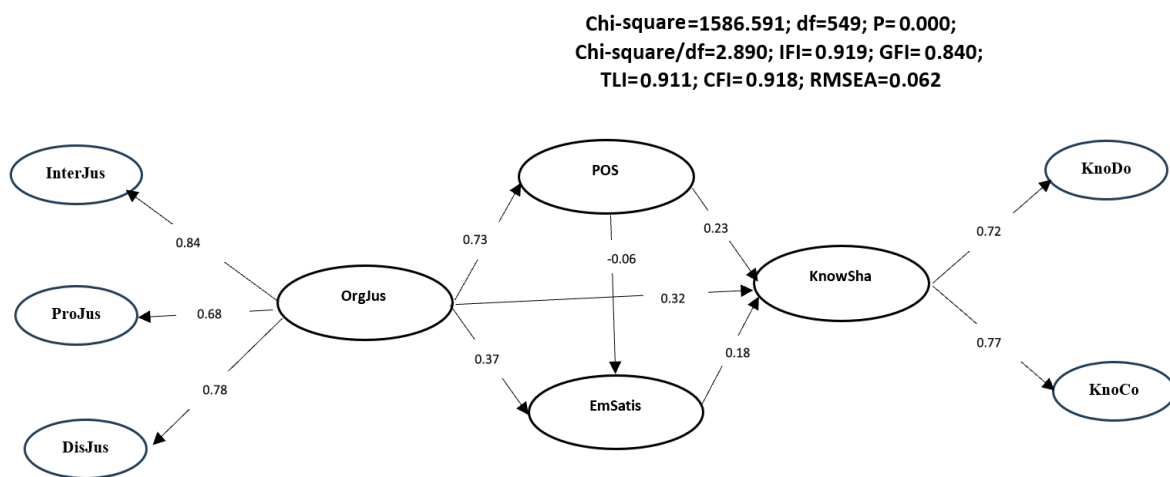
Note: ProJus - procedural justice; InterJus- Interactional justice; DisJus-distributional justice; POS- perceived organizational support; EmSatis-employee satisfaction ; KnoDo-knowledge donating; KnoCo- knowledge collecting.

We evaluated the reliability of our measures through two main indices: the composite reliability index introduced by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and the average variance extracted index of Fornell and Larcker (1981). It is important to note that for all the measures employed in our research, both of these indices exceeded the predefined thresholds. Specifically, the benchmarks are set at a minimum of .60 for the composite reliability index and 0.50 for the AVE index, as per (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Across all our measures, the composite reliability (CR) values fell within the range of 0.912 to 0.968, significantly surpassing the minimum threshold of 0.70. These robust CR values affirm the high reliability of the factors we considered. Furthermore, the AVE values associated with all the factors ranged from 0.523 to 0.723 providing additional evidence of the reliability of our measurements. Moreover, it's noteworthy that all individual items displayed substantial positive loadings on their respective hypothesized factors with the lowest t-value recorded at 26.995. This observation underscores the strong evidence for

convergent validity in line with (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Lastly, when we calculated correlations between any two latent indicators, we consistently found that the confidence interval ( $\pm 2$  S.E.) did not include the value 1.0. These consistent findings offer robust support for the discriminant validity of our measures in line with the framework proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988).

#### 4.2. Hypothesis Testing

In this section, we present the primary findings obtained from our hypothesis testing which aimed to examine the structural relationships among the latent variables. A detailed summary of these results is provided in Table 4 while Figure 3 illustrates the standardized structural coefficients. The size of these coefficients reflects the respective importance of the variables within the model. We employed fitness indices that gauge how effectively the model aligns with the observed data to evaluate the overall fit of our structural model. Our structural model exhibits a favorable level of fit as indicated by the following indices:  $\chi^2(549)=1586.591$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $GFI=0.840$ ,  $CFI=0.918$ ,  $IFI=0.991$ , and  $RMSEA=0.062$ .



**Figure 3.** Results of structural equation model.

**Note:** ProJus - procedural justice; InterJus- Interactional justice; DisJus-distributional justice; OrgJus- organizational justice; POS- perceived organizational support; EmSatis-employee satisfaction ; KnoDo-knowledge donating; KnoCo- knowledge collecting; KnoSha-knowledge sharing.

In Table 4, we present the results derived from the structural model illustrated in Figure 3. Structural equation modeling was performed to examine the direct and indirect effects of the variables OJ, POS and ES on KS. Indirect effects are indicated as a simple multiplicative measure of the magnitude of sequential beta weights (Asher, 1976) while total effects are calculated as the sum of direct and indirect effects (Viswesvaran, 1998). There were no inconsistencies between any of the equations or tests for multicollinearity, linearity, normalcy or homoscedasticity.

The standardized regression coefficients reveal several pivotal insights. OJ exhibits a substantial association with and exerts significant influence over POS ( $\beta_{11}=0.731$ ), ES ( $\beta_{12}=0.371$ ) and KS ( $\beta_{13}=0.323$ ) fully aligning with our stipulated hypotheses 1, 2, and 4, respectively. Moreover, we uncover an indirect effect of OJ on ES (-0.043), channeled through POS ( $0.731 \times 0.059$ ), ultimately yielding an overall influence of OJ on ES tallying at .328. Similarly, the results manifest an indirect effect of OJ on KS (0.227), operating through the intermediary of POS and ES ( $0.731 \times 0.371 \times 0.175$ ), culminating in a comprehensive impact of OJ on KS amounting to 0.550. In the comparative analysis of these effects, we unequivocally establish that the holistic effect of OJ on KS outpaces the combined influence of POS and ES on KS, thus underscoring the salient role of OJ in elucidating KS variance.

Nonetheless, our investigation fails to substantiate a significant relationship between POS and ES as the regression weight for POS in predicting ES fails to exhibit statistically significant differences from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed), thereby refuting hypothesis 3.

Subsequently, our findings ( $\beta_{21}=0.232$  and  $\beta_{22}=0.175$ ) show that POS and ES both exert a direct and significant effect over KS, providing strong support for hypotheses 5 and 6. Finally, table 4 reveals an indirect effect of POS on KS (-0.010), mediated through ES (0.-059x0.175) resulting in a total effect of POS on KS clocking in at 0.222. According to a comprehensive comparison of these effects (0.550), the cumulative effect of POS on KS exceeds the isolated influence of ES on KS.

**Table 4.** The structural model results (direct, indirect and total effects).

Effect from	To	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects
Organizational justice	POS	0.731		0.731
Organizational justice	Employee satisfaction	0.371	-0.043	0.328
POS	Employee satisfaction	-0.059		-0.059
Organizational justice	Knowledge sharing	0.323	0.227	0.550
POS	Knowledge sharing	0.232	-0.010	0.222
Employee satisfaction	Knowledge sharing	0.175		0.175
Goodness of fit statistics		$\chi^2(549)=1586.591$ ; $p=0.000$ ; $\chi^2/df=2.890$ ; $IFI=0.919$ ; $GFI=0.840$ ; $TLI=0.911$ ; $CFI=.918$ ; $RMSEA=0.062$		

## 5. CONCLUSION

We conducted this study with the intention of investigating the complex interactions between organizational justice, organizational support, employee happiness and knowledge sharing in the face of difficult and unsettling circumstances. Organizational is a key component of achievement in the field of knowledge sharing. This research underscores the pivotal strategic roles played by organizational support and employee satisfaction in elevating organizational justice. Through meticulous control of these variables, organizations can nurture distinctive values that are difficult for others to replicate. Our analysis provides substantial support for all our hypotheses affirming that organizational justice exerts not only a direct influence on knowledge sharing but also an indirect one by shaping perceptions of organizational support and employee satisfaction. We initiated this study by crafting and meticulously scrutinizing a model that seamlessly integrates the theories of organizational justice and knowledge sharing. Notably, while some previous studies have delved into the relationship between organizational justice and knowledge sharing, our work distinguishes itself as a pioneering endeavor to comprehensively unravel both the direct and indirect effects of organizational justice on knowledge sharing, especially within the context of SMEs. Our preference for SMEs as the focal point is motivated by their adaptable scale and the closely-knit relationships prevalent across different departments which typically differ from those found in larger organizations. Furthermore, we underscore the substantial impact of employees' perceptions of equitable treatment on various facets, including knowledge sharing. Therefore, the crux of our research revolves around constructing a robust theoretical model tailored to gauge the repercussions of organizational justice on knowledge sharing particularly within the purview of Vietnamese SMEs. Moreover, this research fills in significant theoretical gaps by outlining a model that illustrates how organisational justice affects POS and ES before resulting in KS. Our empirical findings corroborate the intricate relationships postulated in this theoretical framework with statistical affirmation for all hypotheses except the direct impact of POS on ES. Our research offers a cogent framework to elucidate the mechanics underpinning the contribution of organizational justice practices to knowledge sharing through meticulous direct and indirect analyses. In conclusion, our findings coherently indicate that organizational justice practices possess the potential to yield significant effects on KS either through a direct pathway or through the enhancement of POS and ES.

Second, the study shows a positive association between OJ, POS and ES. Within the context of SMEs, OJ holds a vital position. Our findings align with recent empirical studies (Kim & Park, 2017) highlighting the substantial influence of OJ on KS as a direct factor. Additionally, POS and ES also directly affect KS. Hence, employees are

inclined to participate in KS activities when they believe they are being treated fairly, feel supported by the company or are experiencing job satisfaction.

Third, the study also verifies a positive direct and indirect association between OJ and ES through POS. The results demonstrate the importance of OJ in creating ES.

Fourth, the findings concerning the mediating effects indicate that when employees POS and experience job satisfaction, these factors strengthen the direct relationship between OJ and KS. These results demonstrate that apart from OJ, organizational support enables the establishment of a supportive environment that encourages KS. Consequently, employees are more motivated to collaborate and KS in fair organizational settings particularly when they feel content and when their contributions are acknowledged and reciprocated. These two effects of OJ are significant and collectively contribute to fostering additional KS behaviors.

Finally, our results show that increases in organizational support and employee satisfaction are all related to increases in KS especially in the field of SMEs research. It also reveals that organizational support can enhance both employee satisfaction and knowledge sharing. This is the first work that tests the mediating roles of organizational support and employee satisfaction in the relationship between organizational justice and knowledge sharing in SMEs.

There are several limitations to the current investigation.

Firstly, the study relies on the employees' perceptions as single respondents, introducing a certain degree of subjectivity. Additionally, using self-reports to collect data may lead to inflated correlations due to the potential influence of common method variance, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn. However, given the nature of the variables, obtaining ratings from the same individuals was deemed appropriate. Satisfaction and POS are unique to each individual making them the best sources for information on these variables.

Secondly, the model only examines the relationship between OJ and KS through POS and ES.

Thirdly, since the supervisors and subordinates primarily come from local SMEs, the results may have limited generalizability to different cultural and international contexts. Comparative studies involving diverse professions, cultures and industries are necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the constructs included in this study.

Researchers have the opportunity to replicate and expand the current study to gain a deeper understanding and apply the results more broadly based on the findings from the interactions. These extensions may involve exploring additional antecedents of KS and its potential consequences that could shed light on other variables such as employee loyalty. As previously mentioned, this research can be further extended by considering different types of knowledge or incorporating new socio-demographic or organizational characteristics. Therefore, this study serves as a preliminary exploration that can be expanded and built upon in future research.

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#### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STATEMENT**

The Ethical Committee of the Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam has granted approval for this study on 1 June 2023 (Ref. No. 42-2023-RD/HĐ-ĐHCN).

#### **TRANSPARENCY**

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

#### **COMPETING INTERESTS**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

#### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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