Exploring personality traits in the knowledge-sharing behavior: the role of agreeableness and conscientiousness among Malaysian tertiary academics

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Abstract

Purpose – The research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex social, psychological and organizational factors that serve as the foundation driving academics’ knowledge-sharing behavior (KSB) within an academic enclave.

Design/methodology/approach – A cross-sectional research design using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was employed to examine the determinants of personality traits among tertiary academics in Malaysia in relation to their KSB. To this end, a self-administered survey was distributed to a sample group of 526 respondents.

Findings – It is evident that conscientiousness and agreeableness are the personality traits that play a significant role in promoting KSB among academics in higher learning institutions (HLIs). These personality traits are positively linked with academics’ willingness to transfer and receive knowledge. In contrast, the personality trait of openness to experience does not significantly influence KSB.

Research limitations/implications – This study has employed a four-item measurement for evaluating the three distinct personality traits. Despite employing a brief measurement tool, the study has demonstrated significant reliability and validity, particularly in terms of convergent and discriminant validity.

Practical implications – The present study has revealed that conscientiousness in academics is intimately linked with their KSB, which is of paramount importance in the output-based education system. Notably, agreeableness among academics also conveys a positive effect on knowledge sharing (KS) in HLIs, as it cultivates trust and helpfulness among individuals and facilitates the exchange of valuable tacit knowledge.
**Originality/value** – This research explores the relationship between personality traits and KSB among Malaysian academics in HLIs. The study adopts the theories of planned behavior (TPB) and social capital theory (SCT) as theoretical ground, providing a nuanced understanding of the underlying motivations and mechanisms driving academics’ knowledge-sharing behavior within the unique socio-cultural context of Southeast Asia.

**Keywords** Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness to experience, Theory of planned behavior, Social capital theory

**Paper type** Research paper

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**Introduction**

Knowledge is a nontangible asset that plays a crucial role in an organization’s success (Swanson *et al*., 2020). Those enterprises that can effectively harness, utilize and exploit relevant knowledge within their operations are well positioned to thrive, while those that lag in this regard are likely to face fierce competition from their global counterparts (Arif *et al*., 2022). The discipline of knowledge management (KM) has emerged as a valuable tool for organizations seeking to achieve comprehensive excellence in their business activities (Wilson and Campbell, 2020). Given that knowledge sharing (KS) is a crucial component of KM (Fauzi, 2021; Yeşil and Dereli, 2013), it is imperative for entities to propagate knowledge both internally and externally throughout their organizations (Masa’deh *et al*., 2016). KS 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 and Noe, 2010, p. 117). KS encompasses the transmission of both implicit (tacit) and explicit knowledge and often involves a range of initiatives that have been rigorously studied, executed and refined (Gobet, 2017; Wang and Noe, 2010). The reasons behind KS are multifaceted, ranging from the development and comprehension of concepts within certain fields to building consensus and enhancing collective efforts (Syysnummi and Laihonen, 2014). An individual’s expertise and insights can provide an imperative influence, forming one of the key elements behind the collective skill-sharing process within organizations (Annansingh *et al*., 2018).

In higher education settings, higher learning institutions (HLIs) represent the ideal arena for disseminating knowledge through sharing (Jones and Sallis, 2013). The exchange and dissemination of knowledge act as the basis for intellectual advancement and new ideas emerging in the highly dynamic world of academia (Tan, 2016). In this dynamic knowledge-driven society, tertiary academicians, such as university professors, researchers and educators, play a huge role in this ecosystem. Such interactions, collaborations and sharing of knowledge and expertise facilitate disciplinary progresses and help birth intellectual communities (Al-Kurdi *et al*., 2020). In recent years, higher education institutions have become more than just simple repositories of knowledge, as they continually strive to improve their KM practices and learning strategies (Farrukh *et al*., 2020). These organizations seek to manage, blend and disseminate knowledge to their faculty members, making KS a complex yet essential concept in higher education (Syysnummi and Laihonen, 2014). Fostered by academia’s competencies for knowledge development and dissemination, KS has become an ordinary and shared activity among academic staff, improving student and faculty learning while promoting innovation (Al-Kurdi *et al*., 2018; Sriratanaviriyakul and El-Den, 2017). In addition to managing and disseminating knowledge, the academic staff’s research and publications help establish the university’s excellent reputation, which is vital in recruiting new students and raising research and consulting contract funds (Gunasekera and Chong, 2018).

KS is a vital component of the academic community in HLIs (Al-Kurdi *et al*., 2020; Syysnummi and Laihonen, 2014). Within such institutions, the dissemination of shared knowledge, freely and voluntarily, is an essential aspect for academics, administrative staff
and students alike (Fullwood and Rowley, 2017). However, KS in HLIs becomes challenging when some academics are unwilling to share their acquired knowledge (Fauzi et al., 2019; Fauzi, 2023). To better understand and encourage knowledge-sharing behavior (KSB), it is crucial to identify and comprehend all relevant contributing factors. One of these essential factors involves the personality traits of academics. Numerous theories exist in explaining human personalities, with the Big Five personality traits being the most frequently utilized, specifically extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience and emotional stability. These individual traits have been rigorously analyzed in previous research to explain KS intention and behavior in a variety of fields, such as online behavior (Mouakket, 2018; Brailovskaia and Bierhoff, 2020), entrepreneurship (Espíritu-Olmos and Sastre-Castillo, 2015), tourism behavior (Verma and Chandra, 2018; Sаговновић и Kovaciћ, 2022), sports behavior (Hoyt et al., 2009), eating behavior (de Bruijn et al., 2009) and recycling behavior (Poškus and Zukauskienė, 2017). However, there are currently limited studies on how academics’ personalities relate to their KS intention and behavior.

Amidst the intricate tapestry of academia, where knowledge emanates as the dynamic force of progress, a compelling question arises: do personality traits matter? This realization springs from the a view that while learning is crucial for progress of science, research and education, all subjects in this community do not possess an equal behavioral approach (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020). Scholars, researchers and educators in HLIs have different attributes that need to be understood, wherein certain traits like agreeableness and conscientiousness shape willingness to share knowledge. These are long-lasting dispositions that shape academics’ thought processes, emotions and actions in nearly every situation they find themselves in. In order to understand the personalities of academics, the Big Five personality traits model or the five-factor model (FFM) is one of the most popular models for examining personality traits. This model posits that personality can be described and understood in terms of five core dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism. The Big Five personality traits model posits that an individual embodies varying degrees of each trait on the personality spectrum. While many studies have investigated the practice of KS in HLIs, such as Fauzi et al. (2018a, b), Goh and Sandhu (2013), Jolaee et al. (2014), Tan (2016) and Chedid et al. (2020), few have focused on the personalities of academics. In the Malaysian HLI context, there exists a scarcity of in-depth inquiries that investigate the interplay between personality traits and KS behavior among academics. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between academics’ personalities, KS intention and behavior using the theoretical frameworks of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and social capital theory (SCT).

**Theoretical underpinning**

The present study explores the phenomenon of KS among academics by employing two prominent theories of interpersonal behavior, namely the TPB and SCT. Firstly, the TPB, a theoretical model developed by Ajzen and Fishbein in 1989 (Ajzen, 1991), encapsulates one of the most frequently utilized behavioral prediction theories. The TPB posits that intention is directly influenced by three fundamental constructs, namely attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (PBC) (Ajzen, 2011). The TPB represents the second tier of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and extends it by integrating PCB into its framework.

The integration of PBC enhances the explanatory power of the former by accounting for behaviors that are not wholly based on volition. In other words, whereas the TRA implies that behavior is mainly driven by one’s intentions, the TPB acknowledges that certain external factors may impact the control an individual has over their actions. TPB has been extensively employed to anticipate human behavior across a variety of research domains, including KS. Previous scholars have frequently applied TPB to elucidate and comprehend the intentions
and behaviors of individuals concerning KS (Bock et al., 2005; Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010; Fauzi et al., 2018a, b), including academics (Goh and Sandhu, 2013; Jolaee et al., 2014; Raza and Awang, 2020), banking employees (Chatzoglou and Vraimaki, 2009; Abdillah et al., 2018), healthcare personnel (Alhalhouli et al., 2014), school teachers (Zeinabadi, 2022), part-time students (Wu and Zhu, 2012), employees in the oil industry (Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010) and other employees in various organizations (e.g. Bock et al., 2005; Lai et al., 2014; Jeon et al., 2011). The findings from prior studies reveal that TPB significantly impacts KS behavior among these various groups.

In addition to TPB, the present study relies on the SCT as its second theoretical framework. This encompassing framework directs attention toward the human interaction and interpersonal relations among employees in an organization. The SCT comprises various dimensions, including trust, social networks and shared goals (Ganguly et al., 2019). The SCT, thus, primarily centers on interpersonal relationships, through which individuals and organizations create, process, share and utilize knowledge (Tsai et al., 2014; Chiu et al., 2006). Additionally, social capital predictors have demonstrated their potential to augment employees’ KSB with respect to both explicit and tacit knowledge (Hau et al., 2013). The SCT has garnered significant attention within diverse academic and commercial fields due to its positive impact on both individual and organizational performance (Swanson et al., 2020).

Moreover, the SCT has been extensively employed in a multitude of academic disciplines such as sociology (e.g. Dobbin and Smith, 2021; Cai et al., 2021; Ntontis et al., 2020), political science, education (e.g. Almeida et al., 2021; Alshurafat et al., 2021; Murray et al., 2020), healthcare (e.g. Pitas and Ehmer, 2020; Elgar et al., 2020; Sun and Lu, 2020) and management (e.g. Swanson et al., 2020; Ghahtarani et al., 2020; Chang and Hsu, 2016; Huang, 2016) to comprehend and clarify a diverse range of phenomena. Prior research has integrated TPB/TRA with SCT to comprehend respondents’ intentions and behavior (Wu and Zhu, 2012; Chow and Chan, 2008; Lai et al., 2014). Accordingly, the current study recognizes the transformative role of SCT variables, such as trust and social network and aims to examine their impact on academics’ personalities in relation to their KSB with greater tenacity and sophistication.

Research model
The present study attempts to address five research questions and put forward 13 hypotheses in order to comprehend the role of personality traits in the KSB among Malaysian academics. The following Figure 1 provides a representation of the research model employed in this study, portraying the interrelationship among the suggested hypotheses. In this way, this study seeks to delve further into the role of the aforementioned variables on KSB within Malaysian academia.

Research questions and hypothesis development
This study attempts to answer 5 research questions followed by 13 proposed hypotheses:

RQ1. What are the personalities influencing the attitude, intention of KSB and research engagement among the academics?

This study concentrates on the three most significant personalities that predict KS based on the previous work of Matzler et al. (2008), which highlights the importance of these three traits. Meanwhile, Chu et al. (2014) have narrowed down the most influential predictors of workers’ KS in community of practices (CoPs) to the three traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness in achieving business targets. According to Sheese and Graziano (2004), agreeableness is an individual’s disposition toward cooperation, altruism
and empathy, which denotes the significance one places upon amicable relationships with others. Individuals scoring highly in agreeableness often prioritize harmony, exhibit trust and empathy and behave altruistically. Conscientiousness encompasses traits centered around responsibility, organization and hard work (Teh et al., 2011). Those exhibiting high levels of conscientiousness tend toward self-regulated behaviors focused on tasks, goals and upholding commitments. On the other hand, the openness to experience trait reflects proclivities for original thinking and tolerance for the unfamiliar. Persons scoring highly on openness tend to welcome novelty, creative endeavors and paradigm-shifting concepts.

Research shows agreeableness and openness to experience generally increase KS in communities of practice, while conscientiousness plays a more complex regulatory role. Specifically, agreeableness strongly correlates with higher disclosure rates and information-giving behaviors (Matzler et al., 2008, 2011; Lotfi et al., 2016; Anwar, 2017). This reflects agreeable individuals’ harmony-focused and prosocial personalities. Openness also facilitates KS by driving cognitive curiosity, creative ideation and willingness to process novel concepts (Abu Raya et al., 2023; Madrid and Patterson, 2016; Lotfi et al., 2016; Anwar, 2017; Leung and Chiu, 2008). However, conscientiousness yields mixed effects – high diligence may alternately enable or obstruct exchange depending on factors like hoarding tendencies (Yoshino et al., 2021; Spittlehouse et al., 2016) or self-efficacy beliefs (Lee and Klein, 2002; Hao et al., 2019, 2022). In synthesis, agreeableness and openness predispose toward mutual exchange by enhancing cooperative motivations. But conscientiousness shapes exchange contingently based on other drivers like accuracy, excellence and normative rule-following. Therefore, hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 state that:

**H1.** There is a positive relationship between agreeableness and academics’ attitude toward KS.

**H2.** There is a positive relationship between conscientiousness and academics’ attitude toward KS.

**H3.** There is a positive relationship between openness and academics’ attitude toward KS.

Source(s): Authors’ own work/creation
RQ2. How do social-psychological factors (i.e. commitment, social networks and trust) influence the attitude of academics to share knowledge?

The social-psychological factor, originating from the SCT, underscores three variables of relevance to the interaction between academics and other individuals within HLIs, including fellow colleagues, support staff and students. Of interest is how such interactions foster or impede the initiatives toward KS within HLIs. Employers often seek out individuals with a strong sense of dedication to actualizing and completing their academic tasks. Employing individuals who can make a commitment voluntarily, without coercion, is considered desirable (Luo et al., 2021). There are three types of commitment, consisting of normative, continuance and affective commitment. For this study, however, only affective commitment will be explored since KSB requires emotional attachment and affective commitment. Commitment represents devotion and allegiance to one’s institutional affiliations or a specific cause, which can influence their willingness to share knowledge with others (Bibi and Ali, 2017). On the other hand, social networks refer to people or groups that interact and share information with each other regularly and help them exchange what they know across normal boundaries (Kim and Lee, 2006), while trust represents confidence that other parties demonstrate integrity, truthfulness and capability in handling shared knowledge responsibly (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012).

To facilitate KS, academics need personal networks containing multiple friends involved, directly or indirectly, in academia. At the same time, academics’ networking within the HLI context pertains to the relationships within and outside the campus with other academics (Kim and Lee, 2006). A CoP (Mailizar et al., 2022) and professional virtual communities (Lai et al., 2014) are two increasingly accepted types of social networking among academics. These modalities facilitate KS by acting as unofficial platforms for experts to interact and exchange knowledge among peers with similar interests and professions (Hung et al., 2015). Such groups make KS easier since individuals feel more at ease while interacting with others who share the same interest. Employees with greater affective commitments openly impart information across groups (Imamoglu et al., 2019; Bibi and Ali, 2017). Academics driven by involvement in their institutions also exhibit heightened sharing behaviors, whether due to enjoyment, reputational gains, rewards or dutifulness (Bibi and Ali, 2017; Tan and Ramayah, 2014). Moreover, research shows social networks promote KS attitudes and engagement through multiple pathways. These include bolstering motivation via heightened efficacy beliefs (Sivakumar et al., 2023), fulfilling social needs (Yang et al., 2020) and sparking creativity (Zhang et al., 2023). Additionally, academic knowledge flows thrive when students access online communities and technological supports (Haque et al., 2023).

Research indicates that organizations that trust their employees’ capacity to collaborate and work independently contribute to economic development, democratic stability and the general wellbeing of society (Freitag and Bauer, 2016). Knowledge can only be shared when academics have trust in others and ensure such knowledge will not be used in ways that could jeopardize their reputation within an HLI (Mutahar et al., 2022). Past research shows trust is a key driver of KS attitudes and behaviors across contexts. Interpersonal trust enables vulnerable disclosures among teams (Breuer et al., 2020; Kmiecik, 2021). Moreover, organizational trust promotes top-down and bottom-up flows between institutions and members (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012); meanwhile, multidimensional trust also ignites engagement in virtual distance learning (Hao et al., 2022). In summary, by mitigating the risks of unfair exploitation, varied trust types prove to be critical antecedents for mutual KS over barriers.

Based on RQ2, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H4. Commitment has a positive effect on academics’ attitudes toward KS.
H5. Social networks have a positive effect on academics toward KS.

H6. Trust has a positive effect on academics’ intention toward KS.

RQ3. How do organizational and technological factors influence academics’ KS?

Riege (2005) identifies three key factors that influence individual KS behavior: individual traits, organizational context and technological environment. While interpersonal psychology constitutes the fundamental aspect of KS for individuals, these additional factors should also be taken into account. Furthermore, the TPB suggests that intention is determined by subjective norms and PBC. In this regard, Bock et al. (2005) contend that organizational and technological contexts affect these variables.

Addressing the effect of management support on academics’ subjective norm with regard to KS, unwavering support from management motivates academics to share their expertise. Management support refers to how much leaders actively encourage and help employees share what they know with each other (Sveiby and Simons, 2002). Academic professionals, as human beings, possess ample flexibility in sharing knowledge and are often enthusiastic about sharing their tacit knowledge, which is difficult to retrieve due to it being deeply ingrained in their cognitive faculties (Fauzi, 2023). Research shows management support strongly enables KS engagement via combined systemic and psychological mechanisms (Eletter et al., 2023; Ahmad et al., 2023).

Notably, social media platforms constitute a significant and non-negligible influence in the era of Industry 4.0. Social media use refers to the extent to which individuals interact with collaborative online platforms to find, create and share information (Thong et al., 2002). The dissemination of knowledge through media provides opportunities in applying big data and cloud computing (Chen et al., 2014). As experts resistant to change often struggle to survive in the intensive knowledge- and data-driven world, particularly in business-related sectors, it is vital to be able to adapt and take the helm of new developments to guarantee success across any industry (Sultan, 2013).

H7. Management support has a positive effect on academics’ subjective norms in KS.

H8. Social media use has a positive effect on academics’ PBC in KS.

RQ4. How do factors associated with KS intention influence sharing behaviors among the academics?

According to Ajzen (2011), attitude, subjective norm and PBC are the primary predictors of behavior, despite other factors (e.g. habit) potentially affecting individual intention. Indeed, a positive attitude toward KS suggests an individual’s willingness to perform this behavior. Prior studies indicate that academics with a positive inclination toward KS are more likely to portray favorable views of engaging in KS activities and fulfilling their academic duties (Ahmad et al., 2023; Mousa et al., 2019; Punniyamoorthy and Asumptha, 2019; Fauzi et al., 2018a, b). Scholars harboring positive inclinations toward transparency more willingly disseminate insights across peers, networks and institutional ecosystems. Nonetheless, certain individuals who feel negatively about sharing may not exceed their capability threshold or believe that it is their obligation to do so. Consequently, some valuable knowledge may remain unshared or confined within specific academic circles.

Furthermore, subjective norms provide an outline for employees to understand the behavior expected of them for sharing and learning. It posits that academics are more inclined to engage in sharing when they perceive that other groups (i.e. other academics, students and top management) suggest that KS activities are necessary. While these three groups may differ in their approach toward KS, they share a common goal: to encourage KS among...
academics. Past research shows that subjective norms influence KS attitudes and behaviors (Ahmad et al., 2023; Mousa et al., 2019; Fauzi et al., 2018a, b; Mafabi et al., 2017; Tohidinia and Mosakhani, 2010). When transparency earns collective endorsement and esteem, it strengthens personal receptivity.

In addition to subjective norms, PBC plays a vital role in determining academics’ ability and likelihood to share knowledge. Although one may exhibit a positive attitude toward KS, executing the act of sharing may pose some challenges or limitations. As such, PBC is a critical factor to consider when examining academic KS intention and behavior (Akhavan et al., 2015). Multiple studies confirm PBC strongly predicts KS intentions and behaviors among academics (Bock et al., 2005; Fullwood et al., 2013). As academics feel confident in their capabilities to transparently disclose information, their willingness to mutually participate strengthens. Studies spanning institutions in India (Punniyamoorthy and Asumptha, 2019; Ahmad et al., 2023; Hosen et al., 2023) and the United Arab Emirates (Skaik and Othman, 2014) demonstrate consistent positive effects.

Therefore, hypotheses 9, 10 and 11 are presented as follows:

H9. The extent of a favorable attitude toward KS has a positive effect on academics’ intention to share knowledge.

H10. The extent of favorable subjective norms on KS has a positive effect on academics’ intention to share knowledge.

H11. The level of PBC has a positive effect on academics’ intention to share knowledge.

RQ5. How does KS intention influence KSB among the academics?

PBC signifies one’s self-efficacy beliefs regarding their personal capacity to engage in KS, which encompasses individualistic appraisals of mastery and agency in transparently disclosing information across networks (Tirana and Tjakraatmadja, 2019). PBC in KS is deemed essential for academics due to its numerous benefits. The TPB posits that intention is a direct predictor of behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Previous studies have successfully employed TPB or TRA to evaluate KS behavior among academics (Goh and Sandhu, 2013; Jolaee et al., 2014). Notwithstanding, other studies have not made intention the primary catalyst but still incorporated other essential variables in the predictive model for academics’ KS behavior (Sohail and Daud, 2009; Fullwood et al., 2013). Thus, it is evident that the KS intention of academics has a direct bearing on their KS behavior. Based on the final research question, hypotheses 12 and 13 were formulated as follows:

H12. The level of PBC has a positive effect on academics’ KSB.

H13. The intention to share knowledge has a positive effect on academics’ KSB.

**Methodology**

**Population and sample**

This research adopts a non-random quota sampling approach to procure the necessary number of respondents. To attain a more sophisticated and comprehensive account of the aforementioned context, the researchers employed a rigorous sampling procedure that ensured a proportionate representation of the distinct groups of interest. To this end, 3,778 emails were sent to three sub-groups, namely professors, associate professors and senior lecturers, utilizing a 20:30:50 quota allocation, respectively. Their relationship derives from a shared academic role across HLIs, encompassing scholars, researchers and educators. We selected them as a representative group of the HLI academic community, accounting for the multifaceted roles of seniority, expertise and responsibilities.
Notably, in anticipation of the full-scale data collection exercise, a pilot study was conducted with a smaller sample size of 45. The pilot study results presented a sufficient basis for verifying the suitability of the questionnaire utilized in the Malaysian HLIs’ settings (Hertzog, 2008). Such a procedure was deemed necessary to mitigate the risk of making incorrect inferences or drawing unsubstantiated conclusions due to collection instrument inadequacy.

Data collection procedure
The study adopted a rigorous emailing protocol to initiate correspondence with prospective respondents across all 20 public HLIs and six private HLIs of Malaysia with a significant research reputation. These universities were also assessed based on their ranking status using the Quacquarelli Symonds’ ranking system (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2016). Following adherence to this protocol, a total of 540 responses were procured, accounting for 14.31% of the initially distributed survey questionnaires, signifying the overall response rate for this study. Subsequent to the initial dataset screening process, a Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was utilized to eliminate non-responses and instances of straight lining. Following the exclusion of these irrelevant data points from the dataset, a total of 526 comprehensive responses were compiled, thoroughly examined and considered a suitable sample size for subsequent data analyses and conclusive inferences.

Tool
The method employed in this study to examine the determinants of KS behavior among academics was partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), using SmartPLS version 3.2.6 software. The selection of PLS-SEM was grounded in its superior flexibility compared to co-variance-based SEM due to its ability to accommodate non-normal data distributions. In addition, PLS-SEM offers diversified task operations, automatic variable selection and a swift computational process, culminating in a highly efficient research methodology (Boulesteix and Strimmer, 2006). Notably, PLS-SEM guarantees an optimal increase in the variance of dependent variables explained in the structural model, thereby contributing to the rigorous evaluation of the determinants of KS behavior among academics (Peng and Lai, 2012).

Instrument
The study utilized measurement items that were adapted from past studies. The conventional seven-point Likert scale was employed for all the items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). To mitigate social desirability effects and common method bias concerns, the survey items were presented in a balanced order with the inclusion of both positive and negative statements, thus ensuring uniformity in the response pattern. Table 1 showcases a sample of the adapted items and their original sources.

Results
Demographic information
In light of the given demographic statistics pertaining to the survey respondents, it can be summarized that the majority of the sample is comprised of males (284) as opposed to females (244). Malays, who make up the largest ethnic group in Malaysia, amount to 388 respondents (75.7%), while Chinese, Indian and others represent 56 respondents (10.6%), 29 respondents (5.5%) and 43 respondents (8.2%), respectively. In terms of educational qualifications, the majority of the respondents hold a doctoral degree (Ph.D.), while a mere 31 individuals have degrees that do not qualify as such (e.g. master’s and analogous qualifications). With respect
to occupational status, the survey respondents included a total of 104 professors, 156 associate professors and 266 senior lecturers. The results of this study have successfully fulfilled the predetermined 20:30:50 quota allocated to the three subgroups with 19.8, 29.7 and 50.5%, respectively. Notably, it is striking that a medical faculty respondent, who is also an esteemed medical doctor with a master’s degree, holds a senior lecturer position. This contrasts with other faculties, where only PhD holders ascend to senior lecturer positions (see Table 2).

Measurement model
Based on the recommendation posited by Hair et al. (2014), a two-stage PLS-SEM measurement and structural model method were applied. The measurement model presents an analysis of the convergent and discriminant properties of the variables, ensuring the accuracy of the items by scrutinizing the constructs’ reliability and validity. This rigorous method provides a robust framework that thoroughly assesses the involved items and constructs, thus engendering an in-depth and sophisticated analysis (Chin, 2010).

Reliability and validity analysis
In the initial stages of this analysis, it is imperative to evaluate the convergent validity of the questionnaires used to measure the intended constructs. The fundamental aim of this evaluation is to ensure that the survey items converge in the measurement of their intended constructs, which is paramount in any study. Indicator reliability, internal consistency and convergent validity are essential elements of this validity assessment. A satisfactory item loading, defined as above 0.6, satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability levels and a greater-than-0.5 level of the average variance extracted (AVE) are the yardsticks used to measure these crucial elements.

After running the PLS algorithm function, the analysis yielded satisfactory outcomes. It is noted that, with the exception of TR3 of trust and ATT2 of attitude toward KS items, all

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Sample item</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>I see myself as someone who is helpful</td>
<td>Teh et al. (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>My knowledge sharing with other academic members is good</td>
<td>Bock et al. (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>I see myself as someone who is a reliable worker</td>
<td>Teh et al. (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS behavior</td>
<td>I share my working knowledge and experience with my colleagues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS intention</td>
<td>I will share my work reports and official documents with other academics of my institution more frequently in the future</td>
<td>Bock et al. (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management support</td>
<td>The top management in this institution supports me to solve work related problems</td>
<td>Sveiby and Simons (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>I see myself as someone who is inventive</td>
<td>Teh et al. (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived behavioral control</td>
<td>I think I would be able to share my knowledge efficiently</td>
<td>Wu and Chen (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>The resources in the social media relate well to my research needs</td>
<td>Thong et al. (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network</td>
<td>I communicate with other academic members through informal meetings within the institution</td>
<td>Kim and Lee (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective norm</td>
<td>My vice chancellor/director/president thinks that I should share my knowledge with other members in the university</td>
<td>Bock et al. (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>I can freely share ideas with my academic members</td>
<td>Mcallister (1995)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Constructs and items

Source(s): Authors’ own work/creation
indicators recorded scores above 0.6. The values of Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability and AVE exceeded the minimum thresholds, an indication that the data converged in assessing the desired constructs. Table 3 presents the reliability and validity analysis.

**Discriminant validity**

Discriminant validity ensures that the constructs in a given study are discriminant from each other, thus representing a unique construct. Two key criteria used to assess discriminant validity are the Fornell and Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation (Henseler et al., 2016). According to the Fornell and Larcker criterion, the square root of the AVE value (denoted in italic) should be greater than all intercorrelation values, while the HTMT value must be lower than

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
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**Source(s):** Authors’ own work/creation

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**Source(s):** Authors’ own work/creation

**Table 3.** Reliability and validity analysis

**Tertiary academics’ personality traits**
HTMT0.90 (Gold et al., 2001; Teo et al., 2008). Referencing Tables 3 and 4, it is evident that this current study does not present any discernible discriminant validity discrepancies (see Table 5).

Structural model
The second phase of PLS-SEM involves evaluating the structural model (Henseler et al., 2016; Hair et al., 2014; Fauzi, 2022). In this stage, an assessment of each connecting construct’s path coefficient ($\beta$ value), significant correlation ($t$-value) and effect size ($f^2$) is crucial. These metrics were obtained using bootstrapping in SmartPLS 3.2.6 using the 500-resampling technique. The structural model is presented in Figure 2, while Table 6 showcases the result of the path analysis and its significance level.

The results demonstrate that two personality traits, agreeableness and conscientiousness, show a significant relationship to the attitude of KS. The path coefficients for both agreeableness and conscientiousness were found to be 0.150 and 0.138, respectively, with $t$-value statistics indicating their statistical significance at a $\beta$-value <0.005 level. However, the openness trait was found to be insignificant, with an effect size of zero and a $\beta$-value of 0.019. Therefore, openness does not appear to impact an academic’s context of KS behavior.

In line with hypotheses 5 and 6, the extent of an individual’s social networks and trust toward a positive KS attitude were significant, with $\beta$-values of 0.303 ($t$-value 5.212) and 0.252 ($t$-value 5.446), respectively. In contrast, the hypothesis 4 surrounding commitment toward attitude was found to be insignificant, with an effect size of 0 and a $\beta$-value of 0.016. On the other hand, management support had the largest path coefficient of 0.622 ($t$-value of 20.369) and a high effect size of 0.63. Moreover, the effect of social media usage on PBC was also found to be statistically significant, with a path coefficient of 0.472 ($t$-value of 13.699) and an effect size of 0.287. The explained variance of attitude was found to be 42.1%, indicating that all six variables, including agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, commitment, social network and trust, have a significant impact on attitude.

The TPB constructs (hypotheses 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13) also demonstrated a significant path. For the dependent construct of intention, attitude was found to have a path coefficient of 0.251, a $t$-value of 4.328 and an effect size of 0.091. Subjective norm exhibited a path coefficient of 0.342, a $t$-value of 6.599 and an effect size of 0.185, whereas PBC had a path coefficient of 0.331, a $t$-value of 6.054 and an effect size of 0.154. In contrast, for KS behavior-relevant dependent constructs, PBC has a path coefficient of 0.395, a $t$-value of 6.384 and an effect size of 0.157. The path coefficient for KS intention was found to be 0.353, with a $t$-value of 4.903 and an effect size of 0.125.

The subjective norm and PBC explained 38.7 and 22.3%, respectively, of the variance, with management support and social media use impacting both constructs. Meanwhile, the percentage of variance explained in KS intention and behavior was 61.9 and 47.1%, respectively, demonstrating that there is a strong correlation between the respective exogenous variables of TPB and an academic’s KS intentions and actions. Of the 13 hypotheses, only 2 (H3 and H4) were deemed insignificant and were therefore not supported.

Discussion
The present study contributes to the growing understanding of the complex relationship between personality traits and KS among the academics in the Malaysian HLIs. Notably, the findings emphasize the significance of conscientiousness, agreeableness and their interplay in shaping the attitudes surrounding KS within the purview of HLIs. Moreover, the findings
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**Source(s):** Authors' own work/creation
### Hypotheses and Results

#### Table 6: Result of path analysis

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**Note(s):** *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

**Source(s):** Authors’ own work/creation

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**Figure 2.** Structural model

- **Tertiary academics’ personality traits**
- **Hypotheses:** Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, Commitment, Social Network, Trust, Management Support, Social Media Use
- **Variables:** Attitude, Subjective Norm, Knowledge Sharing Intention, Knowledge Sharing Behavior, Perceived Behavioral Control
- **Model R-squared:**
  - $R^2 = 0.421$
  - $R^2 = 0.387$
  - $R^2 = 0.471$

---

**Table 6.** Result of path analysis
also revealed that openness to experience did not notably impact KS behavior among academics. Although this finding contrasts some conventional academic beliefs, it provides a unique perspective on the role of personality in condoning KS.

Conscientiousness personality trait
Conscientiousness emerges as a pivotal trait among academics in the Malaysian HLIs. The trait of conscientiousness, characterized by adherence to rules and guidelines in any given situation, is essential for success in the demanding and challenging world of academia. As a profession marked by high pressure and stress, work performance often hinges on the degree of conscientiousness displayed by the academics. Such a trait empowers academics to navigate complex tasks with precision and dedication by assuring their unwavering adherence to instructions and protocols. Moreover, academics who possess high levels of conscientiousness demonstrate self-determination and the drive to accomplish personal goals as well as organizational objectives. Extant research has demonstrated that conscientiousness serves as a significant predictor of success and achievement for individuals across various domains, including academia. In particular, teaching staff in academia have been found to derive significantly from possessing high levels of conscientiousness (Babar and Tahir, 2020). These findings underscore the importance of conscientiousness for individuals seeking personal and professional growth and further emphasize its role as a fundamental determinant of career success. It is noteworthy that prior studies have assuredly established a positive relationship between conscientiousness and diverse measures of achievement, thereby emphasizing the robustness of conscientiousness as a predictor of performance (Ivcevic and Brackett, 2014; Chong et al., 2014).

Agreeableness personality trait
The personality trait of agreeableness plays a significant role in facilitating KS behavior among the academics in the Malaysian HLIs. Previous research has substantiated that individuals with higher levels of agreeableness tend to maintain better relations with their peers and supervisors by virtue of their increased receptivity to working collaboratively and decreased inclination toward hostility (Reizer et al., 2023; Camps et al., 2016). Academics with high agreeableness tend to possess such skills and can adapt to organizational needs to improve themselves (Freitag and Bauer, 2016). In essence, academics who possess the agreeable trait are likely to exhibit superior performance in the academic sphere, given their proficiency in establishing rapport and engaging in impactful discourse (Kell, 2019). Additionally, research has shown that agreeableness correlates with improved academic achievement, emphasizing it as an indispensable attribute lending itself to academic excellence (Hashmi and Naz, 2020; Hafiz, 2016). Moreover, higher levels of agreeableness help individuals work comfortably in groups across diverse departments, faculties and research centers, which is especially crucial for researchers who must collaborate with various people in their daily work (Lim et al., 2023; Reizer et al., 2023).

Openness to experience personality trait
Surprisingly, the finding reveals that openness to experience does not significantly affect academic attitudes toward KS. This finding is consistent with previous studies that demonstrate an insignificant association between openness and KS within the academic context (Chong et al., 2014). The observation implies that academics’ openness does not necessarily transmute into a willingness and eagerness to share knowledge. The rationale behind this relates to the fact that, even though openness is a prerequisite for academic excellence, high-achieving academics may not have the propensity to share their knowledge,
perceiving some degree of risk. This is because KS is often seen as a risk in academia. In addition, this finding coincides with other studies that demonstrate that openness has an insignificant correlation with academic success (Trapmann et al., 2007). Moreover, the gender dynamics in academia may account for the insignificant relationship between openness and KS in academia. Empirical research indicates that women tend to exhibit lower levels of openness compared to men (Cobb-Clark and Schurer, 2012). This gender-based class difference is linked to differences in risk-taking behavior since women are more likely to anticipate negative outcomes (Harris and Jenkins, 2006). Furthermore, women tend to harbor higher levels of distrust, which can hinder their willingness to openly exchange information (Haselhuhn et al., 2015). Given that only 46% of the study respondents are female, these gender-linked variations may have contributed to the insignificant association of openness with KS observed in our study data.

Theoretical implications
This study has made a significant contribution to the assessment of academics’ psychological profiles based on their big five personalities, as grounded in the TPB, within the context of Malaysian HLIs. Out of the big five personalities, this study concentrates on the three most relevant traits that are deemed to considerably influence academics’ attitudes toward KS in an educational setting: agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness. The uniqueness of these traits lies in their explanation of how they relate to establishing a positive attitude toward KS. Previous studies have shown that conscientiousness, in particular, predicts academic success (Furnham and Cheng, 2014; De Vries et al., 2011), due to its association with individuals’ perseverance in following rules and having the discipline to achieve their goals. Furthermore, this trait can predict individual long-term goals and success (Ivcevic and Brackett, 2014), which is imperative for academics during the era of globalization, where considerable output from research work is required.

In certain Malaysian HLIs, academics face institutional pressures to supervise large numbers of postgraduate students while also ensuring these students publish in top-tier journals as a graduation prerequisite (Hosen et al., 2020). Non-compliance risks denial of promotions and reduced access to monetary assistance or research grants. Thus, sharing knowledge through student mentorship and supervision becomes imperative, with academics obligated to disseminate knowledge that enables high-quality publications. Additionally, conscientious individuals have proven to work better in teams (Zhao et al., 2021), thus highlighting the need for a good academic team to ensure that the publication demand can be met. Above all, research productivity, which includes academic publication, is one significant focus of KS explored in our study, alongside academic and pedagogical KS. However, it is not the sole focus. Our investigation targets research output exchange as part of a broader emphasis encompassing diverse manifestations of KS in academic settings.

Practical implications
The correlation between academics’ level of conscientiousness and their behavior relating to KS has been highlighted in recent studies, revealing that being conscientious could encourage individuals to adhere to rules and objectives. Widespread implementation of output-based education necessitates a need for sharing, where the management seeks academic publications and enhanced research productivity output (Asim et al., 2021). Regrettably, the altitude of competition in academia has resulted in an intensified product-based rather than learning-centric education paradigm, thereby impeding knowledge acquisition among students. In the realm of learning and performance, conscientious behavior is deemed vital for maintaining the quality of research output. It has also been demonstrated that agreeableness as a character trait can positively influence KS behavior in HLIs, particularly in the context of
education, as academic professionals should exhibit greater resourcefulness and helpfulness toward their colleagues. The presence of such characteristics and trust among academics facilitates KS in HLIs, as trust and a willingness to collaborate should enable academics to share valuable knowledge with one another as long as it is understood as being beneficial to them or fellow professionals.

Limitations
This study has utilized a concise four-item measurement tool to assess each of the three personality types under scrutiny. Although this short measurement method has demonstrated considerable reliability and validity, especially in terms of convergent and discriminant validity, a number of prior investigations have employed abbreviated versions of the Big Five personality domain, resulting in issues related to internal consistency. Specifically, Jonason et al. (2011) reported low internal consistency among measurement items despite the presence of a valid construct validity, which was supported by Sanchez-Ruiz et al. (2013). Nonetheless, the present inquiry has sidestepped this concern by utilizing composite reliability, rather than Cronbach’s alpha, to gauge internal consistency. This is because the former method places weight on each measurement item instead of fixating on its static measurement in Cronbach’s alpha. Ultimately, Dijkstra and Henseler (2015) have noted that Cronbach’s alpha is not always reliable when determining the reliability scores of a construct. Moreover, while our study focused on the influence of personality traits on KS, we acknowledge that external factors beyond individual dispositions may also play a meaningful role. School climate and social relations shape the landscapes in which knowledge transfers occur; norms, values and interpersonal connections can either facilitate or obstruct willingness to impart knowledge.

Future works
Conscientiousness is a specific personality trait that has been identified as the best contributor to academic KS behavior. Recent research has brought to light a novel facet of the honesty-humility/integrity, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience (HEXACO) model, which has been found to have a significant influence on academic success (De Vries et al., 2011). The HEXACO model is a personality inventory that includes six traits: H: honesty-humility, E: emotionality, X: extraversion, A: agreeableness, C: conscientiousness and O: openness to experience (Ashton et al., 2014). The sixth trait, honesty-humility/integrity, highlights the importance of academic honesty in knowledge dissemination, as individuals with high levels of this trait are more likely to share knowledge with a broader audience, thereby enhancing their KSB and academic success. To promote KS behavior, future studies should embody this trait in the personality characteristic of academics in KS activities.

Moreover, in addition to honesty-humility/integrity, other factors have been identified that could impact KS behavior among academics, such as descriptive norms (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010), past behaviors (Kang, 2020) and habits (Lin et al., 2020). Therefore, researchers need to investigate these variables in greater detail to better understand KS behavior among academics in the HLI context. Incorporating these additional variables into research could lead to a more comprehensive approach to understanding the mechanisms underlying KSB. However, as pointed out by Ajzen (2011), the exploration of new variables should be undertaken cautiously and systematically.

Conclusion
This study delves into the significance of personality traits for KSB within academic settings. The findings revealed that conscientiousness and agreeableness are the two primary traits
predict such behavior. Additionally, social networks, trust, management support and social media serve as prominent variables in predicting academics’ behaviors, with each respective dependent variable in the TPB containing significant factors. Ultimately, academics’ intentions toward KSB are predicted by attitude, subjective norm and PBC. With Malaysian HLIs being home to a diverse array of ethnicities, including Malays, Chinese, Indians, Sabah and Sarawak natives and expatriates, the country has a unique model of integration. Consequently, the findings from this study can have profound benefits for Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore, where multiracial and multicultural communities exist. As such, this study highlights several factors with notable significance that should be taken seriously to improve HLIs in the country, bolstering their status as world-class universities on a par with their Western counterparts emerging from best community practices.

References


Further reading


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