

A STUDY ON KNOWLEDGE SHARING OF SOCIAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CHENNAI CITY

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Abstract

The present study investigates knowledge sharing practices within the social learning environment among secondary school students in Chennai City, with a focus on the impact of gender and type of school. Using a descriptive survey method, a purposive sample of 30 ninth-standard students from government-aided and private schools was assessed using a self-constructed questionnaire. The findings reveal that a majority of students demonstrate moderate to high levels of engagement in knowledge sharing, indicating a healthy and supportive social learning culture. Gender was found to be a significant factor, with girls showing higher participation and more favorable social learning environment scores compared to boys. In contrast, no significant difference was observed between students from government-aided and private schools, suggesting that institutional type does not substantially influence social learning. The study highlights the importance of fostering inclusive, interactive, and collaborative classroom environments to promote effective knowledge sharing. These insights provide valuable guidance for educators, school administrators, and policymakers in designing interventions that enhance collaborative learning, peer support, and holistic student development.

Keywords: Social Environment, Social Learning Theory, Collaborative learning, Knowledge sharing

Introduction

Learning today is more dynamic and interactive than ever before. Gone are the days when students learned in isolation, simply listening to teachers and memorizing textbooks. Instead, schools are gradually becoming spaces where students learn together, share their thoughts, and support each other's growth. This shift is especially noticeable in secondary schools in bustling cities like Chennai, where diversity and innovation thrive side by side. Social learning environments are playing a key role in this transformation. These environments are not just limited to classrooms; they include playground discussions, group assignments, online study groups, and even informal chat sessions among friends. In these settings, students exchange ideas, ask questions, and offer explanations sometimes even better than teachers, because they understand each other's struggles and speak the same language. In Chennai, secondary school students come from a variety of backgrounds. Their exposure to technology varies widely, as does their access to learning resources. But one thing many have in common

is their natural curiosity and willingness to help friends understand tough concepts or solve tricky problems together. For many, learning is no longer a solitary journey; it's a shared adventure.

However, knowledge sharing does not always happen smoothly. Some students are shy or afraid of being judged for asking questions. Others may feel competitive, thinking that sharing knowledge will give away their advantage. Differences in language, confidence levels, and even access to gadgets like smart phones or the internet can create gaps in how students interact. Sometimes, the teaching style or classroom environment can either encourage or discourage open sharing. On the flip side, when knowledge sharing is encouraged, the benefits are immense. Students who teach others often learn better themselves. Those who receive help feel more supported and less anxious. Group study sessions, whether in person or over social media, can turn a dull subject into an exciting challenge. Friendships are forged, and students develop important life skills like communication, teamwork, and empathy.

Chennai's education system, which encompasses both traditional and modern schools, offers a distinctive context for exploring the varied dynamics of knowledge sharing among students. In this environment, students engage in sharing knowledge through diverse means, utilizing a range of tools and platforms both digital and face-to-face. Their participation in knowledge sharing is influenced by a variety of factors, including personal motivation, cultural and family backgrounds, as well as the support provided by their schools and teachers. The extent to which students feel comfortable and enthusiastic about contributing to collective learning is often shaped by the inclusivity and encouragement fostered within their educational environments.

This study aims to systematically examine the knowledge sharing practices among secondary school students in Chennai. The research seeks to identify the prevalent patterns, underlying motivations, and obstacles that students encounter in social learning environments. The insights gained will illuminate the current state of knowledge sharing and provide practical recommendations for integrating and enhancing these practices in school settings. By deepening the understanding of how students share knowledge and by identifying strategies to promote these behaviors, schools can contribute to the development of learners who are not only academically proficient but also confident, collaborative, and empathetic members of society.

Review of Literature

In the last five years, research has increasingly underscored the importance of digital and social platforms in promoting knowledge sharing among secondary school students. Sivakumar, Jayasingh, and Shaik (2023) found that the use of social media tools such as WhatsApp and collaborative document sharing can significantly boost student motivation and

facilitate effective knowledge exchange in educational settings. Huang, et al. (2023) reported that digital knowledge sharing communities in online education foster collaboration and lifelong learning, although they highlight the need for inclusive infrastructure and clear guidelines to maximize benefits. In the Indian context, Jafar, Ananthpur, and Venkatachalam (2023) examined the digital divide among students in Tamil Nadu, emphasizing the critical role of both family and institutional support in overcoming barriers to online learning and knowledge sharing. Additionally, Ahuja and Bane (2025) demonstrated that while digital transformation in education increases access and engagement, the presence of supportive teachers greatly enhances the effectiveness of these digital initiatives. Collectively, these recent studies point to the growing relevance of socially enabled and technologically mediated environments for knowledge sharing, while also identifying persistent challenges related to access, support, and inclusivity issues that are particularly pertinent to diverse urban centers like Chennai.

Need and Significance of the Study

In the rapidly evolving modern educational landscape, the ability of students to share knowledge effectively within social learning environments has become increasingly important. Secondary school years are formative in shaping students' academic skills, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes toward lifelong learning. In a diverse and urban setting like Chennai City, students come from varied backgrounds and attend different types of schools, making it essential to understand how these factors influence their knowledge sharing practices.

Despite the recognized benefits of collaborative learning, there is limited research focusing specifically on how gender and type of school (such as government or private, co-educational or single-gender) impact knowledge sharing among secondary school students in Chennai. Existing studies often overlook the unique social and cultural dynamics present in this region, as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with different school environments. Understanding these aspects is crucial for identifying barriers to effective knowledge sharing and for developing targeted strategies to promote inclusive and supportive learning experiences.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on the influence of gender and school type on knowledge sharing among ninth-grade students in Chennai. The insights gained can help educators, school administrators, and policymakers design interventions and policies that foster a culture of collaboration and mutual support in schools. By highlighting the specific needs and challenges faced by students in diverse learning environments, this study aims to contribute to the improvement of educational practices, enhance student engagement, and promote holistic academic

development. Ultimately, the findings can serve as a valuable reference for further research and for shaping educational strategies in urban Indian contexts.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing recognition of the importance of knowledge sharing in fostering effective social learning environments, there remains a limited understanding of how gender and type of school influence these practices among secondary school students in Chennai City. Differences in social dynamics, cultural expectations, and educational resources across various school types as well as gender-based perceptions and interactions may significantly affect how students share knowledge, participate in group activities, and utilize available platforms for collaboration. However, existing research has not adequately addressed how these factors shape students' willingness and ability to engage in knowledge sharing. This study seeks to address this gap by systematically examining the impact of gender and school type on the knowledge sharing behaviors of secondary school students in Chennai, with the goal of identifying specific patterns, barriers, and opportunities for improvement in diverse educational settings.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of knowledge sharing among secondary school students in the context of the social learning environment.
2. To determine whether there is a significant difference in knowledge sharing of social learning environment between male and female secondary school students.
3. To examine whether there is a statistically significant difference in knowledge sharing of social learning environment between students from government and private secondary schools.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Secondary school students exhibit a moderate level of knowledge sharing of social learning environment.
2. There is no statistically significant difference in knowledge sharing of social learning environment between male and female secondary school students in Chennai City.
3. There is no statistically significant difference in knowledge sharing of social learning environment between students from government and private secondary schools in Chennai City.

Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive survey method to explore knowledge sharing practices within the social learning environment among secondary school students in Chennai City. The primary research variable is knowledge sharing in the social learning environment,

with demographic variables including gender (boys and girls of ninth standard) and type of school (government and private schools). The sample comprises 30 ninth-grade students selected purposively from various secondary schools in Chennai to ensure representation based on gender and type of school. Data was collected using a self-constructed tool developed by the researcher, consisting of 30 statements rated on a 4-point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree), assigned weightages of 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively. The tool includes both positive and negative statements, with 8 items negatively worded and scored in reverse; the maximum possible score is 23 and the minimum is 0. The collected data were coded and entered into statistical software for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize responses, while independent samples t-tests were applied to determine significant differences in knowledge sharing practices based on gender and type of school, with the level of significance set at 0.05.

Findings and Interpretation

Table 1 Level of Knowledge Sharing within the Social Learning Environment

Variable	Level	N	%	Result
Level of Social Learning Environment	Low	8	26.67	High Level
	Moderate	10	33.3	
	High	12	40%	

The findings indicate that a significant proportion of secondary school students in Chennai City demonstrate active engagement in knowledge sharing within their social learning environments. Specifically, 40% of the students scored at a high level, while 33.3% were at a moderate level, and only 26.67% were at a low level of social learning environment. This distribution suggests that most students are positively involved in sharing information and collaborating with their peers. The relatively high percentage of students in the moderate and high categories reflects a healthy and supportive social learning culture in these schools. However, the presence of students at the low level also signifies the need for targeted interventions to further encourage participation and inclusivity, ensuring that all students can benefit from a strong social learning environment.

Table 2 Significance of Mean difference in Knowledge sharing on Social Learning Environment among Secondary Level School Students with respect to Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t Value	P Value	Remark
Social Learning Environment	Boys	15	57.60	8.64	2.988	0.006**	S
	Girls	15	65	4.16			

Note: ** -Significant at 1%Level

The result showed a calculated t-value of 2.988 with a p-value of 0.006, which is less than 0.01, indicating a highly significant difference at the 0.01 level. The mean score of girls ($M = 65.00$, $SD = 4.16$) was higher than that of boys ($M = 57.60$, $SD = 8.64$), revealing that girls have a more favorable Social Learning Environment than boys. This difference may be attributed to the fact that girls generally exhibit better social interaction, cooperation, and classroom participation. They tend to maintain positive peer relationships, show responsible learning behavior, and adapt easily to collaborative learning situations. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that gender significantly influences the Social Learning Environment, with girls performing better in this area than boys.

Table 3 Significance of Mean difference in Knowledge sharing on Social Learning Environment among Secondary Level School Students with respect to Type of School

Variable	Type of School	N	Mean	SD	t Value	P Value	Remark
Social learning Environment	Government Aided	15	58	12.87	0.524	0.604	NS
	Private	15	59.93	6.181			

Note: NS- Not Significant

The result showed a calculated t-value is 0.524 with a p-value of 0.604, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the difference between the two groups is not significant at the 0.05 level. The mean score of students from Government Aided schools ($M = 58.00$, $SD = 12.87$) is almost similar to that of students from Private schools ($M = 59.93$, $SD = 6.18$). This shows that the type of school does not have any significant influence on the Social Learning Environment of students. The reason for this insignificant difference may be that both types of schools provide almost similar classroom interaction, peer group support, teacher guidance, and learning atmosphere. Hence, the null hypothesis stating that “there is no significant difference between Government Aided and Private school students in their Social Learning Environment” is accepted.

Educational Implication

Fostering knowledge sharing within social learning environments is essential for enhancing both academic and social development among secondary school students. Encouraging collaborative learning, peer discussions, and group activities can strengthen critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Inclusive and supportive classrooms, where all students feel comfortable sharing ideas, ensure equitable participation and promote strong peer learning networks. Integrating digital tools and collaborative platforms alongside traditional teaching methods can further facilitate

knowledge exchange and engagement. Overall, promoting social learning and knowledge sharing equips students with the competencies needed to succeed academically while preparing them for collaborative and dynamic real-world environments.

Conclusion

The study concludes that knowledge sharing within social learning environments is a pivotal factor for secondary school students' academic and social development in Chennai City, functioning as a dynamic process through which learners co-construct understanding, enhance collaboration, and develop critical 21st century skills. The results reveal that girls exhibit significantly higher engagement in knowledge sharing than boys, likely due to their stronger social interaction, cooperative behavior, and classroom participation, whereas the type of school does not significantly influence social learning, indicating that the quality of peer interaction and classroom culture outweighs institutional differences. These findings underscore that effective knowledge sharing is not merely an academic exercise but a transformative educational mechanism that fosters holistic learning, peer support, and cognitive growth. Consequently, educators should focus on creating inclusive and interactive learning environments, implementing structured collaborative strategies, and encouraging active participation from all students, particularly boys, to ensure equitable access to knowledge exchange. By nurturing networked and supportive learning ecosystems, schools can prepare students not only for academic success but also for the collaborative, socially complex demands of contemporary society.

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