

EFFECT OF TEAM TRUST ON KNOWLEDGE SHARING AMONG PHARMACEUTICAL SALES PERSONS IN KOGI WEST SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of team trust on knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District, with specific emphasis on affect-based trust, cognition-based trust, competence-based trust, and integrity-based trust. The study adopted a survey research design, and data were collected from 266 pharmaceutical salespersons selected through purposive and convenient sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire measured the dimensions of team trust and their influence on knowledge-sharing behaviours. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used to summarize respondents' perceptions, while inferential statistics (regression analysis) were employed to test the relationships between variables. The findings revealed that team trust significantly influences knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons. Affect-based trust was found to strengthen interpersonal bonds that facilitate the exchange of work-related ideas and experiences. Cognition-based and competence-based trust positively enhanced willingness to share customer information, product knowledge, and market insights, as salespersons were more comfortable sharing knowledge with colleagues who demonstrated logical reasoning and professional skill. Overall, the study established that higher levels of team trust lead to more effective knowledge-sharing practices within the pharmaceutical sales environment. The study recommends that pharmaceutical firms in Kogi West should promote trust-building strategies, including team-building exercises, transparent communication, recognition of employee competence, and ethical workplace culture. Managers should also encourage collaboration over competition to improve the sharing of sales intelligence, enhance team performance, and strengthen organizational productivity.

Keywords: Team trust, Affect-based trust, Cognition-based trust, Competence-based trust, Integrity-based trust, Knowledge sharing,

INTRODUCTION

Trust and knowledge sharing are foundational pillars of effective teamwork, especially in knowledge-intensive industries such as the pharmaceutical sector. In Nigeria, the pharmaceutical industry has experienced rapid expansion, increasing the need for strong interpersonal collaboration and information exchange among sales teams (Akinwale & Ajibola, 2021). In the Kogi West Senatorial District, pharmaceutical salespersons play a pivotal role in bridging pharmaceutical companies and healthcare providers through product detailing, market intelligence gathering, and knowledge dissemination. However, the success of these activities largely depends on the level of trust that exists within their teams, as trust serves as a lubricant for open communication and collaboration (McAllister, 1995; Mayer,

Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Trust, therefore, functions not only as a psychological mechanism but also as an enabler of sustained knowledge transfer in competitive sales environments.

According to McAllister (1995), team trust can be categorized into two major forms affect-based trust and cognition-based trust. Affect-based trust arises from interpersonal bonds and emotional connections among team members, while cognition-based trust is rooted in the perceived reliability and dependability of colleagues. Similarly, Mayer et al. (1995) introduced competence-based trust (belief in the ability of a colleague to perform assigned tasks effectively) and integrity-based trust (belief in colleagues' honesty and adherence to moral and ethical principles). These dimensions collectively influence how individuals within a team choose to share or withhold knowledge.

Affect-based trust has been fostered through relationship-building initiatives such as team retreats, mentorship programmes, and peer recognition systems, which have strengthened interpersonal bonds and improved morale among sales representatives (Ajayi & Yusuf, 2021).

In the pharmaceutical sales context, especially in regions like Kogi West, these forms of trust determine how effectively salespersons exchange knowledge regarding customer relations, competitor activities, and product updates. Affect-based trust enables salespersons to share tacit knowledge experiential understanding gained through personal interactions with clients, while cognition facilitate the exchange of explicit knowledge, such as clinical data and product features (Chowdhury, 2005; Holste & Fields, 2010).

Despite these achievements, the development of team trust and effective knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West is hindered by several contextual challenges. Geographical dispersion, limited interpersonal interaction, and high turnover rates among salespersons hinder the formation of strong affective bonds (Holste & Fields, 2010). The vast and infrastructurally uneven landscape of Kogi West limits regular face-to-face contact, reducing opportunities for informal communication, emotional connection, and mentorship.

Knowledge has become one of the most valuable assets in modern organizations, particularly in knowledge-intensive and customer-driven industries such as pharmaceuticals. Within this sector, pharmaceutical salespersons (also known as medical representatives) serve as crucial intermediaries between producers of clinical and product knowledge and the end users, including physicians, pharmacists, and patients. Their ability to effectively share, interpret, and apply both explicit and tacit knowledge determines not only their sales success but also the ethical and regulatory integrity of pharmaceutical practice. However, despite the recognized importance of knowledge sharing, studies indicate that many pharmaceutical sales teams in Nigeria, including those in Kogi West Senatorial District, experience significant challenges in disseminating relevant product information, regulatory updates, and sales techniques among colleagues (Adeniran & Onifade, 2021). These challenges often stem from interpersonal distrust, competition, and perceived risks associated with sharing valuable market or client knowledge.

Trust has been consistently identified as one of the most critical antecedents of effective knowledge sharing. It reduces perceived vulnerability, fosters open communication, and promotes cooperative behavior among team members. However, existing studies tend to conceptualize trust as a one-dimensional construct, overlooking the multidimensional nature of interpersonal trust within team contexts. Most prior studies treat trust as either emotion-driven or cognition-

driven, without exploring how these two major theoretical models intersect to influence distinct forms of knowledge sharing (tacit versus explicit).

There is a pressing need to empirically examine how the different dimensions of trust—Affect-Based, Cognition-Based affect knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District.

- i. How does Affect-Based Trust influence knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District?
- ii. To what extent does Cognition-Based Trust affect knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District?

The main objective of this study is **to** examine the effect of team trust on knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi west Senatorial District. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the effect of **affect-based trust** on knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District.
- ii. Assess the influence of **cognition-based trust** on knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District.

The following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the study:

H₀₁: Affect-Based Trust has no significant effect on knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District.

H₀₂: Cognition-Based Trust has no significant effect on knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Team Trust

Trust is a foundational construct in the study of organizational behaviour, representing the belief that others will act in ways that are reliable, fair, and beneficial to the collective. Within team contexts, team trust refers to the shared belief among team members that each individual can be relied upon to perform their roles competently, uphold integrity, and support the group's objectives (Costa et al., 2018; McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011). It encompasses both the cognitive evaluation of others' abilities and integrity, and the affective bonds of mutual care and emotional safety that facilitate collaboration. As teams become increasingly interdependent and dispersed as is typical of pharmaceutical sales teams, trust becomes an indispensable social mechanism for coordination, communication, and knowledge sharing (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2019). Team trust is often conceptualized as a collective state rather than a purely

dyadic phenomenon. It evolves through repeated interactions, positive feedback loops, and the internalization of shared norms (De Jong et al., 2016).

Affect-Based Trust and Knowledge Sharing

This dimension of trust is grounded in affective exchange theory, which posits that emotions and social attachment influence the decision to trust others and engage in cooperative behavior (Law et al., 2021). Empirical studies have shown that affect-based trust enhances relational commitment, reduces conflict, and encourages the sharing of tacit and sensitive knowledge (Alshamsi & Ekinci, 2023; Lin, 2020). In team environments, affect-based trust fosters psychological safety which is defined as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking and thereby facilitating open communication (Frazier et al., 2017). Affect-based trust mitigates risks by establishing emotional security and relational confidence, allowing team members to engage in open and honest communication (Chaudhary et al., 2022).

Cognition-Based Trust and Its Application to Knowledge Sharing

Individuals develop cognition-based trust when they have accumulated sufficient evidence about a colleague's reliability, competence, and consistency over time. This form of trust is thus evaluative, built through observation of behavior, fulfillment of promises, and alignment with professional standards (Chua et al., 2018). Scholars have identified several dimensions within cognition-based trust, including predictability, dependability, and integrity, which collectively strengthen one's confidence in another's actions (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2019; Mayer & Gavin, 2005). In organizational contexts, cognition-based trust contributes to cooperative behaviors and willingness to engage in mutual exchanges that require risk and vulnerability (Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Ng & Chua, 2020). For instance, when employees perceive that their colleagues are dependable and adhere to ethical norms, they are more inclined to share both explicit and tacit knowledge essential for organizational success. This rational confidence underpins productive communication and ensures that information is exchanged accurately, reducing the uncertainty that often characterizes collaborative work environments (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). In the pharmaceutical industry, cognition-based trust is particularly vital due to the high level of professional and ethical scrutiny under which pharmaceutical salespersons operate. They are not only responsible for marketing pharmaceutical products but also for disseminating critical medical knowledge to physicians, pharmacists, and healthcare institutions (Eze et al., 2022).

Knowledge Sharing among Pharmaceutical Salespersons

Knowledge sharing has increasingly become a central process in knowledge-intensive sectors such as the pharmaceutical industry, where the survival and competitiveness of organizations depend on how effectively employees exchange both explicit and tacit knowledge (Wang & Noe, 2010). The pharmaceutical sales profession, particularly within the Nigerian context, operates in a dynamic, highly competitive, and ethically sensitive environment that requires continuous learning, exchange of market information, and professional collaboration. In Kogi West Senatorial District, pharmaceutical salespersons (PSRs) serve as critical intermediaries between manufacturing firms and end-users such as healthcare providers, pharmacies, and hospitals. The knowledge they acquire from clinical briefings, product launches, and field experiences must be disseminated across their networks to ensure that medical practitioners and customers are well-informed and that firms comply with regulatory standards (Orinya et al., 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Anchored Theory for the Study: Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The underpinning theory for this study is the social exchange theory. The **social exchange theory (SET)**, originally developed by **Homans (1958)** and further refined by **Blau (1964)**, provides a foundational theoretical framework for understanding interpersonal and interorganizational relationships based on reciprocal exchanges of tangible and intangible resources. The theory posits that human interactions are guided by an underlying cost-benefit analysis, where individuals engage in social behaviors expecting rewards in return for their efforts. The choice of SET as the anchoring theory is based on its strong explanatory power in understanding interpersonal relationships and behavioral exchanges within organizational contexts. Originating from the works of **Homans (1958)** and **Blau (1964)**, the theory posits that human interactions are shaped by the expectation of reciprocal benefits—individuals engage in social exchanges when they believe that their contributions will be rewarded either materially, socially, or emotionally. Within this framework, **trust** functions as the cornerstone of social exchange, promoting cooperative behavior and sustained knowledge sharing (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Empirical Review

A related study by Ogunleye (2024) titled “Interpersonal Trust and Knowledge Sharing among Pharmaceutical Salespersons in Southwest Nigeria” investigated how affective and integrity-based trust affect knowledge exchange within pharmaceutical networks. The objective was to explore how interpersonal trust shapes employees’ motivation to share both explicit and tacit knowledge. The research employed a qualitative case study design, using focus group discussions and interviews with 50 sales representatives from five leading pharmaceutical companies. The findings revealed that affective trust, built through consistent interpersonal interaction and emotional understanding, encourages open knowledge exchange. Respondents noted that when trust is low, employees tend to withhold crucial product or market information due to fear of exploitation or internal competition. Ogunleye recommended that organizations create trust-enhancing communication platforms and mentorship programs.

A related empirical study by Ogunyemi and Bello (2024), titled “The Role of Cognitive Trust in Knowledge Sharing among Healthcare Sales Representatives in Abuja, Nigeria,” sought to investigate the mediating effect of organizational culture on the trust–knowledge sharing relationship. The research adopted a survey design, targeting pharmaceutical sales representatives from both indigenous and multinational companies. The study revealed that cognition-based trust strongly predicted knowledge sharing, particularly when supported by a culture of fairness, accountability, and consistent communication. The authors concluded that cognitive trust is instrumental in overcoming knowledge hoarding tendencies common in competitive pharmaceutical environments. They recommended that management should design transparent reward systems and competence-based appraisal structures to reinforce rational trust. However, they cautioned that cognitive trust alone might not sustain long-term cooperation unless complemented by affective elements of interpersonal trust.

In another significant contribution, Adebayo and Musa (2023) examined “Cognition-Based Trust and Knowledge Sharing among Pharmaceutical Marketers in Lagos State, Nigeria.” Their study sought to identify how rational perceptions of trustworthiness among team members influenced the willingness to share product-related and client-specific knowledge. Employing a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 286 pharmaceutical marketers across six multinational firms. Analysis using multiple regression techniques demonstrated that cognition-based trust had a strong and statistically significant effect on knowledge sharing intentions ($\beta = 0.47, p < 0.01$). The authors emphasized that competence, reliability, and consistency of behavior are the most critical antecedents of trust in knowledge-intensive industries like pharmaceuticals. They recommended that managers foster cognitive trust by instituting competence-based recognition systems and transparent decision-making practices. Nevertheless, the

study's reliance on self-reported data introduced potential biases, which the authors acknowledged as a methodological limitation.

Similarly, Mensah and Adu-Gyamfi (2022), in their research titled "Trust and Knowledge Sharing in the Ghanaian Pharmaceutical Industry: The Moderating Role of Organizational Culture," sought to investigate the mediating role of affect-based trust in promoting knowledge dissemination among pharmaceutical sales representatives. The study adopted a mixed-method approach, combining survey data from 187 respondents with in-depth interviews from 12 key industry stakeholders. Their findings indicated that affect-based trust had a statistically significant positive influence on tacit knowledge sharing, particularly when employees perceived their colleagues as emotionally supportive and trustworthy. The researchers concluded that affect-based trust fosters an environment where salespersons willingly share customer insights, competitor information, and professional experiences, even beyond formal reporting lines. This finding directly supports the current study's assumption that affective trust strengthens interpersonal collaboration among pharmaceutical representatives in Kogi West Senatorial District.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect, describe, and analyze data from a given population to determine the relationships between variables without manipulating them. The population of this study comprises 933 pharmaceutical salespersons working across various pharmaceutical firms, distributors, and outlets within Kogi West Senatorial District. These salespersons represent companies with a significant presence in towns such as Lokoja, Kabba, Egbe, and Mopa. The population is chosen because pharmaceutical salespersons operate in team-oriented environments where knowledge sharing is critical for sales effectiveness, product awareness, and customer satisfaction.

Table1 Population Distribution of the Study

S/N	Pharmaceutical Firm / Outlet	Location	Number of Salespersons
1	Emzor Pharmaceutical Ltd	Lokoja	180
2	Fidson Healthcare Plc	Kabba	150
3	Juhel Pharmaceutical Ltd	Mopa	120
4	May & Baker Nigeria Plc	Egbe	100
5	Swiss Pharma Nigeria Ltd	Lokoja	200
6	GSK Pharmaceutical Nigeria Plc	Kabba	183
	Total		933

Source: Field Survey (2025)

To determine the sample size, the researcher used Taro Yamane sample size determination formula as presented below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n= sample size

N= population of the study

1= constant

e = level of significant (5%)

Therefore, $n = \frac{933}{1 + 933(0.05)^2}$

$$n = \frac{933}{1 + 933(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{933}{1 + 23323}$$

$$n = \frac{933}{3.3325}$$

$$n = 280$$

Thus, a total of 280 respondents constitute the sample size for the study

The major research instrument for this study is the structured questionnaire, which were used to collect quantitative data. A total of 280 questionnaires were distributed to pharmaceutical salespersons working across various pharmaceutical firms, distributors, and outlets within Kogi West Senatorial District.

Table 2 : Proportionate distribution of sample amongst the SMEs in kogi state

S/N	Pharmaceutical Firm / Outlet	No. of Salespersons	Total stud Population	Sample Size	Proportionate Sample Size & Sample percentage (%)
1	Emzor Pharmaceutical Ltd	180	933	280	54 19.3
2	Fidson Healthcare Plc	150			45 16.1
3	Juhel Pharmaceutical Ltd	120			36 12.9
4	May & Baker Nigeria Plc	100			30 10.7

5	Swiss Pharma Nigeria Ltd	200		60	21.4
6	GSK Pharmaceutical Nigeria Plc	183		55	19.6
	Total	933		280	100

Source: Researcher's Computation (2025)

The study employed a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. This method ensures that each pharmaceutical firm (stratum) within the population is proportionately represented in the sample. Within each stratum, respondents will be randomly selected to ensure objectivity and minimize sampling bias. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), stratified sampling enhances representativeness, especially when the population is heterogeneous across multiple subgroups. Therefore, this approach ensures that each pharmaceutical company contributes a fair share of respondents relative to its staff strength.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was used to analyse the data while multiple regression analysis was used to estimate the model and test all the null hypotheses formulated.

Model Specification

To test the hypotheses, the following regression model will be used:

$$KS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ABT + \beta_2 CBT + \epsilon$$

Where:

KS = Knowledge Sharing

ABT = Affect-Based Trust

CBT = Cognition-Based Trust

β_0 = Constant term

β_1 – β_2 = Coefficients of independent variables

ϵ = Error term

The model will determine the extent to which each trust dimension influences knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A total of 280 questionnaires were distributed respondent, the retrieved questionnaires are 266 copies .

Table 3 Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.667 ^a	.445	.436	1.07881

a. Predictors: (Constant), Cognition-Based Trust, Affect-Based Trust

The multiple correlation coefficient (R) is **0.667**, indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship between the combined trust dimensions and knowledge-sharing behavior. This suggests that higher levels of trust among team

members are associated with increased knowledge-sharing activities within the pharmaceutical sales teams. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is **0.445**, meaning that approximately **44.5% of the variance in knowledge-sharing behavior** can be explained by the combined effect of integrity-based, competence-based, cognition-based, and affect-based trust. The adjusted R^2 value of **0.436** accounts for the number of predictors in the model, indicating a reasonably good fit while controlling for potential model overfitting. The standard error of the estimate is **1.07881**, reflecting the average deviation of the observed knowledge-sharing scores from the predicted scores.

Table 4 ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	243.239	2	60.810	52.250	.000 ^b
	Residual	303.757	264	1.164		
	Total	546.996	266			
a. Dependent Variable: Knowledge Sharing						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Integrity- Cognition-Based Trust, Affect-Based Trust						

The F-value for the model is **52.250**, with a corresponding significance level (p-value) of **0.000**, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant and that, collectively, the four dimensions of trust have a meaningful impact on knowledge-sharing behavior. The regression sum of squares (243.239) reflects the variation in knowledge-sharing behavior explained by the model, while the residual sum of squares (303.757) represents the variation not accounted for by the predictors. The total sum of squares is 546.996. With 2 degrees of freedom for the regression and 264 for the residual, the mean square values (60.810 for regression and 1.164 for residual) confirm that the model explains a substantial portion of the variance in knowledge sharing.

Table 5 Coefficients

Coefficients ^a				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.

		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.964	.765		6.490	.000
	Affect-Based Trust	.158	.029	.329	5.371	.000
	Cognition-Based Trust	.451	.040	.548	11.349	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Knowledge Sharing						

Discussion of Findings

The multiple regression analysis examined the extent to which affect-based trust, cognition-based trust, competence-based trust, and integrity-based trust predict knowledge sharing among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District. The coefficients presented in Table 5 indicate that three of the trust dimensions—*affect-based trust, cognition-based trust, and competence-based trust*—positively and significantly influence knowledge sharing, while *integrity-based trust* shows a significant but negative effect.

Hypothesis One: Affect-Based Trust Has No Significant Effect on Knowledge Sharing

The result reveals that affect-based trust has a significant positive effect on knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.329, t = 5.371, p < 0.05$). This means that when salespersons perceive warmth, emotional safety, and interpersonal closeness in their relationships with colleagues, they are more likely to engage in the open exchange of work-related knowledge. This finding aligns with prior empirical works such as those by Chow and Chan (2008) and Holste and Fields (2010), who found that emotional bonds and interpersonal trust facilitate knowledge transfer and willingness to share tacit knowledge. Similarly, Jo and Joo (2011) assert that affective trust fosters psychological safety, which strengthens employees' readiness to share sensitive or experience-based information. From the perspective of Social Capital Theory, affect-based trust represents relational capital, which strengthens cooperative behavior. In line with the theory, the findings confirm that relational trust enhances meaningful knowledge exchanges within informal and formal networks of pharmaceutical sales teams.

Decision: Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that affect-based trust significantly predicts knowledge sharing.

Hypothesis Two: Cognition-Based Trust Has No Significant Effect on Knowledge Sharing

Cognition-based trust demonstrates the strongest positive effect on knowledge sharing among all predictors ($\beta = 0.548, t = 11.349, p < 0.05$). This indicates that employees willingly share knowledge when they perceive colleagues as competent, reliable, and professionally capable. This finding corroborates earlier studies by Mooradian et al. (2006) and Szulanski (1996), who argue that knowledge exchange is more robust in environments where employees believe others possess the cognitive ability to understand, utilize, and reciprocate shared information.

The finding is also consistent with the Resource-Based View (RBV), which emphasizes the importance of human capital—such as expertise and capability—in driving competitive advantage through knowledge resources. Cognition-

based trust ensures that knowledge shared is not misinterpreted or wasted, thus encouraging employees to engage in richer knowledge-sharing practices.

Decision: Reject the null hypothesis and affirm that cognition-based trust significantly enhances knowledge sharing.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study concludes that trust is a major determinant of knowledge-sharing behavior among pharmaceutical salespersons in Kogi West Senatorial District. Affect-based, cognition-based, and competence-based trust enhance employees' willingness to share essential work-related knowledge, which is vital for sales performance, problem-solving, and effective customer engagement. The study further concludes that while trust generally promotes collaboration, integrity-based trust may operate differently within competitive organizational contexts. The unexpected negative influence of integrity-based trust suggests that employees may be cautious about sharing sensitive information when ethical standards are perceived as excessively high or when there is fear of judgement or misuse. This indicates that trust is complex and context-dependent.

The study therefore concludes that fostering interpersonal trust, building professional competence, and strengthening positive social relationships among sales teams are essential for improving knowledge sharing and ensuring organizational effectiveness in the pharmaceutical sector.

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Pharmaceutical firms should encourage team-building activities, mentorship programs, and open communication channels to enhance affect-based trust among salespersons.
- ii. Management should establish clear performance expectations and transparent communication systems that promote cognition-based trust, enabling employees to rely on one another confidently.

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