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# The Roles of Power Distance Orientation and Perceived Insider Status in the Subordinates' Moqi with Supervisors and Sustainable Knowledge-Sharing

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**Abstract:** Although knowledge-sharing, an important facet of knowledge management, has been encouraged for the sustainable development of organizations, this kind of behavior is still not prevalent among group members. To enrich the literature and contribute to its practical usage, this research proposed a model based on the fit theory to examine the roles of perceived insider status (PIS) and power distance orientation in subordinates' Moqi with supervisors (SMS) and knowledge-sharing. Survey data from eight firms in China contained 196 samples and was analyzed by MPLUS software to justify the hypotheses. The results showed that: first, SMS predicted knowledge-sharing and perceived insider status; second, perceived insider status positively mediated the relationship between SMS and knowledge-sharing; third, power distance orientation not only positively moderated the relationship between SMS and perceived insider status, but also positively moderated the relationship between SMS and knowledge-sharing. This study enriched the literature on the antecedents of knowledge-sharing and application of SMS. Additionally, this study proposes a few suggestions to practitioners and researchers for establishing sustainable organizations.

**Keywords:** subordinates' Moqi with supervisors; perceived insider status; knowledge-sharing; power distance orientation; sustainable organization

## 1. Introduction

As one of the main contributors to the sustainability of society as a whole, organizations are asked to change strategies to maintain long-term development [1]. How to efficiently allocate and use resources determines the performance of organizations. Knowledge, the key content of knowledge management, is a kind of important intangible resource that keeps organizations competitive in markets [2,3]. As one of the business strategies for sustainable purposes, knowledge management emphasizes on the use of knowledge and helps organizations transfer and create intellectual capital to maintain long-term comparative advantages and stand out in fierce competition in the markets. It is believed that the organizational sustainability relies on active interactions among employees and efficient knowledge management in teams [4–6]. Past scholars point out that the implementation of inter-member coordination and knowledge management greatly depends on employees' motivations or intentions in knowledge-sharing [7,8]. Knowledge-sharing is defined as a process that allows

members to share ideas, information, and suggestions with each other and identify problems and propose solutions through formal or informal channels [9–11]. Past literature has verified that knowledge-sharing predicts high organizational performance, innovation capabilities and conversion rate of investment [12]. Although a series of incentives have been adopted in a wide range of organizations to encourage knowledge-sharing behaviors, employees are still reluctant to share knowledge with others [13]. Therefore, to prompt knowledge-sharing for the sustainable development of organizations, it is important to explore how to inspire knowledge-sharing behavior within organizations [14].

Recent literature about how to inspire knowledge-sharing behavior in organizations can be roughly categorized into two streams. One stream tries to explore the effects of various types of leadership including empowerment leadership [10], transformational and transactional leadership [15], and abusive leadership [16]. The other stream examines the effects of individual characteristics including individual personalities or dispositions, greed, openness, self-efficacy, age, gender, and tenure [12,13,17–19]. Besides the above two parties, some researchers try to explore how interactions between employees and supervisors influence knowledge-sharing behavior, however, their findings are mostly concluded from Western countries' cases and cannot be referred to the Eastern context. Compared with the Western countries, the indirectness and euphemism in interpersonal communication are higher in Eastern countries. On most occasions, Eastern people are less willing to share their real thoughts with others and they used to let others "guess". Since most Eastern countries (e.g., Japan, Korea) are significantly influenced by Chinese culture in history, this study takes China as a representative of the Eastern countries to explore how interactions between subordinates and their supervisors influence knowledge-sharing behavior.

This research adopts a concept named "subordinates' Moqi with supervisors (SMS)" from Zheng et al. [20] to describe the relationship between subordinates and supervisors in the Eastern context. Moqi is "a state of unspoken or tacit understanding between two parties" [20] (p.956). SMS reflects the idea that interpersonal interactions and cooperation are achieved based on tacit understandings instead of speaking out between subordinates and supervisors [20]. If the subordinates have high "Moqi" with their supervisors, they will better understand what their leaders really want and achieve cooperation. Stamper and Masterson [21] assert that subordinates usually consider supervisors as the representatives of the organization and their intentions in conducting the extra-role behaviors depend on whether inferring themselves as insiders of groups [22]. If they think that they are the real "teammates" with their supervisors, they will voluntarily perform well and take responsibilities beyond their duties to support the supervisors. Perceived insider status (PIS) can be defined as the employees' perceptions of interpersonal distance and to what extent they are accepted as organizational insiders by the groups [23]. If the employees of groups perceive that they are accepted by the organizations, they may be willing to spare no effort to support the development of organizations.

Subsequently, given the influence of cultural difference on the perceptions of employees toward interpersonal relationships, this study adopts the "power distance" to narrate the relationship between subordinates and supervisors. Past literature has confirmed that power distance orientation (PDO) is a dimension of culture and can influence the behaviors of individuals and groups in organizations [24]. Power distance orientation is defined as the extent to which people accept inequality between classes [25,26] and this concept has been applied to evaluate the individual difference between countries. Additionally, Farh et al. [27] believe that the values of PDO are different from individual to individual even when in the same country. In the organizational context, the difference in PDO will influence employees' perceptions and behaviors. If individuals have high PDO, they will keep a longer distance from their supervisors and obey the orders more.

This study attempts to explore the roles of perceived insider status and power distance orientation in the influential mechanism between SMS and knowledge-sharing behavior. The rest of this study is organized as follows. In Section 2, a brief background is provided, followed by the proposition of a series of hypotheses. In Section 3, this research describes the research method. In Section 4, the results

of the model hypotheses are explained. In Section 5, the findings are summarized and the relationships among SMS, knowledge sharing, and sustainable development are demonstrated. In Section 6 the main conclusions, limitations of this paper, and further studies are discussed.

## 2. Background and Research Model

Sustainable development is widely concerned with having a positive effect on enterprises' long-term interest [28]. If enterprises neglect this issue, they will not only miss the opportunities for development, but also face the risk of being eliminated by markets [29]. Past literature points out that enterprises should try to save and reuse the resource, avoiding waste and over-exploitation [29]. To realize sustainable development, enterprises should consider the effects of the operation on society, environment and stakeholder interests [30]. Generally, the patterns of development determine the direction of sustainable development [31]. Many scholars have discussed the organizational sustainability from the perspectives of entrepreneurship [32–36], human resources [29,37], the path of knowledge capability [31,38–40], and corporate social responsibility [30], and suggest that organizations design a sustainable development plan according to their own conditions. For example, to realize sustainable innovation, manufacturing organizations should concern problems in technology; while service organizations should be concerned with issues about the structure and business model [41]. Among different elements for sustainable development, knowledge capability has been concerned by researchers and practitioners, because this kind of capability can offer long-term resources to the organizations for innovation [31]. As organizations acquire this capability, they will better react to new opportunities and take chances to realize further development by utilizing knowledge and upgrading the present technology [40]. On most occasions, organizations cannot reach high knowledge capability without efficient human resource management. Since everyone's capability and knowledge are different, organizations may try to integrate these resources to make full use of the knowledge [31] to improve the productivity [37] and innovation [42] for long-term development [34]. Given the high cost of training and hiring new talent, knowledge management is proposed to help organizations realize the reuse of resources in teams.

Efficient knowledge management enables organizations to better utilize different kinds of information and initiate comparative advantages [2,3,43]. As the key part of knowledge management, knowledge-sharing behavior influences the diffusion of information, establishment of cooperation and innovation [12,44]. Knowledge-sharing can help organizations to reuse the intangible resource and improve the efficiency of organizations. Past literature has verified the positive effect of knowledge-sharing in the cooperation and performance of organizations [44]. However, it is not easy to transfer knowledge accurately and completely due to its adherence to individuals' egos and occupations [45]. Therefore, it is necessary to explore how to inspire individuals' knowledge-sharing behaviors.

### 2.1. Knowledge-Sharing

Knowledge-sharing occurs among individuals and organizations. In the organizational context, knowledge is often shared among employees in the form of various work-related documents, organizational rules, procedures, personal experiences, and technical tips [13]. During this process, many factors influence individuals' intentions to share knowledge. Past literature finds that the difference among individuals can influence their sharing behaviors. Connelly and Kelloway [17] find that age, gender and tenure of working significantly influence individuals' knowledge-sharing. For example, the interaction climate has a greater effect on female than male in sharing knowledge. Subsequently, self-efficacy and openness to self-experience can influence knowledge sharing [18,46,47]. Lin [47] finds that norms of reciprocity, self-efficacy and helping others can motivate knowledge sharing.

Besides, leadership and organizational factors also are verified to be correlated with knowledge-sharing. Authorized leaders can inspire subordinates to participate in knowledge-sharing

through empowering more power and resources to subordinates [10]. As employees perceive care [37], support [17,46], commitment [14,47] and fairness [48] in the groups, they are more willing to participate in knowledge-sharing. Additionally, the climate and environment in working places are also considered to influence knowledge sharing. An active communication climate can enhance the individuals' willingness to communicate and share information with each other [14]. In a multi-language working environment, language convergence will positively affect knowledge-sharing [48].

Although past literature has verified many influential factors on knowledge-sharing, there are still disputes over several factors. For example, the effect of trust on knowledge sharing is disputed [48,49]. Some researchers find that social trust has no significant effect on employees' intention in sharing knowledge. However, general trust is verified to contribute to knowledge-sharing.

## 2.2. Subordinates' Moqi with Supervisors and Knowledge Sharing

One of the main streams exploring the antecedents of knowledge-sharing is from the perspective of leaders. It is found that leaders may motivate the members to share knowledge in teams [10]. Scholars have verified the positive effects of the behaviors of leaders on employees' knowledge-sharing, such as empowering leader behavior, ethical leadership behavior, management support and trust [10,12,50]. However, past literature merely focuses on the direct effects of the leaders' behaviors on knowledge-sharing, few of them explain the phenomenon from the perspective of the influence of the tacit interactions between leaders and subordinates on knowledge-sharing. Supervisors create the most immediate environment for employees through various kinds of behaviors at the workplaces, indirectly influencing the attitudes of subordinates [22,51]. Therefore, it is necessary to study the behaviors of supervisors and the consequences of these behaviors. Person-supervisor fit theory reflects on the consistent and complementary compatibility between subordinates and supervisors [52]. To be specific, subordinates can get more invisible information and assistance through establishing tacit understandings with supervisors, which reflects the complementarity in information resources and abilities between supervisors and subordinates. Moreover, subordinates' understandings about their supervisors' work expectations and tasks reflect the consistency of their work goals. Therefore, the degree of SMS reveals the extent of match between subordinates and supervisor [20]. As the subordinates reach high matching degree with their supervisors, the subordinates will adapt to work with less pressure. On this occasion, subordinates will generate a stronger sense of safety, pleasant mood, and then improve job satisfaction [53] and enhance emotional commitment and recognition of the organization. Furthermore, subordinates' proactive behaviors will increase as their defensiveness decreases [54]. Past literature shows that subordinates with high SMS level seem to be more cooperative and perceptive toward supervisors' expectations and learn more beyond their duties [53], help their colleagues [55], and perform more organizational citizenship behavior [53]. Past literature has been verified that the close relationships that are established during the daily games can improve the employees' sense of belonging and intention to share knowledge [56]. However, if the SMS level is maintained at a low level, subordinates may fail to accurately and fully understand their supervisors' tacit information and expectation and they will fail to satisfactorily finish the task [20].

Since subordinates with high-level SMS have more tacit interactions with their supervisors, they can acquire more responses from their supervisors and may feel being accepted, trusted, and supported by their supervisors [20]. On this occasion, supervisors' acceptance, trust and supports can greatly reduce subordinates' perceived cost in sharing knowledge, indirectly encouraging subordinates to devote themselves to voluntary roles (e.g., knowledge-sharing) [12,55]. However, if SMS stays at a low level, the failure interactions between subordinates and supervisors may lead to employees' divergence and resistance. On this occasion, subordinates may be negative toward the work and less willing to devote themselves in in-role and extra-role contributions (e.g., knowledge sharing). Therefore, it may be inferred that as subordinates have Moqi with their supervisors, and the knowledge-sharing will happen. As reasoned above, this study hypothesizes:

**Hypothesis 1.** *SMS can predict knowledge sharing.*

### *2.3. Subordinates' Moqi with Supervisors, Perceived Insider Status and Knowledge-Sharing*

Perceived insider status can be described as to what extent employee perceive that they are accepted and recognized by the teams. Stamper and Masterson [21] propose two ways to define an "insider" and "outsider" in groups. First, according to social exchange theory, organizations will provide "insiders" with more resources or better remuneration; while "outsiders" cannot get the same treatment. Second, according to organizational socialization strategy, employees can establish psychological contracts with the organizations as they perceive that they are "insiders". Therefore, as employees receive more treatment than others, they will define themselves as "insiders" [57].

The SMS consists of two important traits including the abilities in understanding tacit information and prominent coordination [20]. Specifically, subordinates with high-level SMS can read invisible information from supervisors' unspoken "words" via observing and analyzing supervisors' expressions in eyes, tones of voice, and body language. Then, the ability of understanding supervisors' real intentions, expectations and job requirements may help members to cooperatively conduct tasks with proper and satisfying approaches. Person-supervisor fit theory emphasizes the compatibility among people may give another angle to explain the "good match" between subordinates and supervisors. In this study, perceived insider status can be introduced in the model. As mentioned above, "insiders" may acquire status if they are accepted by the organizations [21]. Person-supervisor fit theory believes that the degree of compatibility between employees' and supervisors' characteristics (e.g., values, personality, job demands, and behavioral styles) significantly influences individuals' cognitions and the outcomes of teams (e.g., organizational citizenship behavior) [53,54,58]. SMS shows the conformance in job expectations and job demands between supervisors and subordinates, which make subordinates feel closely connected with their supervisors as insiders of the organizations [21]. To be specific, the cooperative actions of subordinates with high-level SMS may help them be accepted by organizations [20]. On this occasion, the SMS can make subordinates feel that they match the organizations and they are insiders of the groups [55,59]. Moreover, high SMS may help subordinates get more information and other interests from their supervisors, which leads them to consider themselves as "insiders" [20,21]. Through cooperatively solving problems and accomplishing tasks in work, both supervisors and the subordinates will recognize their contribution to the organizations, indirectly enhancing the sense of being in-group [60]. Thus, this study hypothesizes:

**Hypothesis 2.** *SMS can predict perceived insider status.*

Past literature has verified that perceived insider status can inspire employees' sense of belonging which reflects the degree of the individual's connection with others [23]. Thus, an individual may feel that he/she is close to other members and establish interpersonal trust with them [12,19]. Although there is evidence supporting the correlation between perceived insider status and extra-role behavior (e.g., citizenship behavior) [21], knowledge-sharing that is one kind of extra-role behavior has not been previously examined. As individuals trust their teammates and consider themselves as insiders of organizations, they may not only try to get some rights but also to take certain responsibilities and conduct organizational citizenship behavior [60]. To be specific, individuals with high perceived insider status can more easily perceive trust, support and respect so that they will take the responsibilities of positions and perform some altruistic behaviors beyond the requirements of their job duties (e.g., knowledge sharing) [10,21,37]. Past literature has verified that people with high-level perceived insider status perform better in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and innovation [59].

By contrast, individuals with low perceived insider status may consider that they are abandoned by the organizations because they hardly feel the commitment, trust and acceptance [21]. They will

consider themselves as outsiders and care less about the goals and interests of the organizations. On this occasion, employees' organizational citizenship behaviors are hindered, and they will try to maintain their advantages and interest to avoid being caught up by others [21]. Since knowledge-sharing may threaten their advantages in skills or social capital [61], they will be reluctant to share knowledge. According to the above, this study hypothesizes:

**Hypothesis 3.** *Perceived insider status can predict knowledge sharing.*

Furthermore, perceived insider status may play a mediator role in SMS and knowledge sharing. As subordinates have strong SMS, they may maintain close relationships with their supervisors and consider themselves as the insiders of the groups. Perception of being accepted by the organizations can inspire individuals to trust others and contribute to the development of the groups [62]. On this occasion, the more individuals perceive that they match with members and supervisors, the more they trust others and conduct in-role and extra-role behaviors. Therefore, this study hypothesizes:

**Hypothesis 4.** *Perceived insider status positively mediates the relationship between SMS and knowledge-sharing.*

#### 2.4. The Moderating Role of Power Distance Orientation

Power distance, as a culture value orientation [62], is closely correlated with the cross-class relationship. Compared with Westerners, Easterners are more sensitive to the gaps between classes and their behaviors are more obviously influenced by the responses of high ranks [26]. This study focuses on the moderating effect of power distance at the individual level, namely power distance orientation (PDO) [63]. Power distance orientation means the degree of acceptance of unequal distribution in organizations among people [64]. Individuals with high power distance orientation feel that the subordinates should obey supervisors without query [62,65] and keep a proper distance from the supervisors [66]. However, people with low power distance orientation believe that members in the groups should be generally equal and the relationships betweenordinates and supervisors should not be estranged.

Person-supervisor fit theory emphasizes "compatibility" that is about the relationships between subordinates and supervisors. In these relationships, the degree of perceived distance determines the extent of cooperation. Subordinates holding high-power-distance value may show deference, respect, and loyalty to the authority (i.e., supervisors), at the same time, they prefer to maintain greater social distance with the higher ranks [27,67]. On this occasion, supervisors' responses generally have greater influences on subordinates' attitudes and behaviors [67]. Any favor from supervisors to subordinates will narrow the gap and strengthen the bonds between them [68].

SMS can help subordinates establish close links with supervisors to achieve cooperation as teams. However, people with high PDO perceive that subordinates should keep distance with supervisors. According to social comparison theory [69], people will pre-assess the distance with supervisors through balancing the perception of "should keep distance" and the intention of "shorten perceived distance". For people with high PDO, they may be more sensitive to a change of distance (i.e., SMS) and they are more likely to consider themselves as insiders. Compared with people with high-level PDO, people with low-level PDO overestimate their relationships between their supervisors, and they react less to a change of distance. To some extent, the higher the level of the PDO is, the more change of the effect of SMS on PIS will be perceived. Together, this study postulates that PDO amplifies the impact of SMS on PIS. Thus, this study hypothesizes:

**Hypothesis 5.** *Power distance orientation positively moderates the relationship between SMS and perceived insider status.*

Subsequently, for the people with high-level PDO, they may hold positive attitudes to “being insiders” and tend more to behave proactively. In contrast, people with the low-level PDO may have fewer reactions to the degree of being accepted by the groups and they will have less attachment to their supervisors and teams. Thus, they are less willing to be engaged in performing extra-role behavior, such as knowledge sharing. Thus, this study hypothesizes:

**Hypothesis 6.** *Power distance orientation positively moderates the relationship between SMS and knowledge sharing.*

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Study Design

A quantitative research method was adopted in this study by statistically analyzing the survey data. All questions were designed as “required questions” and uploaded to one of Chinese biggest online survey websites ([www.wjx.cn](http://www.wjx.cn)) in advance. After discussing with the CEOs of 8 firms located in Shanghai, Beijing, Zhejiang, Guangdong and Jiangsu provinces in China, the authors of this research sent the electronic link of the online survey to managers to distribute to the subordinates to fill in. Respondents were required to submit the surveys only after they finished all the questions from 10 July to 15 July in 2018. Finally, this study collected 196 valid data samples (60.5% of the whole distributed surveys). Since these firms were in the cities with main clusters of industries in China and they were the representative firms in manufacturing and service industries, the samples to some extent were representative.

#### 3.2. Measurement

The survey consisted of two parts, including demographic variables (gender, age, education, the tenure of work) and scales of the constructs (subordinates Moqi with supervisors, perceived insider status, knowledge sharing, and power distance orientation). The measurements adopted in this research were selected from past literature and translated from English into Chinese by professional translators. The whole translation process followed the suggestion of Brislin [70]. This study invited two bilingual professors of management to check the translation validity of the Chinese version. The measurements for constructs were all seven-point Likert scales (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Subordinates Moqi with supervisors was measured by an 8-item scale developed by Zheng et al. [20]. Each subordinate was asked to independently report the state between him (her), and his (her) supervisors. The scale was reliable in this study (Cronbach’s alpha was 0.933).

PIS was measured by a 6-item scale [21]. Each subordinate was asked to objectively evaluate her (his) perceptions on to what extent they were accepted by her (his) group. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.945, which satisfied the requirement of reliability.

Knowledge-sharing was measured by an 8-item scale developed by Lu et al. [13]. Subordinates were asked to report their intention to knowledge share behaviors objectively. The observed reliability coefficient was satisfying (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.946$ ).

Power distance orientation was measured by a 6-item scale [71]. Subordinates were asked to objectively report their perceptions of power distance. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of this scale was 0.865 in this study.

The demographic variables were settled as control variables to avoid their influence on dependent variables [72,73].

### 3.3. Participants

In the analysis stage 196 valid samples were involved. The percentage of male (67.3%) was higher than females (32.7%). In terms of the age, the percentage of people who were at 31–40 was the highest (58.2%), the second was people who were at 26–30 (29.6%), and rest people were between 31 and over 50 (12.3%). Regarding education, most of the subordinates were holders of Bachelor degree (63.3%), followed by holders of Associate degree (16.8%), holders of Master degrees (15.3%), holders of high school degree (3.6%), and holders of Doctor Degree (1%). Finally, by the tenure of work, 27.6% the subordinates had worked for 1 to 3 years, followed by beyond 8 years (23.5%), 5–8 years (19.9%), 3–5 years (18.4%) and less than 1 year (10.7%). Furthermore, 19.4% of the participants had worked with their supervisors for less than 1 year, 36.7% of the participants had worked with their supervisors for 1 to 3 years, and 43.7% of the participants had worked with their supervisors for beyond 3 years.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The results of descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) and correlations analysis among constructs are presented in Table 1. As Table 1 shows: SMS was positively correlated with PIS ( $r = 0.549$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and knowledge-sharing behavior ( $r = 0.717$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), respectively. Then, PIS was positively correlated with knowledge-sharing behavior ( $r = 0.547$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Finally, there was no significant correlation between PDO and PIS ( $r = -0.047$ ,  $p = 0.513$ ), and between PDO and knowledge-sharing behavior ( $r = -0.064$ ,  $p = 0.374$ ).

**Table 1.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

Indicator	Means	S.D.	1	2	3
1 SMS	5.82	0.85	-		
2 PIS	5.61	1.20	0.549 **	-	
3 PDO	3.19	1.16	0.011	-0.047	-
4 knowledge sharing	5.71	1.03	0.717 **	0.547 **	-0.064

Note: N = 196. \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . SMS = subordinates' Moqi with supervisors; PDO = power distance orientation; PIS = perceived insider status.

### 4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted by Mplus in this study to check the quality of the measurement model. Mplus has been applied for latent variable modeling (e.g., Zhang et al.) [74] and its comprehensive function in dealing with different kinds of data has been confirmed by academia. Mplus can be used to run confirmatory factor analysis and a structural equation model (SEM) based on various kinds of data (e.g., cross-sectional data, longitudinal data, single-tier data, and multi-tier data). Since the data in this study is cross-sectional and continuous, Mplus can be used to examine the hypotheses based on the collected data.

According to the suggestions of past literature [75,76], a series of indexes are adopted to measure to what extent the model reproduces the data, including the values of  $\chi^2$  goodness-of-fit test ( $\chi^2/df$ ), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR).

Before testing our hypotheses, this study performed CFAs in MPLUS software. At first, it set up a four-latent-factor model including SMS, perceived insider status, knowledge sharing behavior and PDO ( $M_0$ ). Then this study compared the above model ( $M_0$ ) with other three alternative models. These alternative models were: three-latent-factor model ( $M_1$ : SMS + PIS, PDO and knowledge sharing behavior); two-latent-factor model ( $M_2$ : SMS + PIS + PDO, and knowledge-sharing behavior); and one-latent-factor model ( $M_3$ : SMS + PIS + PDO + knowledge-sharing behavior).



Table 2 showed that the results of four-latent-factor model ( $\chi^2_{df=344, N=196} = 630.74$ ; CFI = 0.928; TLI = 0.921; RMSEA = 0.065; SRMR = 0.051) revealed superior fit and good discriminative validity of main variables in this study [77].

**Table 2.** Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results for predicting discriminant validity of main variables.

Model	$\chi^2$	Df	$\Delta \chi^2$	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Quality Criteria				>0.9	>0.9	<0.08	<0.08
four-factor model (M0)	630.74	344		0.928	0.921	0.051	0.065
three-factor model (M1)	1253.96	347	623.22	0.773	0.753	0.085	0.115
two-factor model (M2)	1679.13	349	1048.39	0.667	0.639	0.128	0.139
one-factor model (M3)	2072.90	350	1442.16	0.569	0.534	0.138	0.158

Note: N = 196. M<sub>0</sub> = "subordinates' Moqi with supervisors, perceived insider status, power distance orientation, and knowledge sharing behavior"; M<sub>1</sub> = "subordinates' Moqi with supervisors + perceived insider status, power distance orientation, and knowledge-sharing behavior"; M<sub>2</sub> = "subordinates' Moqi with supervisors+ perceived insider status + power distance orientation, and knowledge sharing behavior"; M<sub>3</sub> = "subordinates' Moqi with supervisors + perceived insider status + power distance orientation + knowledge sharing behavior".

### 4.3. Results of Hypotheses Testing

This study took gender, age, education, organizational time, and the working time with supervisors as control variables, and used the linear regression method to test the Hypotheses 1–3. Then, this study tested H4 through using 1000-time bootstrapping approach. Finally, this study took demographic variables as control variables and tested H5 and H6 by conducting the moderating regression. Results were listed in Table 3.

#### 4.3.1. Main Effects

Hypothesis 1 said that SMS could predict knowledge sharing behavior. According to the results of model 1 in Table 3, SMS was positively correlated with knowledge sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.87$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Thus, H1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that SMS could predict PIS. The outcomes of model 6 in Table 3 indicated that SMS was positively correlated with PIS ( $\beta = 0.77$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Thus, H2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that PIS could predict knowledge sharing behavior. The outcomes of model 2 in Table 3 indicated that PIS was positively correlated with knowledge sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Thus, H3 was supported.

Table 3. The results of the hypotheses test.

Variables	Knowledge-Sharing Behavior								PIS							
	Model 0		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.
Intercept	5.800 **	0.597	0.801	0.513	3.008 **	0.545	0.454 **	0.057	5.822 **	0.421	6.147 **	0.647	1.732 *	0.778	0.636	0.423
Gender	0.065	0.166	0.185	0.123	0.187	0.140	0.216	0.117	0.229 *	0.114	−0.269	0.193	−0.163	0.169	−0.141	0.164
Age	−0.043	0.128	−0.043	0.091	0.002	0.107	−0.024	0.088	−0.048	0.087	−0.099	0.150	−0.099	0.124	−0.127	0.12
Education	−0.037	0.111	−0.032	0.072	−0.021	0.105	−0.026	0.070	−0.036	0.072	−0.035	0.137	−0.031	0.139	−0.039	0.134
Tenure	0.118	0.077	0.074	0.052	0.075	0.068	0.064	0.052	0.066	0.052	0.094	0.090	0.055	0.074	0.058	0.072
Time with supervisor	0.038	0.070	−0.073	0.053	0.016	0.066	−0.064	0.053	−0.044	0.054	0.048	0.077	−0.050	0.071	−0.019	0.072
Ind	−0.258 **	0.096	−0.412	0.080	−0.217	0.087	−0.144	0.074	−0.152*	0.075	−0.090	0.133	0.013	0.128	0	0.125
SMS			0.873 **	0.055			0.725 **	0.069	0.722 **	0.070			0.771 **	0.098	0.731 **	0.096
PIS					0.454 **	0.053	0.191 **	0.057	0.163 **	0.059						
PDO									−0.099 *	0.041					−0.123	0.070
SMS*PDO									0.120 **	0.041					0.188 *	0.079
R <sup>2</sup>	0.073		0.536		0.34		0.571		0.588		0.041		0.309		0.337	
ΔR <sup>2</sup>			0.463		0.267		0.231		0.017				0.268		0.028	

Note: N = 196. \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . SMS = subordinates' Moqi with supervisors; PDO = power distance orientation; PIS = perceived insider status.

#### 4.3.2. Indirect Effects

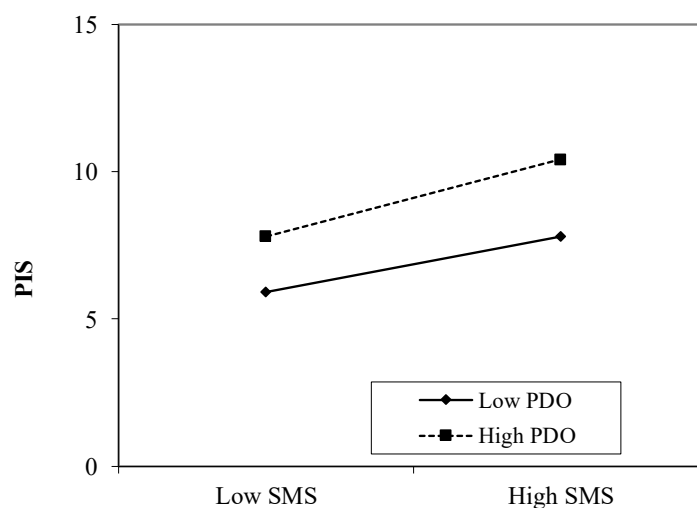
Hypothesis 4 predicted that PIS mediated the effect of SMS on knowledge sharing behavior. The results of model 6 in Table 3 showed that SMS was positively correlated with PIS ( $\beta = 0.77, p = 0.000$ ). In addition, SMS was positively correlated with knowledge-sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.87, p = 0.000$ ) as shown in model 1 in Table 3. The results of model 3 showed that PIS was positively correlated with knowledge-sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.19, p = 0.001$ ); while SMS was still positively correlated with knowledge-sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.73, p = 0.000$ ). The results in Table 4 indicated that the mediating effect of PIS in SMS and knowledge-sharing behavior was significant. The 95% confidence interval of the mediating effect of PIS was [0.064, 0.218], excluding zero. Thus, the mediating effect of PIS was significant. Hypothesis 4 was supported.

**Table 4.** Mediating effect test results.

Relationship	A	b	Indirect Effect	Direct Effect	95% conf.
SMS-PIS-Knowledge sharing behavior	0.771 **	0.191 **	0.147 **	0.725 **	[0.050, 0.237]

Note: N = 196. \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . SMS = subordinates' Moqi with supervisors; PIS = perceived insider status.

Hypothesis 5 stated that PDO moderated the relationship between SMS and PIS. The result of model 7 in Table 3 showed that PDO positively moderated the effect of SMS on PIS ( $\beta = 0.19, p = 0.018$ ). Figure 1 presented this moderating effect of PDO through exhibiting changes of the slopes [77]. As PDO was maintained at a high level (1 standard deviation above the mean), SMS was positively correlated with PIS ( $\beta = 0.95, t = 7.07, p = 0.000$ ). As PDO was maintained at a low level (1 standard deviation below the mean), the positive effect of SMS on PIS was still significant ( $\beta = 0.51, t = 3.83, p = 0.000$ ). Compared with two coefficients, it could be inferred that the higher PDO reached, the stronger effect of SMS on PIS would be. Together, these results provided support for Hypothesis 5.



**Figure 1.** Moderating Effect 1.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that PDO positively moderated the effect of SMS on knowledge-sharing behavior. Model 4 in Table 3 (M4) showed that PDO positively moderated the relationship between SMS and knowledge sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.12, p = 0.004$ ). Figure 2 presents this moderating effect through exhibiting changes of the slopes. As PDO was maintained at a high level (1 standard deviation above the mean), SMS was positively correlated with knowledge sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.58, t = 6.89, p = 0.000$ ). When maintained at a low level (1 standard deviation below the mean), the relationship was still significant ( $\beta = 0.86, t = 10.18, p = 0.000$ ). Compared with two coefficients, it could be inferred

that the higher PDO reached, the stronger the effect of SMS on knowledge-sharing behavior would be. Together, these results provided support for Hypothesis 6.

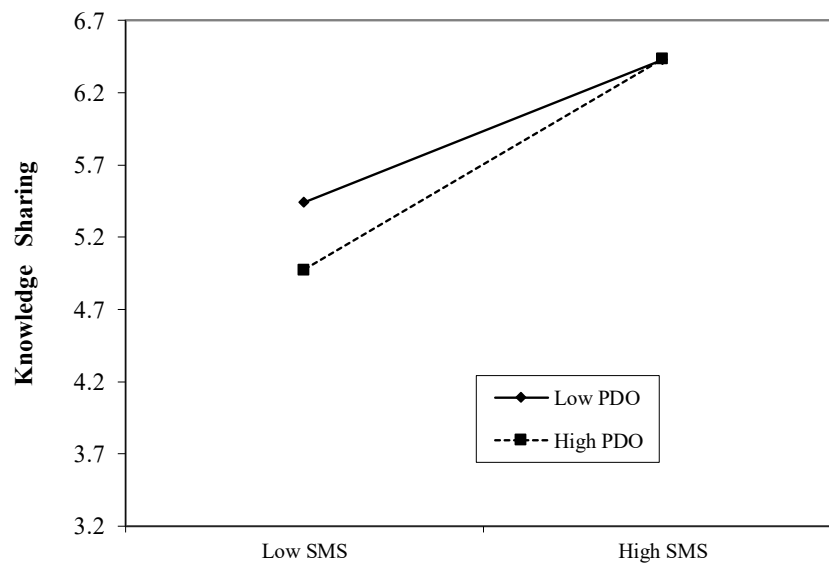


Figure 2. Moderating effect 2.

## 5. Discussions

### 5.1. Findings

The aim of this study is to understand how subordinates' Moqi with supervisors affects knowledge-sharing behavior. According to the person-supervisor fit theory, this study proposes PIS as the mediating factor and power distance orientation as the moderating factor in the subordinates' Moqi with supervisors and knowledge-sharing behavior. Results show that: (1) Moqi between subordinates and supervisors can inspire subordinates' perception of being insiders of the groups and intentions to share knowledge; (2) as subordinates consider they are insiders of the groups and the trusted followers of their supervisors, they will conduct extra-role behaviors, including knowledge sharing behavior; (3) perceived insider status mediates the effect of SMS on subordinates' knowledge sharing behavior; (4) power distance orientation positively moderates the relationship between subordinates' Moqi with supervisors and perceived insider status; (5) the indirect effect of subordinates' Moqi with supervisors on knowledge-sharing through perceived insider status is positively moderated by PDO.

### 5.2. Subordinates' Moqi with Supervisors, Knowledge-Sharing Behavior and Sustainability

Subordinates' Moqi with supervisors is a vital factor in motivating teamwork and development of organizations [20]. A good understanding between subordinates and their supervisors can not only establish closer relationships but also inspire identification and working motivation. On this occasion, members of the team will be more willing to behave altruistically to take more responsibilities. As a kind of altruistic behavior, knowledge sharing is the engine of accumulating and creating of intangible capital. Efficient knowledge sharing not only enhances the relationships among members but also generates more opportunities for innovation and reformation, indirectly prompting the whole organizations to be sustainable.

## 6. Conclusions

This study explores the mechanism of how subordinates' Moqi with supervisors (SMS) influences knowledge sharing behavior. In the path, perceived insider status is regarded as a mediator and power distance orientation is considered as a moderator. The results show that, first, SMS positively

predicted knowledge sharing behavior and perceived insider status; second, perceived insider status positively mediated the relationship between SMS and knowledge sharing behavior; third, power distance orientation positively moderated the relationship between SMS and perceived insider status as well as the relationship between SMS and knowledge-sharing behavior. This study not only enriches the literature, but also can be referred to by practitioners.

### 6.1. Implications

Compared with past literature, this study does not apply the prevalent theories that have been widely adopted (e.g., social exchange theory), instead, this study adopts the person-supervisor fit theory to explore the antecedent of knowledge sharing behavior from the perception of interaction between subordinates and supervisors. The study verifies the predictive effect of person-supervisor fit theory in explaining the knowledge-sharing behavior, which can be referred to by other scholars.

Subsequently, this study expands the finding of Zheng and his colleagues who examine the influence of SMS on role behavior (e.g., task performance) [20], revealing the potential effect of SMS on a specific extra-role behavior (e.g., knowledge-sharing behavior). This study extends the influence of SMS from role behavior to extra-role behavior and provides a more comprehensive understanding of SMS.

Additionally, this study explores the mechanism from antecedent to knowledge-sharing from a different angle. Past scholars mainly explore the influential mechanisms of antecedents on knowledge-sharing from the perspective of social capital, motivation, social network and social exchange, enrolling trust, identification and social interaction [78], greed and perceived self-efficacy [13], expected organizational rewards, reciprocal benefits, knowledge self-efficacy, enjoyment in helping others and justice [12,19,79]. Based on person-supervisor fit theory, this study develops the findings of Zheng et al. [20], proposes the potential effect of a self-concept strategy (i.e., perceived insider status) and reveal its effect in self-concept and knowledge sharing [58]. It is consistent with the view of Shamir who proposes that work behavior may be an expression of individual self-concept that employees want to affirm in work [80].

Finally, this study verifies the moderating effect of culture (i.e., power distance orientation). High power distance reflects greater social distance orientation and low power distance emphasizes equality in power [68]. Past literature believes that good work outcomes may be achieved if individuals' PDO stay at a low level. For example, PDO can moderate the positive cross-level relationship between transformational leadership and procedural justice. The relationship is stronger at low-level PDO rather than high-level PDO [65]. The results of the current study show the positive moderating effect of PDO on the relationship between SMS and PIS. High PDO amplifies the influence of SMS on PIS and knowledge-sharing. The results specify the effect of interaction between subordinates and supervisors on employees' behaviors in the Eastern context.

The present findings have several managerial implications. Firstly, the results of this study reveal that SMS can predict knowledge-sharing. It is suggested that SMS is an important factor that promotes employees' outcomes. To inspire more subordinates' knowledge sharing for organizational sustainability, organizations may encourage employees to build SMS with their supervisors. High SMS can inspire employees to share their knowledge and capital with the organizations, indirectly contributing to the innovation and development of quality of human resources. High-quality and frequent knowledge-sharing can help organizations build high-skill and innovative teams to survive in the competitions and maintain sustainable development in the future. Secondly, the results of this study show that subordinates with high PDO are likely to share knowledge. In multicultural background teams, managers may apply different strategies to promote employees' knowledge-sharing so that the teams can be innovative, flexible and sustainable in a complex environment. Thirdly, findings show that PIS is positive to knowledge-sharing. Thus, supervisors and organizations may pay attention to managerial practices related to PIS of subordinates, such as organizational support, justice and delegation [21, 60,62]. Through inspiring the perceived insider status, the teams can cultivate a climate

of trust so that the members may help each other to work more sustainably. Finally, other strategies that can promote the PIS of subordinates may be integrated into leadership training programs [62].

## 6.2. Limitations and Future Research

The present study has several limitations that should be noticed in future research. Firstly, this study conducts self-reported surveys which may lead to common method variance. To reduce the threat of common method variance, future research may collect data at several different time stages. Secondly, the data of SMS is collected from subordinates. Future research should measure SMS from both subordinates' and supervisors' perspective in order to get a more objective measure of the constructs [81]. Thirdly, this study only explores the mediating effect of one dimension of self-concept (i.e., PIS). Future research may examine the influence of SMS on employees' others behavior via self-esteem (i.e., another dimension of self-concept) [82]. Finally, this study only examines the influence of SMS on knowledge sharing in the Chinese context; future research can test the model in different cultural contexts or through a comparative approach in different countries.

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