

Support, Goal Orientation, and Knowledge Sharing

Wonseok Choi*

Seokhwa Yun**

〈Contents〉

I. Introduction

II. Hypothesis Development

III. Method

IV. Results

V. Discussion

In today's turbulent business environments, knowledge management becomes critical factor determining organizational competitive advantage and success. Although researchers have paid increased attention to knowledge management, we do not have enough understanding of employee knowledge sharing behaviors. Therefore, integrating social exchange, goal orientation, and knowledge sharing literature, this study examines (1) the relationships between supervisory support and knowledge sharing and (2) the moderating role of individual's goal orientation on this relation. The results showed the effects of supervisory support on knowledge sharing, moderated by goal orientation.

I. Introduction

Knowledge being recognized as the most critical resource to organizational success, knowledge management has become progressively important in the organizations (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Spender & Grant, 1996). Reflecting these phenomena, lately, scholars have paid increasing attention to creativity and knowledge sharing (e.g., Kim & Yun,

*Assistant Professor of Management, College of Business Administration at University of Detroit Mercy

**Professor, College of Business Administration, Seoul National University, Korea(ROK), Corresponding Author (syun@snu.ac.kr)

2015; Kim, Kim, & Yun, 2015; Kim, Han, Son, & Yun, 2017; Choi, Kim, & Yun, 2018). Growing evidence shows that organizations are more effective when they are capable of making knowledge in organization shared by members successfully (Argote, Beckman, & Epple, 1990; Baum & Ingram, 1998). For many organizations, knowledge work and the integration of cross-functional expertise in a timely manner become the critical source of competitive advantage.

Organizations adopt several tactics to manage and create knowledge. For instance, expecting benefit of knowledge sharing, organizations use teams and teams are increasingly becoming a dominant form of organizing in knowledge intensive work settings (e.g., Yun, Faraj, & Sims, 2005). They anticipate that when employees with diverse knowledge work together, exchange, sharing, and synergy of knowledge will be generated. It has been proposed that individuals are the prime movers of knowledge creation (Nonaka, 1994) and organizational knowledge is created through communication [sharing] of individual knowledge among co-workers (Senge, 1990). For instance, Srivastava, Bartol, and Locke (2006) examined the intervening roles of knowledge sharing in their relationship between empowering leadership and team performance. Results of the study showed that knowledge sharing was positively related to team performance, measured through a time-lagged market-based source. Quigley, Tesluk, Locke, and Bartol (2007) also found the positive relationship between knowledge sharing and performance, measured as final market share.

However, individuals may not always be willing to share their knowledge (e.g., Szulanski, 1996; Tobin, 1998; Yukl, 2002). For instance, employees do not share knowledge in order to protect their ownership of knowledge, due to perception of not being properly rewarded for knowledge sharing behaviors, and the like. Even though a company may have a great knowledge management system, it is only realizable when people share the knowledge they have. Thus, it becomes a key issue to motivate employees to share their knowledge. Although researchers have recently paid increased attention to knowledge management, we do not have enough understanding of employee knowledge sharing behaviors (e.g., Kim, Lee, Park, & Yun, 2015; Lee, Kim, & Yun, 2018).

Recognizing this issue, in this study, we examined antecedents of employee knowledge sharing behaviors. The present research has two purposes. First, by integrating social ex-

change, organizational support, and knowledge sharing literatures, we proposed that employees are likely to share their knowledge when they feel supported. According to social exchange theory, employees trade their effort in return for the support they received based on the norm of the reciprocity. Employees may share their knowledge as a form of return, since knowledge sharing can benefit the organization. Second, we investigate the moderating role of the employee's goal orientation in this support-knowledge sharing process. We suggest that individual goal orientation can potentially change the effect of support on knowledge sharing. Recently, management scholars have paid increasing attention to goal orientation and found its utility to explain employee behaviors at organization. However, we do not yet know its effects on employee knowledge sharing behaviors. In this study, we propose that individual goal orientation has a moderating effect on the relationship between support and knowledge sharing.

II. Hypothesis Development

1. Support and Knowledge Sharing

Social exchange theory has long been used as an overarching framework to explain the motivational basis behind various employee attitudes and employee behaviors (e.g., Ilies, Nahrgang, Morgeson, 2007; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). According to social exchange theory, at a workplace, employees establish a social exchange relationship with organization and supervisor. As a part of this relationship, employees feel obligated to reciprocate high-quality relationships (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960). As a result, they increase their commitment to the organization and behaviors beneficial to the other party such as organizational citizenship behavior (e.g., Ilies, et al., 2007). Especially, discretionary efforts of employees are likely to be increased when they feel responsibility of reciprocation.

On the basis of the reciprocity norm, support makes recipients feel obligations to exchange caring for caring (Foa & Foa, 1980). According to the meta-analysis of Rhoades

and Eisenberger (2002), support in organization had relationships in the predicted direction with job satisfaction, positive mood at work, and extra-role behavior. They suggest that support influence employees' affective reactions, such as psychological safety by meeting socioemotional needs, and signaling the availability of aid when needed. Furthermore, they argued that support in organization should increase favorable actions to the organization that go beyond assigned responsibility. According to George and Brief (1992), such extra-role behaviors include offering constructive suggestions, and gaining knowledge and skills that are beneficial to the organization. Disterer (2001) suggest that sharing knowledge with others is often seen as additional work, because it requires much time for reflection, documentation, communication, etc. Whereas the performance of an organization is usually measured by billable hours only and time for reflection is also scarce (Haldin-Herrgard, 2000). Reflection of work and sharing experiences are more additional investment and extra work than clearly given present in-role.

Such psychological impact caused by support will positively influence employees' knowledge sharing. Employees are apt to be stingy with knowledge sharing, being anxious about loss of expert power. However if an employee's socioemotional needs are fulfilled by sufficient support, they are likely to feel more comfortable to share their knowledge. Besides, seeking others' knowledge and giving self-knowledge is pretty vulnerable to others' judgment, because it could disclose one's vulnerable point. Therefore, in a supportive environment, employees are likely to perceive psychological comfort and safety which will lower barriers that inhibit initiation of knowledge sharing.

In this study, we examined the effect of supervisory support on knowledge sharing. As a representative of organization, supervisors constantly interact and establish social exchange relationship with employees (e.g., Settoon et al., 1996; Yun, Takeuchi, & Wei, 2007). Their behaviors make a significant impact on employee attitude and behaviors. Further, since direct beneficiary of employee knowledge sharing is likely to be supervisors who interact with employees on a daily basis, employees are likely to react supervisor support. Thus, we suggest a positive effect of supervisory support on knowledge sharing.

Hypothesis 1. Supervisory support is positively related to employee's knowledge sharing.

2. Moderating Effects of Employee's Goal Orientation

Furthermore, we propose that employees' goal orientation will moderate the relationship between supervisory support and knowledge sharing. Although we expect a positive relationship between supervisory support and knowledge sharing, individual differences may change this relationship. In particular, this study focuses on individual goal orientation. The construct of goal orientation has been developed in education research by Dweck (1986). Recently, organizational researchers have paid increasing attention to goal orientation as an important individual difference and found some positive effects on training and motivation (e.g., Choi, Madjar, & Yun, 2018; Payne, Youngcourt, & Beaubien, 2007).

According to Dweck (1986), individuals have different goal orientation, which refers to dispositions to develop or demonstrate ability in achievement situation. Brett and Vandewalle (1999) conceptualize this as a mental framework for how individuals interpret and respond to achievement situations. Because of this difference in goal orientation, some view a difficulty as a challenge that can be mastered with additional effort (learning goal orientation), whereas others view it as an indicator of low ability (performance goal orientation) (Vandewalle, 1997). Especially this kind of personal feature is very useful to account for additional work-behavior such as knowledge sharing, organizational citizenship behavior.

These distinct goal orientations are associated with different cognitive framework. Especially beliefs about ability and effort are conspicuous. For those who have learning goal orientation, ability is an adaptable attribute that can be developed through effort and experience (Brette & Vandewalle, 1999). In contrast, for individuals with performance goal orientation, ability is a fixed, maladaptive attribute and a product of innate talent (Dweck, 1999). Although goal orientation was initially conceptualized as a two-factor construct, learning or performance orientation, Vandewalle (1997) suggested three dimensions, learning goal orientation, performance-prove goal orientation, and performance-avoid goal orientation. This study adopts this three factor model to develop hypothesis on moderat-

ing effects of goal orientation.

First, learning goal orientation refers to the desire to develop the self by acquiring new skills, mastering new situations, and improving one's competence from experience (VandeWalle, 1997). Empirical studies found that learning goal orientation is positively related to openness to new experiences, optimism, an internal locus of control, and the desire to work hard (Button, Mathieu, & Zajac, 1996; VandeWalle, 1996, 1997). In their meta-analysis, Payne and her colleagues (2007) found that learning goal orientation had positive relationships with all Big Five personality dimensions, self-esteem, general self-efficacy, feedback-seeking, learning, and academic performance.

Employees with high learning goal orientation are more confident, active, open-minded, and agreeable. They also deal with anxiety more effectively. As stated above, employees may not be willing to share the knowledge because of the fear that they may lose expert power. However, employee learning goal orientation may reduce this anxiety and make them become more actively share the knowledge they have. In addition, employees with high learning goal orientation may define supervisory support more broadly than those with low learning goal orientation. They are also likely to view supervisor behavior more positively. Further, in order to learn new skills and knowledge, it is essential to disclose the level of knowledge and expertise to others. Thus, given the same amount of support they receive, they are likely to engage in knowledge sharing behaviors than those with low learning goal orientation. Thus, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 2. Employee's learning goal orientation moderates the relationship between supervisory support and knowledge sharing such that this relationship is stronger when learning goal orientation is high than when learning goal orientation is low.

Second, performance-prove goal orientation indicates the desire to prove one's competence and to gain favorable judgments from others (VandeWalle, 1997). According to Dweck (1986), with a performance-prove goal orientation, individuals view ability as a fixed attribute. Empirical research suggested that performance-prove oriented individuals seek to prove their ability by looking better than others do (Butler,

1993; Farr, Hoffmann, & Ringenbach, 1993). Individuals with a performance-prove goal orientation are inclined to evaluate their performance by comparing with others. Therefore, for those who have this goal orientation, it is very important to attain positive comparisons to others. In other words, they are likely to have competitive nature.

Further, recent meta-analysis demonstrated that performance-prove goal orientation has a negative relationship with emotional stability, self-esteem, and general self-efficacy (Payne et al., 2007). This implies that individuals with high performance-prove orientation is likely to experience more anxiety stemming from knowledge sharing and they are more vulnerable, which may lead them to exert more effort to protect expert power they have. They may react to other's behaviors more cautiously. On the other hands, those with low performance-prove orientation may be less concerned about loss of the expert power. Thus, employees with low performance-prove orientation are likely to react more strongly to the supervisory support than those with high performance-prove orientation. Thus, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 3. Employee's performance-prove goal orientation moderates the relationship between supervisory support and knowledge sharing such that this relationship is weaker when performance-prove goal orientation is high than when performance-prove goal orientation is low.

Third, Performance-avoid goal orientation expresses the desire to avoid the disproving of one's competence and to avoid negative judgments about it (VandeWalle, 1997). According to Button et al. (1996), a performance goal orientation should be associated with defensive behavior if activities could demonstrate a low level of skill and risk negative evaluation from others. VandeWalle (1996, 1997) found that performance-avoid goal orientation is positively related to fear of negative evaluation from other, but it is also negatively related to optimism and the desire to work hard. In the end, individuals with this goal orientation are highly passive. If possible, individuals with performance-avoid goal orientation avoid all the risk that disclose their abilities and skills, which is in

nature opposing to knowledge sharing.

However, in the way of active knowledge sharing, it cannot be avoided to communicate and interact with others. The more special knowledge and expertise, the more communication and interaction with others required to be transferred. Employees with high performance-avoid goal orientation may see those interactions risky since their low abilities and skills are exposed. Even if an individual feels obligation by supervisory support, the performance-avoid oriented will keep away from knowledge sharing and try to reciprocate it in other way as possible. The positive influence of support on knowledge sharing will be enfeebled by a performance-avoid goal orientation. Thus, we expect the followings:

Hypothesis 4. Employee's performance-avoid goal orientation moderates the relationship between supervisory support and knowledge sharing such that this relationship is weaker when performance-avoid goal orientation is high than when performance-avoid goal orientation is low.

III. Method

1. Participants and Procedures

Data were collected using questionnaires distributed to employees and their direct managers in 11 Korean companies. Surveys were distributed to 270 full-time employees and of these 194 were returned, giving a response rate of 71.85%. Of them, 58.8% were male. Their average age was 28.96 years ($SD = 4.52$). On average, their job tenure was 26.72 months ($SD = 24.30$). The jobs that the participants held were very diverse, including software engineering, office management, and book editing, to name only a few.

The managerial surveys were delivered to their immediate managers and after managers' rating, those surveys are sealed by manager and returned by participants. Fifty managers returned the survey, of whom 88.0% were male and 90.0% held at least a bachelor's

degree. Their average age was 34.90 years ($SD = 4.35$). They had an average job tenure of 43.61 months ($SD = 28.49$). On average, one manager rate 4.2 subordinates.

2. Measures

The focal employees were asked to provide information on supervisory support, and goal orientation. Their immediate managers were asked to rate the focal employee's knowledge sharing. All of the items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Supervisory Support. Supervisory support was measured using eight items (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997; Kim et al., 2015, Lee, et al., 2013). A sample item reads, "My supervisor seems willing to listen to my problems." The Cronbach's α for this scale was .94.

Goal Orientation. We used a 13-item instrument that was developed and validated by VandeWalle (1997). The instrument has three subscales: (a) five items measured learning goal orientation, a desire to develop the self by acquiring new skills, mastering new situations, and improving one's competence, (b) four items measured the proving dimension of a performance goal orientation, a desire to prove one's competence and to gain favorable judgments about it, and (c) five items measured the avoiding dimension of a performance goal orientation, a desire to avoid the disproving of one's competence and to avoid negative judgments about it. The reliabilities of these three scales were .89, .87, .81 for the remaining five-item learning goal orientation, four-item proving dimension of performance goal orientation, and four-item avoiding dimension of performance goal orientation, respectively.

Knowledge Sharing. We asked the manager to rate the employee's knowledge sharing, using seven items (e.g., Kim et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2015; Srivastava et al., 2006). The object of the item was changed to refer to the subordinate. A sample item reads, "S/he share his/her special knowledge and expertise with one another." The reliability of this scale was .92.

3. Analytical Strategy

To test Hypothesis 1 through 4, we performed four sets of hierarchical regression analyses. In step 1, we included control variables followed by supervisory support in step 2 and goal orientation in step 3. In step 4, the interaction term between the two (supervisory support x goal orientation) was entered. In addition, according to Aiken and West (1991), we plotted the significant interaction effect, using ± 1 standard deviation.

We conducted analyses with several control variables such as demographics (educational level, job tenure, hierarchical job level, and employment type). Irrespective of control variables, the results of these analyses were stable and those were depicted in Table 2.

IV. Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations are depicted in <Table 1>. <Table 2> shows the results of the hierarchical regression analyses for supervisory support, goal orientation, and knowledge sharing. Model 1-4D report the standardized beta coefficients (β s) associated with each individual step. Hypothesis 1 proposed a positive relationship between

<Table 1> Descriptive Statistics of the Variables^a

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Supervisory support ^b	5.03	1.08	(.94)				
2. Learning goal orientation ^b	5.09	.85	.015	(.89)			
3. Performance-prove goal orientation ^b	4.70	.91	-.021	.392**	(.87)		
4. Performance-avoid goal orientation ^b	3.41	1.02	-.198**	-.161*	.077	(.81)	
5. Knowledge sharing ^c	4.80	.92	.249**	.122	.072	-.080	(.92)

Note. N=194. Reliabilities are on the diagonal in parentheses. ^a Means and standard deviations are listed for informational purposes only because these were standardized for the regression analyses. ^b These variables were measured from focal employees. ^c Managerial rating. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$ (two-tailed)

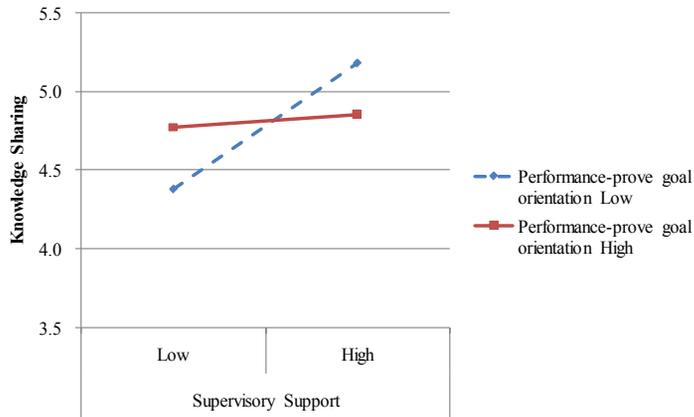
supervisory support and knowledge sharing. The supervisory support was significantly and positively related to knowledge sharing ($\beta = .25, p < .001$, Model 2). Therefore, the results provide support for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 proposed a moderating effect of learning goal orientation on the

〈Table 2〉 Multiple Regression Results on Knowledge Sharing (Supervisory Support)

Variable	Knowledge Sharing						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 4C	Model 4D
Step1: Control Variables							
Education	.07	.08	.07	.07	.08	.07	.08
Tenure	.01	.04	.06	.06	.07	.06	.07
Occupational Type	-.07	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.05
Employment Type	.19**	.18*	.18*	.18*	.19**	.18*	.19**
Step2: Main effects							
1. Supervisory Support (SS)		.25**	.24**	.29	1.07**	.32	.68
Step3: Employee's Goal Orientation							
2. Learning Goal Orientation (LGO)			.11	.14	.10	.11	-.34
3. Performance-Prove Goal Orientation (PPGO)			.03	.03	.75*	.03	.93**
4. Performance-Avoid Goal Orientation (PAGO)			-.02	-.03	-.04	.09	-.03
Step4: Interaction							
5. SS ^a * LGO ^b				-.06			.76
6. SS ^a * PPGO ^c					-1.10*		-1.38**
7. SS ^a * PAGO ^d						-.12	-.01
Overall F	2.39	4.52	3.23	2.85	3.70	2.87	3.17
R ²	.05	.11	.12	.12	.15	.12	.16
F change		12.46*	1.06	.01	6.74*	.14	2.76*
R ² change		.06	.02	.00	.03	.00	.04

Note. N=194. Entries are standardized regression coefficients. Regardless of control variable, results are stable. ^a SS=Supervisory Support. ^b LGO=Learning Goal Orientation. ^c PPGO=Performance-Prove Goal Orientation. ^d PAGO=Performance-Avoid Goal Orientation. † $p \leq .1$, * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed)



〈Figure 1〉 Interaction of Supervisory Support and Performance-Prove Goal Orientation on Knowledge Sharing

relationship between supervisory support and knowledge sharing. Contrary to our expectations, there was no significant interaction effect ($\beta = -.06$, n.s., Model 4A). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 argued for a moderating effect of performance-prove goal orientation on the relationship between supervisory support and knowledge sharing. The last step of the regression analysis indicated that the interaction terms explained 3 percent of the incremental variance. The beta coefficients for this step showed a significant interaction effect between supervisory and performance-prove goal orientation on knowledge sharing ($\beta = -1.38$, $p < .01$, Model 4D). When plotted, the figure indicated that the relationship between supervisory support and knowledge sharing was weaker when performance-prove goal orientation was high than when it was low (see 〈Figure 1〉). Therefore, these results provided support for Hypothesis 3.

Contrary to our expectation, there was no significant interaction effect between supervisory support and performance-avoid goal orientation on knowledge sharing ($\beta = -.12$, n.s., Model 4C). Thus, the result of our study did not provide support for Hypothesis 4.

V. Discussion

As business environments change rapidly, knowledge management becomes critical factor determining organizational competitive advantage and success. Organizations adopted many different approaches to instill knowledge creation and sharing. Recent studies found positive effects of knowledge sharing on organizational performance (Quigley et al., 2007; Srivastava et al., 2006). Lately, researchers started to pay attention to the determinants of employee knowledge sharing behaviors. For instance, Srivastava et al. (2006) found a positive effect of empowering leadership on knowledge sharing in management teams. Quigley et al. (2007) demonstrated incentive condition and norms have positive effect on knowledge sharing behaviors. However, we still do not have enough understanding of the determinants of employee knowledge sharing behaviors. Recognizing these, in this study, we tried to enhance our knowledge of employee knowledge sharing behaviors.

Integrating social exchange, goal orientation, and knowledge sharing literature, in this study, we investigated the effects of supervisory support on knowledge sharing, moderated by goal orientation. Our results demonstrated a positive relationship between supervisory support and employee knowledge sharing behaviors. Further, we found a moderating effect of performance-prove goal orientation in this process.

The result of our research was consistent with social exchange theory. On the basis of the reciprocity norm, social exchange theorists argue that favorable treatment obliges the return of it. Employees, acting from this sense of reciprocation, perform various extra-role behaviors by discretion. Knowledge sharing is a valuable discretionary behavior for reciprocation, which requires pretty much time and effort. Therefore, we expected that the more supported employees feel, the more knowledge sharing be induced as one of these various reciprocations. Consistent with our expectation, supervisory support is positively related to knowledge sharing. Our finding extends the social exchange perspective to explain employee knowledge sharing behaviors by indicating that social exchange theory works in motivation of knowledge sharing as well. Our findings demonstrated the importance of supervisory support in employee knowledge sharing. The result suggested that supervisory

support is one of the essential conditions to motivate voluntary knowledge sharing. Therefore, managers, especially those who work in a high knowledge intensive situation, should pay more attention to the employees' perceptions that supervisor valued their contributions and care about their well-being.

In this study, we found that performance-prove goal orientation weakens the positive relationship between supervisory support and knowledge sharing. In other words, performance-prove goal orientation, which generally lead to outperformance of in-role (e.g., Barron & Harackiewicz, 2000; Elliot & Church, 1997), had a negative impact on employee knowledge sharing behaviors. Our findings indicated the importance of an employee's goal orientation, especially performance-prove goal orientation, in knowledge sharing. More specifically, although supervisor support enhances knowledge sharing in organization, the extent of knowledge sharing is restricted by employees' performance-prove goal orientations. Thus, managers' attempts should be made to change employees' goal orientation to be more productive not competitive. For instance, Kraiger, Ford, and Salas (1993) recommended the use of mentoring a developmental activity. VandeWalle and Cummings (1997) also proposed that managers create strong situations that implant growing motivation into employees.

Limitations and Conclusion

This study does have a few limitations to be carefully considered. First, a limitation of our study involves its cross-sectional nature. We collected the data at one point in time. Therefore, we cannot infer causality, although our hypotheses were theoretically driven. Future research needs to utilize longitudinal research design in order to better infer causality. Another limitation may be diversities of respondents' jobs in this survey. The participants held various types of jobs. This can be an advantage of the research, which supports the generalization of this study, but it can also be a potential source of confusion. Particularly, diverse jobs might have totally different requirements about the extent of knowledge sharing. Third, in this study, we investigated limited number of potential antecedents of employee knowledge sharing behaviors, i.e. support and goal

orientation. However, numerous factors which effect on knowledge sharing are remained. For instance, organizational climate such as group cohesion will reduce barriers of knowledge sharing. Strong climate of sharing is expected to foster active knowledge sharing in organization. In addition, diverse reinforcement such as pay system, reward for knowledge sharing would be critical to activate knowledge sharing in organization. Moreover, additional moderators of knowledge sharing should be studied by future researches. As you can see the moderating role of goal orientation in this study, even in the same situation, knowledge sharing of individuals is quite different by personal features. For instance, personality such as extraversion can play role as a moderator in motivation of knowledge sharing. Thus, future research is needed to integrate this study's findings and another factor.

Despite its limitations, this study advances our understanding of employee knowledge sharing behaviors in organization. Especially, we investigated factors that motivate voluntary knowledge sharing. Supervisory support that care about employees' well-being and value their contribution, is needed to motivate knowledge sharing. Furthermore, our findings suggest that individual's goal orientation has an important role in enhancement of knowledge sharing. More specifically, performance-prove goal orientation weakened the positive relations between supervisory support and knowledge sharing. In short, this study illustrates the utility of social exchange perspective and individual differences to explain individual knowledge sharing behaviors. Hence, additional research in this area seems not only to be warranted but also to be critical to advance our understanding of employee knowledge sharing behaviors.

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구성원의 목표 성향에 따른 상사후원 인식과 지식공유 간의 관계

최 원 석*

윤 석 화**

요 약

급변하는 오늘의 경영환경 속에서, 지식 경영은 조직의 경쟁 우위와 성공을 위한 핵심적인 요인이 되었다. 그간 지식 경영에 많은 연구자들의 관심이 쏟아졌지만, 여전히 구성원의 지식 공유에 대한 더 깊은 이해가 요구되고 있다. 이에 본 연구는, 사회 교환, 목표 성향, 그리고 지식 공유 분야의 선행 연구를 바탕으로, (1) 상사 후원과 지식 공유의 관계와 (2) 구성원들의 목표 성향의 조절 효과를 살펴보았다. 실증 분석 결과 상사 후원이 지식 공유에 미치는 효과가 구성원들의 목표 성향에 따라 조절됨이 밝혀졌다.

*디트로이트머시대학교 경영대학 조교수

**서울대학교 경영대학 교수