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Sharing is Caring:

A Qualitative Study of Idea-sharing in Large Organizations

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Abstract

Background and Purpose: It is widely known that knowledge is a critical component of firms' ability to innovate. Although large organizations usually have a large pool of human capital, and thus knowledge, they face challenges to motivate employees to share their valuable knowledge across silos (i.e., business units). The purpose of this thesis is to explore how knowledge sharing among employees at the early stage of the innovation process can be encouraged. The research is further focused on motivation, enablers, and challenges and/or barriers of intra-organizational idea-sharing occurring among employees with and without managerial or leadership responsibilities in large organizations.

Method/approach: The research followed a cross-sectional qualitative research design with an abductive approach, where the empirical findings were examined using thematic analysis. While the abductive approach allowed the authors to iterate between literature and empirical data, the cross-sectional design facilitated identification of patterns and variation *across* the data sample and supported the production of general findings between two sample groups. Thematic analysis was deemed as a rigorous method for analyzing the empirical findings. Further elaborated, the undertaken research included a total of 23 respondents: 1 expert respondent and 22 respondents from 7 organizations across 5 industries. These respondents were classified into two sample groups: employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities and employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities. Then, a thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the empirical findings.

Findings: The findings of this research suggest that *individual motivators, organizational structure, communication channels, organizational culture, leaders, the team, and top-management, organizational activities, and organizational position* might be important concepts to consider when encouraging employees to share ideas. The authors present a conceptual model, which includes the above-mentioned concepts, which to some extent might explain how employees can be encouraged to share knowledge at the early stage of the innovation process.

Research limitations: The research limitations adhere to its qualitative nature, which might have implications for the robustness of the empirical findings. In other words, the findings are rooted in respondents' subjective views, as well as the authors' interpretations of it, rather than being based on quantitative inferences.

Practical implications: The research has practical implications on the individual, the managerial, and the organizational level. Specifically, our findings suggest employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities should choose a job area and organization that aligns with their interests and personal drive. Employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities should both choose a leadership style that empowers employees and fosters interactions, and they should also involve, give freedom, and recognize their employees and their ideas. At an organizational level, the characteristics of the organizational structure, culture, and activities should be considered and aligned to encourage employees to share their ideas, going towards a more employee-driven innovation approach.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing, idea sharing, large organizations, motivation, barriers, enablers, employee, innovation.

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1. Introduction

In this chapter, the background, problem discussion, and purpose of the research is outlined. This research is written in collaboration with the consulting firm CGI, therefore, the problem discussion is followed by a company description. Thereafter, the purpose of the research and research question(s) is stated, followed by the delimitations and the disposition of the research.

1.1 Background

Innovation is one of the main economic drivers of modern societies, which indicates that a nation's innovation capability is a crucial determinant of competitiveness in the global market (Rodrik, 2020; OECD, 2007). At the same time, megatrends such as climate change and health challenges are evolving and shaping the development of economics, politics, environment, and technology. As a result, these influence the future direction of activities related to science and innovation (OECD, 2016). While the development, in this case, refers to innovations on a macro-level, new technological innovations are equally important on a micro-level where the single firm is trying to secure its survival. According to NACD's (2019) Public Company Governance Survey, approximately 7 out of 10 directors said that over the next 5 years, firms cannot count on the extension of their historical strategy to survive. Rather, the firms will likely have to adopt new business models and redefine the assumptions of what success looks like to obtain future growth (NACD, 2019). This means that without any sort of innovation - regardless of if it is product, process, or business model innovation- the firms will not survive. As Leonard and Straus states: "*innovate or fall behind*" (1997, p. 2).

During the last decades, Grant (2002) explains that attention has been drawn to the fundamental economic changes rooted in the availability and accumulation of knowledge. As a result, there has been an interest in the knowledge-based view of the firm, highlighting that the postindustrial economy has been linked to a knowledge-based approach. Grant (2002) continues by mentioning a few characteristics of the knowledge based economic era. For example, there has been a shift of focus from tangible to intangible assets. Also, increased interconnectivity and the digitalization has enabled new ways of information management, as well as companies now operating virtually. An organization cannot produce innovation without knowledge, as the creation of new knowledge is exploited to develop new concepts of products, services, and organizational transformation. Therefore, knowledge has become a core asset for firms' ability to produce innovation, which affects the firm's ability to achieve a competitive advantage (Grant, 2002).

According to Kuemmerle (2006), large firms and their innovative activities are particularly important for overall economic development since they employ many people and house a large amount of product and process knowledge. Further, Kuemmerle (2006) explains that the relationship between large firms and their different innovations is complex. As a research

objective, innovation in large firms is especially interesting for two reasons, a) their role in the entrepreneurship ecology, as the origin of new firms usually occurs in the same or related industries as the larger firm and b) the change in the overall characteristics as the firm growth takes off (Kuemmerle, 2006). While small firms are characterized by agile resource allocation and managerial execution, large firms oftentimes have lost these characteristics when expanding, resulting in a lack of flexibility (Kuemmerle, 2006). The very nature of large organizations is unwieldy, and the structure, routines and systems is built to support existing operations, thus making it hard for these firms to adapt to different processes in the acceleration of innovative ideas and essentially turning the inventions into novel products, services or processes (Braganza et al., 2009).

When generating innovations, the early phase of the process, also called “fuzzy front end”, is vital as it is where employees generate ideas, screen them and develop concepts (Alam, 2006; Reid & De Brentani, 2004). The process involves activities connected to different aspects, such as managing knowledge, stimulating creativity to generate ideas, and protecting ideas (Goffin & Mitchell, 2016). In this stage, the idea generation and concept development are often chaotic, and incorporate much information and high levels of vagueness (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). Here, both internal and external sources of information are used to cope with the ambiguity (Zahay et al., 2004). To manage the early stage of the innovation process, the use of IT tools for generating and collecting employees' ideas have emerged (e.g., Björk et al., 2014; Beretta, 2019).

With references to the work of Amabile (1983) and Shalley (1995), Perry-Smith (2006) explains that individual level of creativity refers to “*the generation of novel and appropriate ideas, products, processes, or solutions*” (p. 86). Further, the idea generation involves moving or combining pieces of knowledge across groups (Burt, 2004). Nonaka (1994) argues that although ideas are generated in individuals' minds, social interactions are essential to the development of ideas and creation of knowledge. From a social perspective, new ideas are generated and shared with the intention to be discussed within an individual's network, where network position, strength of social relationships, and network structure has been argued to impact creativity and the generation of new ideas (Perry-Smith, 2006; Burt, 2004). According to Hansen (2002), having linkages and shorter paths across business units are important for sharing knowledge effectively and may affect the speed of completing work-related tasks. A higher degree of organizational knowledge sharing has been associated with increasing organizational innovativeness and performance (Van Wijk et al., 2008). Von Krogh (1998) highlights the importance of good relationships for effective sharing of knowledge, and claims that care in relationships gives rise to, for example, mutual trust and access to help. Von Krogh (1998) further emphasizes the value of care in relationships within organizations by explaining that “*constructive and helpful relations speed up the communication process, enable organization members to share their personal knowledge and to discuss their ideas and concerns freely*” (p. 136).

According to Wang and Noe (2010), knowledge sharing in an organizational context refers “*to the provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others*”

to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures” (p. 117). Additionally, Cummings (2004) describes that knowledge sharing includes both providing and receiving know-how and task information, as well as feedback, regarding a procedure or product. Although incumbent organizations have access to a large pool of human capital and knowledge, they face challenges in motivating employees to share their ideas, opinions and further change their way of working (Garvin & Levesque, 2006). This is concerning, since all these elements are required when generating innovations (Garvin & Levesque, 2006). Nesheim and Gressgård (2014) highlights that all employees need to have the means to share their ideas and knowledge without encountering boundaries of departments, organizations and geographies. Business units in different organizational or geographical locations might have valuable knowledge inhibited, which leads to the ability to learn is dependent on the process of knowledge sharing and exchange (Nesheim & Grassgård, 2014).

Further, a few studies have been made where idea generation and contributions of ideas have been investigated to study knowledge sharing (e.g. Hung et al., 2011). Yi (2009) highlights that knowledge sharing behavior can be indicated through examining various ways of interacting with colleagues, such as posting ideas to an organizational database, brainstorming, or seeking ideas to solve problems by having team meetings. In turn, these activities can be examined for the purpose of measuring and evaluating knowledge sharing behavior in organizations. However, there are components of knowledge sharing behavior that do not necessarily include sharing of ideas, and there is no established way or scale for investigation of knowledge sharing behavior (Yi, 2009). Nevertheless, the authors of this thesis argue that the process of knowledge sharing is a process where social interaction takes place and where the generation, discussion, and development of ideas are included as one way to share knowledge in organizations. Therefore, investigation of idea-sharing might give insights to knowledge sharing behavior. However, sharing knowledge does not *per se* imply that ideas are shared.

1.2 Problem Discussion

As mentioned in the background, large sized organizations employ a large number of knowledgeable workers. Thus, these organizations' ability to tap into the knowledge base of its human resources and make use of its innovation potential, should be highly desirable (Kuemmerle, 2006). However, the nature of knowledge structures and boundaries within organizations might be problematic and can hinder innovation and knowledge creation across functional units (Carlile, 2002). To encourage knowledge sharing among employees, knowledge creation and application within an organization demands different characteristics of the organizational structure and climate (Chen et al., 2010). An organizational structure incorporating high formalization and centralization might impede social interactions which might result in lower degree of communication and knowledge sharing among employees (Chen & Huang, 2007; Robbins & Decenzo, 2001; Damanpour, 1991; Sivadas & Dwyer, 2000). Adding to the problem, the ambition of sharing knowledge and turning ideas into new business opportunities and innovations might vary between the employees (Little, 1991; Edmiston, 2007).

Moreover, the organizational positions and roles might influence the degree of knowledge sharing that occurs among employees. Høystrup et al. (2012) explains that organizations might have a top-down approach to innovation. According to Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) the tendency for organizations to differentiate between their employees' capability to innovate is strong. As a result, the ideas coming from employees of the top management, R&D- and/or strategic activities are being more emphasized. Also, these employees have more decision authority over the development of the ideas compared to their non-R&D- and non-managerial colleagues (Kesting & Ulhøi, 2010). The operational employees not working with R&D and without managerial positions are neglected as they do not have any official ties to the innovation department, oftentimes thought of as the R&D-unit, of these large firms (Kesting & Ulhøi, 2010). However, the authors explain, they are still a creative and valuable asset for their employer due to the context-dependent nature of their knowledge. For example, an employee at the customer service department is likely to have more in-depth knowledge about the customers' pain-points compared to an employee at the R&D- unit, hence why the knowledge obtained by the first employee can contribute to significant innovative work (Kesting & Ulhøi, 2010).

The neglected group of operational employees shows that boundary spanning organizational encouragement of innovation is vital, since the process should take place in collaboration between different players (Leonard & Straus 1997). As these players naturally have different views of the world, this results in disparate ideas, perception and ways of processing information (Leonard & Straus 1997). Common knowledge can be used to share knowledge across boundaries in the organization, however, there might be limits to the degree of specialized knowledge that can be shared through it (Carlile, 2004). Further, Detert et al (2010) explains that employees might choose to withhold knowledge and not express their ideas or concerns to another employee having a higher position. The reasons might be, for example, that the employees are afraid of the potential consequences (Detert et al., 2010), or that managers will not act on their ideas or concerns (Detert & Burris, 2016). Likewise, employees might choose not to share their ideas if they perceive the costs to exceed the benefits, such as perceiving it as more stressful than fun, or prioritizing personal motivations before career (Wendelken et al., 2014). However, Burkus (2013) argues, one of the main problems to innovation might not be lack of ideas from employees, rather to recognize the good ideas within an organization when they have to go through the traditional hierarchical structure to be approved. Some ideas might get rejected in the traditional approval process when novel and creative ideas are presented in a situation that includes uncertainty. As a consequence, notable innovations might initially be rejected when practicality might be favored over creativity in the face of uncertainty (Burkus, 2013).

This research focuses on knowledge sharing at the early stage of the innovation process and takes the perspective of employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities, mainly

working in Scandinavia¹. By knowledge sharing at the early stage of the innovation process, the authors refer to knowledge that is shared through social interactions by the expression of ideas that occurs through the generation, discussion, and development of ideas by means of, for example, helping colleagues, solving problems, and producing various degrees of innovations. The authors are interested in the enablers and barriers and/or challenges employees face when sharing their ideas within and between teams in an intra-organizational context and the motivation for sharing ideas. However, the authors argue that the employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities might have a key role in the idea-sharing process as they might have decision-making authority over team members to some extent and favorable network positions with regard to sharing ideas across business units. Likewise, they might have a group level perspective of their team members' knowledge sharing behavior. Therefore, employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities were of interest for this research in addition to the employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities. Also, as there might be differences with regards to the perception of the idea-sharing process and involvement in innovation related activities depending on the organizational position and degree of R&D involvement, the authors wished to include participants with different roles and degree of R&D activities related to employees' current role.

1.3 Company Collaboration

This thesis is written in collaboration with CGI, a consulting firm which focuses on IT and business consulting services (CGI, n.da; CGI, n.db). With clients in both the private and public sector, CGI offers business consulting, system integration, IT outsourcing, infrastructure as well as business process and application services (CGI, n.da; CGI, n.db). CGI has identified the need to 'democratize innovation' among employees, especially in large organizations. That implies that firms need to involve employees from different parts of the organization and across organizational units to a larger extent than they are currently doing. In a blog post in September 2020, Högenberg, CGI's Head of Innovation in Scandinavia, described that many employees' experience the organizational innovation journey as frustrating, as people do not know how their ideas are handled by the organization. This might cause declining interest of employees to bring forward their ideas, resulting in less ideas being shared (Högenberg, 2020, September 3).

CGI expressed a desire to find a solution for their large client organization which could support and nurture idea-sharing among employees'. The desire of CGI aligned with the authors' curiosity to dig deeper into the field of what motivates employees to share knowledge. Moreover, CGI only provided the research topic and the criteria of involving organizations with more than 1000 employees in Scandinavia, but was not further engaged in the sampling of respondents.

¹ When sampling, the researchers found out that two out of 23 respondents operated outside of Scandinavia. However, no difference between these respondents and the rest of the respondent group was found with regard to motivation, enablers, or challenges of idea-sharing.

1.4 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how knowledge sharing among employees at the early stage of the innovation process can be encouraged. Therefore, the focus is on intra-organizational idea-sharing occurring among employees with and without managerial or leadership responsibilities in large organizations. In particular, the research aims to generate an understanding of employees' perception of the idea-sharing process related to motivation, enablers and challenges and/or barriers. Also, the authors aim to add to the previous literature that investigates knowledge sharing focused on sharing ideas, where the intention is to contribute to the understanding of the research topic which could create an avenue for future research. In order to explore the topic of interest, a qualitative research method with an abductive exploratory approach has been chosen, and the location of interest is mainly employees working at large organizations in Scandinavia².

Given the purpose of the research, the following main research question has been formulated:

- *How can employees working in large organizations be encouraged to share knowledge at the early stage of the innovation process?*

Furthermore, to produce a nuanced understanding of the main research question, the authors decided to focus on idea-sharing as a way to investigate knowledge sharing among employees at the early stage of the innovation process. Therefore, the following sub-research questions were constructed:

- What motivates employees to share their ideas?
- What enables idea-sharing among employees?
- What are the challenges and/or barriers for idea-sharing among employees?

1.5 Delimitations

Given the defined purpose of the research, several delimitations have been made. First, the research limits itself by only including large firms who employ more than 1000 people in Scandinavia, hence excluding small and medium-sized organizations. Yet, when estimating the size of the organization, parent organization, branches, and affiliates were included. Moreover, the research excludes organizations in the public sector and organizations that do not have a strong presence in the Scandinavian market. Thereby the research includes large multinational organizations in the private sector.

Also, the research is delimited to knowledge sharing in an inter-organizational context and the early stage of the innovation process, where the focus is on idea-sharing among employees. Hence, the research only focuses on knowledge that is shared through the expression of ideas. Moreover, employees might be more or less formally involved in innovative activities although

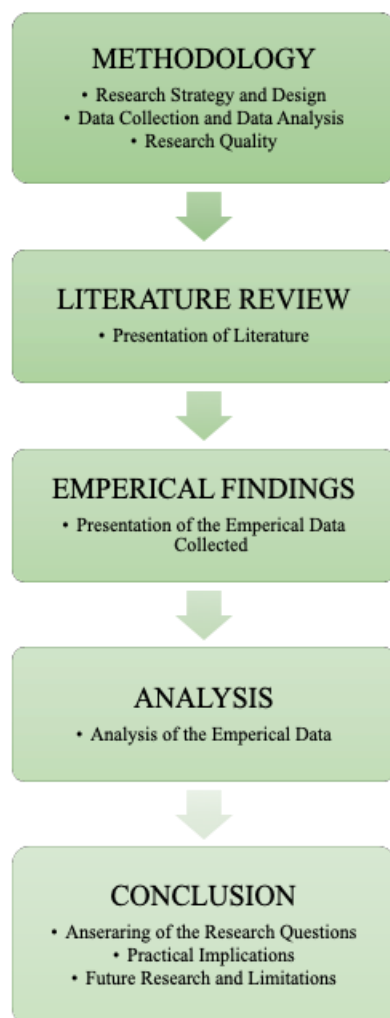
² When the research was conducted, two exceptions occurred where the employees were working in Europe. This was judged to not affect the result of the research.

they do not officially belong to a traditional R&D unit. Therefore, the research includes employees working with R&D related activities as well as employees not working with R&D related activities. However, the research excludes traditional R&D employees such as scientists. Further, the research includes both intra-organizational idea-sharing occurring in-person and digitally.

Lastly, the research is limited to having a qualitative approach and investigating the subjective views of employees. Therefore, the variables of examination will rely on employees' subjective evaluations and perceptions of their reality. While the subjective views are important and can generate generalizable findings, the research will not be able to generate findings that are rooted in quantitative metrics or determine any causal relationship.

1.6 Disposition

The disposition of the thesis will be outlined as the following:



2. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology for the research. First, the research strategy and design are established, followed by data collection which incorporates a description of the literature review and the primary data. Also, the section of primary data collection includes the sample method, sample criteria, sample size, and the interview process. Lastly, the methodology for the data analysis is outlined, together with the quality of the research.

2.1 Research Strategy

According to Bell et al. (2019), the research strategy is a central aspect of the research as it enables researchers to carry out the research and explain the observed pattern of association between different phenomena. A qualitative research strategy focuses on words and images within the data collected and further emphasizes the social reality created by the individuals' (Bell et al., 2019). This stands in contrast to the quantitative approach which rather focuses on numbers and measurements, in order to explain the relationship or pattern observed (Bell et al., 2019). The qualitative research strategy aligns with the purpose of this research, which has been to explore how knowledge sharing among employees at the early stage of the innovation process can be encouraged. Also, the research aims to generate an understanding of employees' perception of the idea-sharing process related to motivation, enablers and challenges and/or barriers, within a certain group of respondents: *employees with and without managerial or leadership responsibilities, with an emphasis on employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities*. Hence, the researchers have aimed to capture the essence of the individual's social reality. This would likely not have been possible with a quantitative research approach, as the quantification of the data would have faded the nuances of each respondent's answers and thereby limited the social reality which they ought to describe. Therefore, a qualitative research strategy was reasoned to be the most appropriate given the purpose and aim of this research.

Critical voices argue that qualitative research being "*merely an assembly of anecdotes and personal impressions, strongly subject to researcher bias*" (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 1). This aligns with the critique of the approach being highly subjective, where the results obtained from a qualitative approach are unsystematic and relies on the researcher's personal view of what is deemed as significant (Bell et al., 2019). Moreover, qualitative study is claimed to lack reproducibility and generalizability (Mays & Pope, 1995; Bell et al., 2019). The difficulty of replication primarily rests in the research being unstructured and that it depends on the researcher's inventiveness, thus making it hard to reproduce. The problem with generalization stems from the fact that the researcher generates rich and detailed information about small samples (Mays & Pope, 1995). While critique of the qualitative research strategy has been contemplated, the authors of this research found the approach the most suitable for the research objective. The raised academic concerns have been considered and mitigated to the best of the

authors' abilities, by comparison of different research methodologies in order to choose an adequate research methodology.

A qualitative research strategy oftentimes aligns with an inductive research approach, which aims to extend previous literature rather than test it (Bell et al., 2019). In contrast, deductive logic aligns with the quantitative research strategy, where the researcher forms a hypothesis based on what is known within the research domain and later tests the hypothesis (Bell et al., 2019). While the deductive approach has been criticized for its reliance on a strict logic of theory testing, the inductive approach has weaknesses related to the amount of empirical data that would be required to build a theory (Bell et al., 2019). To overcome the limitations of these approaches, the abductive approach has been chosen for this research. Bell et al. (2019) explain that the abductive approach is useful when researchers aim to investigate an area or a phenomenon observed, which the existing theories cannot explain. When applying an abductive approach, the researchers investigate conditions which can explain the phenomena through an iterative process of reviewing literature and empirical data (Bell et al., 2019). (Bell et al., 2019). The abductive approach allows the researchers to go back and forth between theory and data and in situations where there may be competing interpretations and explanations of the empirical data, the researchers seek to find the best possible explanation (Bell et al., 2019; Mantere & Ketokivi 2013). However, the iterative approach in abductive reasoning could cause the researcher to be biased and instead of explaining the new phenomena, the data is used to confirm the researchers' pre-understandings (Bell et al., 2019). To overcome this limitation, it is crucial that the researcher remains open to be surprised by the observed phenomena (Bell et al., 2019). Because of the iterative nature of the abductive logic, the authors found the approach to be the most suitable for this research. The process of iterating between literature and empirical findings, while still remaining open to discover new phenomena, was found to be the most appropriate for answering the research questions.

2.2 Research Design

In regard to the research design, a cross-sectional design was chosen as the most appropriate for this research. However, both multiple-case study and cross-sectional design was considered. Multiple-case studies are generally focused on investigating a particular case or context, in a single organization or during a single event (Bell et al., 2019). When a researcher is faced with whether to employ a multiple case study design or cross-sectional design, the following can be contemplated:

A simple rule of thumb is to ask: what is the focus? If the focus is on the cases and their unique contexts, it is a multiple-case study and as such is an extension of the case study approach; if the emphasis is on producing general findings, with little regard for the unique contexts of each of the eight cases, it is better viewed as a cross-sectional design. (Bell et al., 2019, p. 67)

Rather than investigating the individual context of an organization or an industry, this research concerns itself with identifying patterns and variation *across* the data sample and emphasizes

the production of general findings among the respondents. Thus, employing a cross-sectional research design was considered the most appropriate compared to a multiple-case study.

The choice of research design has been strengthened by the aim of the research, the decision to include multiple large Scandinavian organizations across several industries and the variety of individual respondents. However, one concern might be the representativeness of the selected cases and respondents. According to Siggelkow (2007), if the representativeness of the interviewees is low, then the comparability and generalizability of the findings could be flawed. Therefore, it is important that the observations made are comparable and the method for each interview aims to be identical (Siggelkow, 2007). In contrast to investigating only one industry or respondent at one single company, this research includes a total of 23 respondents: 22 respondents across 5 different industries and one additional expert respondent. This, in combination with semi-structured interviews, has increased this research's potential level of comparability and generalizability. The aim of the research has not been to find and compare industry or the unique context of each respondent employee. Rather, it has been to focus on producing general findings among employees working at large organizations while reducing the impact of a specific industry, thus increasing generalizability. Thus, the cross-sectional research design allowed the authors to find patterns of association and variation across the sample of respondents and strengthened the choice of such research design.

2.3 Data Collection

In this section, the procedure for primary data collection is presented. First the approach for reviewing literature is described, the inclusion and the exclusion criteria, and the primary data collection. The primary data collection describes the method for sampling, the sample size, the interview structure and the interview process. Lastly, the choice of data analysis is motivated, and the quality aspect of the research is presented.

2.3.1 Literature Review

For this research, a literature review with a narrative approach was found to be the most appropriate, however some elements of a systematic approach were included. In an abductive approach the researcher is concerned with building an understanding and developing explanations of an observed phenomena, however it might be challenging to outline the previous theoretical contributions before the data has been collected (Bell et al., 2019). The outcome of abductive research is usually the development of explanations regarding the observed phenomena. The process of iterating between theory and data might require greater flexibility as issues and limitations might be discovered during the process. The narrative review offers the opportunity to generate understanding of the research area, rather than a knowledge synthesis, and allows for modifications of the research boundaries as the data collection goes along (Bell et al., 2019). The narrative review was employed for this research in order to investigate the research area broadly. Moreover, the narrative approach allowed for the authors to remain open and curious to new phenomenon throughout the research.

As a first stage of the narrative literature review, the authors explored the previous literature by the use of online databases. The topics explored were connected to knowledge sharing among employees in organizations as well as the early stage of the innovation process. In this stage, the purpose was to get an initial understanding of the topic to base the interview guide on, identify relevant keywords and well-recognized pieces of previous research to build a solid theoretical foundation.

The second stage of the literature review was conducted with the same search strategy as in the first stage, yet in parallel to conducting the interviews which allowed the researcher to iterate between theory and data. As in the first stage of the literature review, the search for literature was conducted by using the online databases and using keywords. Furthermore, while reviewing literature, some references which seemed to be building blocks and of significant value for the studies were recognized and further reviewed. During the review process, different frameworks were examined and contrasted, related to organizational theory, strategic management theories, social and psychological theories.

Table 1: Keywords

Keywords		
Knowledge sharing		
Idea sharing		
Knowledge management		
Knowledge creation		
Knowledge based view of the firm		
Employee driven innovation		
Knowledge sharing	<i>and</i>	Large organization
Knowledge sharing	<i>and</i>	Barriers/challenges
Knowledge sharing	<i>and</i>	Enablers
Knowledge sharing	<i>and</i>	Motivation
Knowledge sharing	<i>and</i>	Innovation
Knowledge sharing	<i>and</i>	Idea sharing

Idea sharing	<i>and</i>	Large organization
Idea sharing	<i>and</i>	Barriers/challenges
Idea sharing	<i>and</i>	Enablers
Idea sharing	<i>and</i>	Motivation
Idea sharing	<i>and</i>	Innovation
Employee	<i>and</i>	Innovation

2.3.1.1 Databases, Inclusion and Exclusion Criterias

The literature was planned by specifying a review protocol and deciding on usage of data sources, in order to find topics that related to the research question and ensured a high academic quality. The literature was accessed through the library of Gothenburg University at the School of Business, Economics, and Law, and online databases such as Super Search, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. During the process of collecting literature, frameworks related to organizational theory, strategic management theories, social and psychological theories were examined and contrasted. Well-recognized pieces of previous research were identified by paying attention to the relevance of academic articles to the research area, the publishing journal, and the number of citations. The quality aspect was reached by including peer-reviewed literature and published by academic journals with higher impact factors, such as Organization Science, Academy of Management Journal, Annual Review of Organizational Psychology, and Organizational Behavior. Also, some references which seemed to be building blocks and of significant value for the studies were recognized and further reviewed.

To focus the literature review and ensure a level of quality of the literature, certain inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. These are found in Table 2, seen below.

Table 2: Exclusion and Inclusion Criterias

Exclusion Criterias
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exclude unpublished articles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exclude literature that explicitly has a focus on small companies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exclude literature that focus on public organizations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exclude literature that focus on the concepts of Individual Knowledge and Collective Knowledge.

Inclusion Criterias
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include peer reviewed literature.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include literature that address knowledge management and knowledge sharing in an intraorganizational, yet context broad.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include literature that primarily are published in journals with a higher impact factor.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include articles primarily that have citations > 10, yet preferably >100.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic articles, articles published in Harvard Business Review and online books.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports provided by international institutions (e.g., EU and OECD) and Swedish government.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including articles <i>mainly</i> published between 1990-2021³.

2.3.2 Primary Data Collection

The collection of primary data is important in qualitative research, hence the choice of doing either unstructured interviews or semi-structured interviews was considered (Bell et al., 2019). Unstructured interviews are similar to a non-directed conversation where the respondents freely reason around a subject with no, too little, guidance (Bell et al., 2019). However, unstructured interviews were decided against in favor of semi-structured interviews, as the latter increased the comparability between the respondents and therefore suited both the research strategy and research design better. When conducting semi-structured interviews, the researchers used an interview guide to cover pre-constructed themes, while still allowing for follow up questions on certain topics in order to capture the interviewees experiences and opinions (Bell et al., 2019). Since the research has a cross-sectional design and includes two samples of respondent groups, semi-structured interviews were believed to increase the overall comparability and generalizability of the respondents' answers. By following the interview guide (found in appendix 1 and 2), it was made sure that the respondents answered questions around a few pre-decided themes while still having room for elaboration. The interview guide, including the topics, is discussed in section 2.3.2.4.

2.3.2.1 Sample Method

To support the research, both the sample method and size were considered. As the latter tends to vary in qualitative research, and the justification of such is crucial (Bell et al., 2019; Mason 2010). For this research, generic purposive sampling was considered to be the most suitable approach due to the research criteria and the time scope. A generic purposive sampling means that the sampling of cases is strategically selected and linked to the specific research criteria to align with the purpose of the research (Bell et al., 2019). The sample criteria were formulated and fixed *a priori*, whereby a generic purposive sample was drawn. The sample consisted of

³ The authors aimed to include articles published between 1990 to 2021. However, there are a few exceptions where the origin of a concept has been coined, developed, and defined. For example, Polanyi (1962; 1966)

organizations that fulfilled sample criteria 1 and 2. After the initial contact with the organizations, snowball sampling was employed. Snowball sampling occurs when an initial group of respondents is used to initiate contact with more potential respondents, which are accessible for the research (Bell et al., 2019). In this research, employees who initially had been contacted selected potential respondents based on sample criteria 3. Then, respondents were classified by the authors into sample groups based on the presence or absence of managerial or leadership responsibilities.

To find potential respondents, interview requests were sent to several organizations that fulfilled the sample criteria 1 and 2 through email. The emails were formulated in both English and Swedish, and included a presentation of the research purpose and a request of interviewing at least one employee with managerial or leadership responsibilities and one to two "operational workers" without managerial or leadership responsibilities. The companies were also informed of the collaboration with CGI, to increase transparency. As the participating companies themselves selected which respondents to include, the possibility of convenience sampling cannot be excluded. However, the comparability is high due to the same interview request being sent out to all participating companies. The sample size between the respondent groups differs slightly. This has been considered but is not judged to be of high concern as the difference between the groups is small.

2.3.2.2 Sample Criterias

In regard to the research, the selection of respondent firms was made in accordance with certain criterions.

The **first sample criteria** was that the participating companies needed to be established in the Scandinavian market and of large size. Large organizations generate a significant amount of value to the overall business economy (OECD, 2017) and employ a high number of employees (Kuemmerle, 2006). According to European Commission (2015), large enterprises need to have above 250 employees working full time and either a) an annual turnover of more than 50 million Euro, or b) an annual balance sheet total over 43 million Euro. However, the collaboration partner CGI expressed a desire to include organizations with more than 1000 employees in Scandinavia, including subsidiaries. Therefore, the sampling criteria of the companies having at least 1000 employees in Scandinavia were established. To meet the criteria, the 2019 annual reports of the potential organizations included in the sample were reviewed. Thus, the organizations with less than 1000 employees including parent organization and subsidiaries, and/or an annual turnover of less than 50 million were therefore sorted out of the sample of potential respondents.

The **second sample criteria** concerned the investigation of well-recognized organizations *across* industries in Scandinavia. As touched upon in the introduction, large firms oftentimes struggle to sustain innovation. The struggle seems to be similar across industries, rather than within a specific industry. Hence, motivating the choice for researching across industries. The Swedish Innovation Index 2019 (Karlstads universitet, 2020a) was chosen as a rigorous index

of which a satisfactory sample across industries could be drawn. Karlstads universitet (2020b) describes that the purpose of the index is to increase the awareness of innovation in companies from a customer's perspective and the index has been collaboratively developed by researchers at universities in Sweden, Norway, and the US. The index is based on several parameters, such as the attractiveness and perception of companies' innovative ability in the eyes of customers (Karlstads universitet, 2020b). For the Swedish Innovation Index 2019, approximately 14 000 customers ranked 80 companies and organizations across 10 industries (Karlstads universitet, 2020c). Hence, using the Swedish Innovation Index (Karlstads universitet, 2020c) did narrow the scope of potential companies to include in the research as well as provide a cross industry sample of companies that has been recognized as innovative. The authors contacted companies from all the industries included in the index, whereby companies from five different industries were available for participation.

The **third sampling criteria** was to include both employees with a managerial perspective and employees without a managerial perspective. Additionally, to be included, each sample firm had to provide at least one respondent with managerial or leadership responsibilities, and one to three respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities. The reason being that interviewing employees with managerial responsibilities allowed for examination of the top-down processes. Simultaneously, capturing the view of employees without managerial responsibilities was considered to be highly important to incorporate the bottom-up process. Further, the respondents were a mixture of employees working with no or some degree of activities related to the field of strategy and/or R&D units. What can be classified as R&D activities may be ambiguous. For a R&D project, the type of staff that are involved are, for example, researchers and supporting staff. Also, what can be classified to be R&D activity varies between sectors (OECD, 2015). For this research, the authors have included respondents with both no or low degree of involvement in R&D related activities, for example, customer support or coordinator, and medium or high degree of involvement in R&D related activities, for example, Business Developer and Strategist. Including respondents at different levels of an organization and in different positions was argued to be advantageous for a deeper understanding of the interactions in the idea-sharing process within large organizations. As it may be difficult to draw the line of what can be classified as involvement in R&D activities, the authors assessed the R&D involvement of each respondent based on the description of the role respondents gave during the beginning of the interviews.

Further, there is some evidence that years of experience within a functional unit might influence knowledge sharing (Nesheim & Gressgård, 2014). Therefore, the researcher aspired to generate a sample that included a variation of years of experience within the company. In these samples, all except one employee had worked at the company for at least one year and the maximum years of experience within the company was 32 years. Thus, the years of experience within the companies varied between approximately 1 year to 32 years in the two samples.

Table 3: Sample Criterias

Sample Criterias	
1st	Organizations established in the Scandinavian market and large firm size.
2nd	Well-recognized organizations.
3rd	Employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities and employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities managerial, where both sample groups include employees with no to high involvement in R&D activities.

2.3.2.3 Sample Size

According to Bell et al (2019), sample size tends to vary in qualitative research and is guided by reaching a theoretical saturation. A large sample size might be preferable when the research involves several types of comparisons within the sample. Yet, it might be hard to tell when a theoretical saturation has been achieved. Likewise, the relationships between the variables (patterns of association) and generalizability are likely to benefit from a larger sample size (Bell et al., 2019). Given that the potential respondents groups had limited availability for participating in research, the sample size had to be balanced with the time for conducting interviews. The authors aimed to conduct at least 20 interviews to the length of approximately 30 minutes to reach an appropriate size and conduct in-depth interviews. In total, 23 participated in the research.

In table 4, the industry affiliation of the respondents is shown, namely: hotel and travel, transportation, bank and insurance, retail, and telecom. All industries include one or two participating companies. A total sample of 23 respondents, including one expert interview, has been conducted. Moreover, 10 respondents had managerial or leadership responsibilities and 12 respondents of operational workers without managerial or leadership responsibilities. The reason for interviewing one expert, as well as respondents with and without managerial or leadership responsibilities, was triangulation. This is discussed in section 2.5.1. Further, a list of the respondents with and without managerial or leadership responsibilities is shown in table 5 and 6, followed by table 7 which provides information about the expert interview.

Table 4: Industriers

Participating Organizations	Number of Respondents
Bank & Insurance	6
Retail	4
Transportation	2

Hotel & Traveling	6
Telecom	3
Total number of organizations: 7	Total number of respondents: 22

Table 5: Sample Group 1 - Employees without Managerial or Leadership Responsibilities

Respondents	Titel	Years of Experience	R&D related activities	Duration	Program	Date
R1	Logistic specialist	14 years	No/Low Degree	23 min	Zoom	2021-03-23
R2*	Safety Compliance Specialist	10 years	No/Low Degree	30 min	Zoom	2021-03-26
R3	Customer Service	1 year and 9 months	No/Low Degree	28 min	Zoom	2021-03-31
R4	Content Coordinator	4 years	No/Low Degree	24 min	Zoom	2021-02-25
R5	Customer Claims & Quality Operations	6 years	No/Low Degree	29 min	Zoom	2021-03-02
R6	Sales Support	8 years	No/Low Degree	25 min	Zoom	2021-03-03
R7	Customer Service	2,5 years	No/Low Degree	21 min	Microsoft Teams	2021-03-17
R8	Customer Service	11 months	No/Low Degree	25 min	Microsoft Teams	2021-03-26
R9	Business Developer	16 years	Medium/High degree	34 min	Zoom	2021-03-24
R10	Business Operation & Development	10 years	Medium/High degree	32 min	Microsoft Teams	2021-03-03
R11	Business Developer	1,5 years	Medium/High degree	30 min	Microsoft Teams	2021-02-25
R12	Digital Strategist	4 years	Medium/High degree	26 min	Zoom	2021-03-25

**Indicates respondents working outside of Scandinavia.*

Table 6: Sample Group 2- Respondents with Managerial or Leadership Responsibilities

Respondents	Titel	Years of Experience	R&D related activities	Duration	Program	Date
M1	Head of Service Delivery	3	No/Low Degree	32 min	Zoom	2021-03-17
M2	Group and Local Optimization Lead	3	No/Low Degree	30 min	Zoom	2021-03-03
M3	Head of Leisure Distribution	3	No/Low Degree	29 min	Zoom	2021-03-02
M4	Team Leader	5	No/Low Degree	26 min	Microsoft Teams	2021-03-16
M5	Head of Development Department	32	Medium/High degree	37 min	Microsoft Teams	2021-03-01
M6	Innovation Manager Supply Chain Development	6	Medium/High degree	28 min	Zoom	2021-03-01
M7	Business Innovation Unit	6	Medium/High degree	31 min	Microsoft Teams	2021-02-24
M8	Head of Customer Development	22	Medium/High degree	36 min	Microsoft Teams	2021-02-26
M9	Tech Lead	2	Medium/High degree	22 min	Google Meet	2022-02-24
M10*	Supply Chain Development	3	Medium/High degree	24 min	Zoom	2021-03-24

*Indicates respondents working outside of Scandinavia.

Table 7: Expert Respondent

Respondent	Titel	Years of Experience	Duration	Program
E1	Assistant Professor, Expert and Consultant in Collaborative Innovation	6	33 min	Zoom

2.3.2.4 Interview Guide

Based on an initial literature review the interview guide was set-up and formalized. To further ensure that the main topics related to the research questions were covered, a pilot interview was conducted. The most important topics of the guides were related to the experience of idea-

sharing, motivation and potential barriers or challenges faced when sharing ideas within an organization. To capture a wider, yet structured data, both open and closed questions were used. Before the actual interviews were conducted, the questions in the interview guides were tested and slightly modified through two pilot interviews. A pilot study helps the researcher to identify potential issues related to the interview process (Bell et al., 2019).

As stated previously, this research includes two sample groups and one expert interview. Therefore, three separate interview guides were constructed. These guides can be found in appendix A, B, and C. Although the overarching themes in the interview-guides were similar, the adhering questions slightly varied between the sample groups. The reason for varying the questions between the respondent groups was to capture the different perspectives of employees with, and without, managerial or leadership responsibilities. The questions asked to the employee without managerial or leadership responsibilities, focused on capturing the perspective of the individual. The employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities, were asked questions which focused on the team, to capture the group perspective. The expert interview focused on themes, primarily discovered throughout the interviews with the employees.

2.3.2.5 Interview Process

All the interviews were conducted digitally through either Zoom, Google Meet or Microsoft Teams. The digital meeting provider was selected according to the safety requirements of the respondent organization. Having the interviews digitally allowed for flexibility to include respondents in different geographical areas, while also following the Covid-19 restrictions implemented by the Swedish Government. Online interviews are usually conducted in a non-face-to-face environment, and therefore the method has been critiqued for establishing a weaker rapport in comparison to face-to-face interviews (Bell et al., 2019). However, the increasingly use of video conference technologies make the non-natural element of it less of a concern and the authors judged that the benefits exceeded the drawbacks. The benefits of digital interviews include increased flexibility in the respondents' schedules, and a potential higher degree of willingness to participate. Nevertheless, there is a risk of technical problems occurring which might impact the interviewees responses (Bell et al., 2019).

As mentioned in section 3.2.1, requests were sent out to potential respondents and included a brief description of the topic and purpose of the research. No additional information about the interview questions was sent before the interviews. The decision was made to ensure as equal conditions as possible for all interviewees. One of the respondents requested additional information before the interview, hence the interview themes were sent out to this person. As only the themes were revealed before the interviewees, the qualitative rigor of the respondents was still judged to be high. Each interview was set to be around 30 minutes. It could be argued that this is a relatively short time to carry out an in-depth interview. However, the potentially limited availability of respondents had to be balanced with achieving a satisfying number of respondents. Therefore, 30 minutes was considered to be a reasonable interview time. To enable the respondents to freely express their views and beliefs, the authors chose to anonymize

both the interviewees and the companies. Since the research focuses on recurring patterns expressed by employees in large firms, rather than the context of each firm, this was reasoned to be the most appropriate.

In total, 23 employees were interviewed, including one expert interview. At the beginning of each interview, general information of the structure of the interviews was given and the interviewers asked the interviewees for permission to record the interviews. The reason behind recording the interviews was to facilitate transcription and support the analysis of the data after the interviews had been conducted. Moreover, linguistic, socio-cultural, and methodological issues may arise when conducting cross-cultural studies (Xian, 2008). Since one of the research criteria was that the firms were established in the Scandinavian market, there was no guarantee that all respondents were Swedish speaking. All the interviews were therefore held in English to avoid misconception in the translation of interviews and to open up for a wider pool of respondents. The majority of interviews were held with employees based in Scandinavia, yet with a few respondents being based in Europe⁴.

2.4 Data Analysis

According to Bell et al. (2019), the choice of method for analyzing data is crucial and needs to fit the overall purpose of the study. In qualitative research, the emphasis is on the individual's unique social reality, and the research tends to generate rich, detailed, and unstructured data (Bell et al., 2019). Even with semi-structured interviews the data is likely to be unstructured and the answers tend to be varying on an aggregated level. Therefore, a flexible approach to analyzing the data is necessary to simplify the identification of meanings and hidden patterns amongst the respondents' answers (Bell et al., 2019). Thematic analysis, where the researcher breaks down the data into codes, analyzes the codes and develops concepts and themes (Bell et al., 2019), was considered to be the most suitable approach for analyzing the data collected for this research. Nevertheless, grounded theory was also discussed. Grounded theory often aligns with an inductive inquiry and the researcher aims to construct theory grounded in the empirical data collected, hence derives the theory from the data and systematically analyses the data throughout the research process (Glaser, 1992; Khan, 2014). However, the thematic analysis was deemed most appropriate compared to grounded theory, as the former best supported the identification of concepts, themes and comparability across the data collected while limiting the potential occurrence of research biases. As this research applies an abductive approach, the authors further recognized that the potential risk of research bias could be stronger when applying grounded theory, compared to thematic analysis.

Qualitative research often takes an iterative form, and it is recommended that the analysis of codes and themes occur alongside the interview, as this allows for adjustments in the process of data collection (Bell et al., 2019). In order to process the data and acquire a richer understanding of it, the authors transcribed interview material alongside conducting new

⁴ Two out of 23 respondents operated outside of Scandinavia. However, no difference between these respondents and the rest of the respondent group was found with regard to motivation, enablers, or challenges of idea-sharing. These respondents are marked with an *

interviews. This allows for familiarization with the data and facilitates the identification of both patterns and inconsistencies in the respondent's answers (Bell et al., 2019). The thematic analysis started with the authors identifying recurring codes alongside the interview process. These codes describe small units of analysis, capturing interesting nuances in the data, and act as building blocks for the development of themes (Clarke & Braun, 2017). After completing the full interview process, an in-depth identification of top tier codes was conducted with the use of color-coding. Both authors systematically generated top tier codes from all interviews, in order to align the analysis rigorously. Then, the top tier codes were clustered into concepts, further processed and organized into color-coded themes. The coding chart can be found in appendix D.

When deriving the concepts and themes, the purpose of the research, the research questions as well as the literature, was taken into consideration. However, it should be mentioned that large amounts of unstructured data collected might make it difficult to compare the data in a structured way and there is a risk that the context of what has been said gets lost (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Bell et al., 2019). As an additional challenge, the use of coding might result in fragmented data, implying that the original narrative flow might fade (Bell et al., 2019). To mitigate these risks and ensure that a systematic analysis was conducted, both authors derived the concepts and themes in tandem as well as reasonable time was allocated to conduct the analysis thoroughly and iteratively. Then, the findings were discussed between the two researchers until a consensus in the data was reached through an iterative process.

2.5 Quality of Research

The quality of the research is of high importance, and reliability and validity are essential aspects to consider when conducting and evaluating the research quality (Bell et al., 2019). For qualitative research, the adaptation of these aspects is slightly different compared to quantitative research, since the former does not incorporate any measurements in contrast to the latter (Bell et al., 2019). Therefore, alternative ways of evaluating the quality of qualitative research have been developed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose trustworthiness and authenticity as alternative criteria for qualitative research which parallels the traditional quality criteria of reliability and validity. Trustworthiness comprises the four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These will be explained and discussed in more detail below with regard to this research.

2.5.1 Credibility

According to Bell et al. (2019), credibility is equivalent to the criterion of internal validity in quantitative research and entails that the research is conducted properly and established credibility of findings. The researchers are providing the findings of the research to individuals that have been included. Providing the findings allows the respondents to confirm that the researchers have understood the social world that has been subject to research correctly (Bell et al., 2019). Further, Shenton (2004) explains that using triangulation via data sources by including a variety of informants to verify individual viewpoints against others can be used to create a rich understanding of attitudes and behaviors of the individuals that are being

investigated. In this research, the focus was on employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities, yet these individual viewpoints and experiences were verified against employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities. In addition, one expert was included to complement the perspectives of employees with and without managerial or leadership responsibilities and understand the interaction among these. Including a variety of respondents enabled the researchers to get group-level perspectives and explain attitudes and behaviors to expand the understanding of how employees can be encouraged to share knowledge at the early stage of the innovation process. Further, while a cross-sectional design using semi-structured interviews might not offer a robust way to extract causal inferences, the chosen research design allowed the authors to investigate the social reality created by the individuals and aligned with this research's purpose. In this research, the establishment of credibility was ensured by respondent validation. The respondent validation process included that the empirical findings were sent out through email to the respondents to validate that the researcher had interpreted and understood their responses correctly.

2.5.2 Transferability

Bell et al. (2019) explain that transferability is equivalent to the criterion of external validity in quantitative research and refers to whether the findings apply to other contexts. Transferability or external validity might be questionable for studies where only one or a few cases are included, and the sample is generated non-randomized (Bell et al., 2019). Additionally, the authors are aware that there may be differences between people's words and actions. As mentioned in section 3.3.1.2, this research incorporates certain criteria for sampling respondents. The researchers decided to include 7 cases (organizations) across five different industries based on the Swedish Innovation Index, which aimed to strengthen the transferability of the findings. Since the research relies on a third-party provider for the company index and includes more than a few cases, it cannot be argued to have generated a randomized sample. However, it most likely includes a sample where the initial selection of companies is less likely to be influenced by the researcher's knowledge of existing large organizations in Scandinavia. Likewise, the sample's representativeness is strengthened by including several large organizations across industries, and employees with different positions in organizations. Further, the cross-sectional design was chosen as the focus of this research was to produce general findings among employees working in large organizations, rather than capture the unique context of each organization. However, as the sample size is small the findings will, to some extent, apply to other contexts. Yet, it might not represent the views of all employees working in large organizations and the generalizability might vary between contexts.

2.5.3 Dependability

Dependability is concerned with whether the findings apply at other times and are equivalent to the criterion of reliability in quantitative research (Bell et al., 2019). Replicability is usually a challenge to qualitative research as circumstances and contexts vary, and hence, the original study might not be possible to replicate accurately (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Nevertheless, the authors of this research argue that it will be possible to replicate the research to some extent. Replicability has been ensured by the authors having provided detailed information about the

research process and rationale for the considerations and decisions that have been made with regard to the research. For example, the literature review had a narrative approach, including keywords and certain criteria. Also, the qualitative interviewing followed the same process for respondents and had a semi-structured approach, and the comparability to some degree was ensured by following an interview guide.

Further, Bell et al. (2019) explain that dependability has an auditing approach where the researcher keeps the research material throughout the entire research process. Then, the researcher invites peers to review how procedures are or have been followed, either while conducting the research or at the end (Bell et al., 2019). That was achieved by that the authors of this thesis had frequent discussions with each other during the research process and established a structure for reviewing literature, collecting the data, and performing the analysis. For instance, the literature was reviewed by both of the researchers. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by both researchers, and a thematic analysis was performed by the authors in tandem. Also, the authors stored and saved all data digitally throughout the entire research process, such as recordings and transcriptions of interviews, notes and drafts from different phases of the research. Likewise, the authors had three formal meetings scheduled by the university where peers were invited to review and give feedback on different parts of the research. Also, two additional informal feedback sessions were held with peers. As a consequence, the findings of this research are likely to be replicable at other times. However, contextual factors might affect the literature review, sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

2.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability parallels objectivity in quantitative research and entails ensuring that the research has been conducted by the researcher acting in good faith and not allowing personal values to affect the conduction of research (Bell et al., 2019). In this research, the authors have to the best of their ability, ensured objectivity by following the research process and not allowed personal values, theoretical inclinations, respondents, or the collaboration company to affect the research in such a way that actions threaten the objectivity of the research. Also, the authors have worked in tandem and have had critical discussions throughout the research process and have critically reviewed each other's decisions and actions.

2.5.5 Authenticity

Authenticity concerns the potential impact of the research concerning the social and political influence that can be shaped by representing multiple viewpoints within a certain social context (Bell et al., 2019). The authors of this research have been aware of the responsibility to accurately represent different perspectives. That has been ensured by including a variety of respondents having different roles and organizational positions. Further, the authors have fairly represented the findings, implying that the authors have treated the respondents' answers as equal to the research. No specific viewpoint has been given more attention or considered as being of higher value than others.

2.6 Research Ethics

While conducting research, it is important to be aware and discuss ethical considerations, mainly regarding people that participate in the research and potential unethical activities connected to the research that should be dismissed (Bell et al., 2019). Diener and Crandall (1978) present four ethical principles in business research: avoidance of harm, informed consent, privacy, and preventing deception. Bell et al. (2019) explain that the first ethical principle, avoidance of harm, is multifaceted and includes any potential harm of participants, such as stress, harm to participants' self-esteem, or future employment. In particular, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents might be difficult in qualitative research and needs to be addressed (Bell et al., 2019). Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured in this research by that respondents and organizations were anonymized and information that could reveal the identity of the respondents or organizations in, for example, empirical findings, was eliminated to the best of the authors' knowledge. Likewise, the transcriptions were stored online where only the authors had access to the documents, and all requests of sharing the data with others were declined.

Further, Bell et al. (2019) explain that a second ethical principle, informed consent, is concerned with giving the participants as much information they need to make an informed decision about participating in the research. Also, informed consent includes giving information to participants regarding potential recording (Bell et al., 2019). In this research, the interview requests were sent out through email and included information about the research purpose, company collaboration, and the employees that were requested for interviews. During the interviews, the respondents were informed about anonymity as well as the purpose of recording the interviews, transcribing and later analyzing the empirical data. All respondents gave their consent to be recorded. Additionally, the respondents were informed that the empirical findings were to be sent out for respondent validation later.

Moreover, privacy is the third ethical principle and relates to protecting the research participants' privacy (Bell et al., 2019). The privacy of participants was ensured as only the authors had access to the recordings and transcriptions, and no personal information of respondents were shared. Also, during the interviews the authors tried to judge if any topic appeared to be sensitive to any respondent. Preventing deception is the fourth ethical principle which corresponds to the scenario when researchers misrepresent their research (Bell et al., 2019). As mentioned above regarding the ethical principle of informed consent, the interview request included information about the research. In addition to the information mentioned above, the interview requests included a short presentation of the authors, informing the organization that the authors were students studying their Master in Innovation and Industrial Management and that research was conducted for the author's master thesis.

Lastly, some ethical considerations concerning trust and reciprocity, which emphasizes that the research should benefit both researchers and research participants (Bell et al., 2019). Sharing the respondents' findings was seen as one way to show appreciation to the respondents and conduct respondent validation. However, Bell et al. (2019) explain that one ethical concern

related to showing the findings could be that anonymity is jeopardized. Yet, the authors of this thesis ensured anonymity by avoiding harm by taking the actions explained in connections to the first ethical principle discussed in this chapter.

3. Literature

This chapter provides an overview of the previous literature related to the chosen research area. First, literature on Knowledge and Knowledge Sharing is presented, followed by the Role of Knowledge in an organizational context. The literature review continues by describing How Knowledge is Shared in organizations, and thereafter, presenting Attitudes and Motivation Towards Knowledge Sharing. Lastly, Enablers and Barriers to Knowledge Sharing in an intra-organizational context is tying the literature review together.

3.1 Knowledge and Knowledge Sharing

3.1.1 What is Knowledge?

Davenport and Prusak (1998) suggests that even though knowledge is separate from both data and information, the terms often cause confusion. The reason is that many people have trouble understanding what data, information and knowledge are and how they differ from each other. Davenport and Prusak (1998) further explains that firms who do not understand the fundamental difference between and the meaning of knowledge, data and information often invest heavily into technology initiatives which later on do not deliver what is needed or what they thought they were obtaining (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Thus, knowledge, data and information are important and “*organizational success and failure can often depend on knowing which of them you need, which you have, and what you can and can't do with each*” (Davenport and Prusak, 1998, p. 1).

Furthermore, Nonaka, (1994) defines knowledge as a “*justified true belief*” (p.15) and further distinguishes between two types of knowledge: explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. According to Howells (1996) tacit knowledge⁵ is characterized by difficulties in codification and storage. Also, it is referred to as “*know-how*” embedded in procedures and acquired through learned behavior (Howells, 1996). On the other hand, explicit knowledge can be referred to as a “*know-what*” type of knowledge that can be codified and stored through the use of formal language, such as a mathematical expression or a manual (Smith, 2001). The interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge drives the creation of new ideas, concepts, and organizational knowledge (Nonaka, 1994).

⁵ The definition of tacit knowledge can be traced back to Michael Polanyi’s theoretical contributions, e.g. Polanyi, M. (1962). Tacit Knowing. *Philosophy Today*, 6(4), 239-262. and Polanyi, M. (1966). *The Tacit Dimension*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1966.

3.1.2 What is Knowledge Sharing?

Further, Nonaka (1994) argues that ideas emerge and are formed in individuals' minds, yet social interactions are critical to the development of ideas and creation of knowledge. In an organizational context, these interactions may span across organizational departments and adds a dimension to organizational knowledge creation “*which is associated with the extent of social interaction between individuals that share and develop knowledge*” (Nonaka, 1994, p. 15). Wang and Noe (2010) describe that knowledge sharing refers “*to the provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures*” (p. 117). Also, Cummings (2004) has argued that the definition of knowledge sharing not only includes the provision and recipient of task information and how-how, but also feedback regarding a procedure or product. In this thesis, knowledge sharing will be defined as the provision or recipient of task information, know-how, and feedback to help and collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures (Wang & Noe, 2010; Cummings, 2004).

Moreover, knowledge sharing occurs between at least two parties which forms a relationship. When the actor(s) share knowledge, the other one(s) learn from it (Hendriks, 1999), and knowledge can be shared through, for example, written or face-to-face communication (Wang & Noe, 2010). One party shares the knowledge it holds (i.e., the sender or provider). The other party acquires the knowledge (i.e., recipient or seeker) by perceiving, interpreting, and internalizing the knowledge that is being expressed (Hendriks, 1999). For example, managers get 67% of their knowledge from face-to-face interactions or phone calls, and only 33% from documents (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Furthermore, social interactions enable employees to build relationships and networks which support efficient utilization as well as exchange of knowledge among employees (Chen & Huang, 2007). Likewise, there may be barriers to knowledge sharing such as cultural aspects (McDermott & O’dell, 2001), distrust in managers (Detert & Burris, 2016), mental models (Edmondson & Nembhard, 2009), and communication issues related to sharing specialized knowledge through the use of common knowledge (Carlile, 2004). Smith (2001) argues organizations might create a competitive advantage if they manage to successfully utilize their employees' accumulation of tacit and explicit knowledge, in regard to achieving organizational goals and problem-solving activities.

3.2 The Role of Knowledge in Organization

Drawing on previous literature, the role of knowledge possessed by individuals in relation to the organization and society has been investigated and conceptualized as an organizational knowledge creation process.

3.2.1 Knowledge as a Strategic Resource

During the last decade, the knowledge-based view of the firm has emerged, and knowledge has become a key resource to organizations ability to stay competitive (Grant, 2002). An example of how firms value knowledge is that they often recruit individuals for their experience rather than intelligence or education, as these persons have proven that they understand the value of knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Also, the speed of change is increasing at different levels, both regarding technological development, as well as within and across industries. This has in turn shed light on the role of knowledge in firms and drawn attention to knowledge management (Grant, 2002). Grant (1996b) presents the assumptions which the knowledge based view of the firm relies on, as the following: a) viewing knowledge as a resource of high strategic importance (Grant, 1996b), b) there are different types of knowledge and the transferability⁶ varies for these (Nonaka, 1994), c) knowledge is created and learned by individuals (Simon, 1991), and d) knowledge diversity is usually required in the production of a new product or service (Kogut & Zander, 1992).

3.2.2 Knowledge Creation and Innovation

The patterns of interaction and conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge held by individuals is the core of knowledge creation, yet the organization both provides mobilizational factors and context in which the creation of new knowledge can occur (Nonaka, 1994). Kogut and Zander (1992) describe that "*firms are a repository of capabilities, as determined by the social knowledge embedded in enduring individual relationships structured by organizing principles*" (Kogut & Zander, 1992, p. 369). Recombining the existing capabilities and leveraging on the social relationships that are shaped by cooperation within the organization are central mechanisms in creating new knowledge and further ensure the firm's success in a competitive landscape. However, the new knowledge tends to be based on the current cumulation of knowledge, contributing to path dependency and predictability of the organization's future activities (Kogut & Zander, 1992). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that the knowledge creation process starts with the individual. The sharing and exchange of personal knowledge at all organizational levels are a key component of new creation of knowledge. As there are different characteristics of tacit and explicit knowledge, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) present a four-stage model for knowledge creation from tacit to tacit (socialization), from tacit to explicit (articulation), from explicit to explicit (combination, and from explicit to tacit (internalization). When socialization takes place, tacit knowledge is shared to become tacit. Articulation allows the tacit knowledge to become explicit. Combination includes the process when explicit knowledge is combined and integrated. Internalization occurs when explicit knowledge is applied and internalized by the individual (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Additionally, effective knowledge creation requires a component of care incorporated into organizational relationships, which enables knowledge sharing and

⁶ Knowledge transfer could be another way to investigate how knowledge is shared. However, this research focuses on knowledge sharing and does not look further into the topic of knowledge transfer as such.

discussions of ideas supported by mutual trust, access to help, empathy, courage, and lenient judgement (Von Krogh, 1998).

Further, the presented knowledge-based view of the firm has been explored and elaborated. One example is Grant (1996a) that argues that "*knowledge is viewed as residing within the individual, and the primary role of the organization is knowledge application rather than knowledge creation*" (Grant, 1996a, p. 109). Madhavan and Grover (1998) provide the construction of knowledge as "embedded" and "embodied" in the creation of new knowledge in the new product development process. They propose that embedded knowledge is "*the potential knowledge resulting from the combination of the individual team members' stores of tacit knowledge*" (Madhavan & Grover, 1998, p. 2) and that "*the potential for new knowledge is embedded in the team and its interaction*" (Madhavan & Grover, p. 2). Hence, a new product can be viewed to consist of embodied knowledge. Consequently, the researchers explain that the conversion of the embedded knowledge possessed by members of the new product development team to the embodied knowledge in the form of a new product, is significant. Among several factors, collective trust in the technical abilities of the team members, frequency of direct interactions among team members of a cross-functional team, as well as informal interactions, are critical to the effectiveness and efficiency of the conversion and thus, creation of new knowledge (Madhavan & Grover, 1998).

3.3 How is Knowledge Shared in Organizations?

So far, the literature review has been concerned with exploring literature connected to the nature of knowledge sharing and the role of knowledge in organizations. This raises the question of how do organizations practically manage knowledge creation and dissemination within functional units as well as across these with regard to knowledge sharing and innovation? Regarding the context of interaction, knowledge sharing can occur through either face-to-face or technology aided interactions (Wang & Noe, 2010). Moreover, sharing knowledge with regard to interaction context such as sharing interpersonal or through databases might be associated with different perceived benefits and costs (Bordia et al., 2006).

Further, Nesheim and Gressgård (2014) stress the importance of knowledge sharing across units in the high-risk setting. The study found that workers being autonomously motivated, compared to extrinsic motivated, were more open to receiving knowledge from others. However, the findings also reveal a geographical effect, where the participants working onshore were more involved in activities related to knowledge sharing compared to their offshore colleagues. According to Nesheim and Gressgård (2014) the latter findings can be explained by the type of work the employee is engaged with and the opportunities he or she has for sharing knowledge. This indicates that the different results of improvement initiatives could be explained by the actual work location and thus, should be accounted for (Nesheim & Gressgård, 2014).

During the past year, attention has been directed to the harnessing of internal knowledge, in particular ideas, through information and communication technologies (ICT), web-based ideation systems (e.g., Beretta, 2019) and internal crowdsourcing (e.g., Zuchowski et al., 2016). Zuchowski et al. (2016) reviewed previous research for internal crowdsourcing of knowledge, and shaped by that, they present a definition: "*Internal crowdsourcing is an (a) IT-enabled (b) group activity based on an (c) open call for participation (d) in an enterprise.*" (Zuchowski et al., 2016, p. 168). Further they address that internal crowdsourcing is beneficial when a problem needs to be considered by people having knowledge within different functional areas in the organization. Also, the problem solvers are employees that voluntarily participate, and the evaluation of ideas allows employees (the crowd) to be involved (Zuchowski et al., 2016).

Björk et al. (2014) made a case study of demand-driven collaborative ideation management at Ericsson, where an IT based tool was internally developed to give the opportunity to all employees globally to participate in a "bottom-up" approach. Based on their case study, they found that some important factors of the demand-driven collaborative ideation were incentives, visibility, and resources. However, this way of working with ideation and collection of ideas present some challenges that have to be addressed. For example, giving the opportunity to all employees to participate might impact the usability of ideas and a tendency of producing incremental innovation (Björk et al. 2014). Furthermore, the use of information communication technology-based tools has been investigated in relation to employee driven innovation, and how these tools can support employee driven innovation. For instance, Gressgård et al. (2014), finding suggest that in order for these tools to be efficient, they must be integrated into employees' daily work practices and aligned with organizational tools, such as KPI's and incentives (Gressgård et al., 2014).

3.4 Attitudes and Motivation Toward Knowledge Sharing

Although many researchers, managers and leaders understand that knowledge sharing within the organization is vital, few have studied the individual determinants of such. As Björk et al. (2014) point out, although ideation systems might help organizations to adopt a more open and collective ideation approach, it does not solve the potential problem of motivating employees to dedicate time and effort to create ideas, and then share and present their ideas to an organization. Further, Bock and Kim (2002) sheds light on the individual employees' knowledge sharing behavior within the context of the organization. The motivation to share knowledge within the organization must be fostered, as knowledge sharing is a key component in a firm (Bock & Kim, 2002). Also, the research shows that expected rewards, which oftentimes believed to be the main motivation for knowledge sharing, is not an important factor of motivation for employee's knowledge sharing. Rather, expected associations and contributions are the crucial determinant of the individual employees' attitude towards knowledge sharing. Hence, knowledge sharing can be supported by the organization, however, it cannot be forced (Bock & Kim, 2002).

3.4.1 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Traditionally, research of knowledge sharing with regards to governance mechanisms on an organizational level has dominated the individual level of analysis. Yet, the individual level of analysis regarding an individual's motivation, attitudes, behavior is important to understand what underpins knowledge sharing at an organizational level (Foss et al., 2010). As touched upon in the previous sections, the role of motivation in knowledge sharing has been examined from an organizational climate, organizational structure, and leadership point of view. Mainly, by considering the factors and mechanisms on an organizational level that motivates employees to engage in knowledge sharing activities through social interactions (e.g., Janz et al., 1997; Chen & Huang, 2007; Donate & de Pablo, 2015).

However, Foss et al. (2009) explain, the type of individual motivation connected to organizational activities, performance management practices and individual characteristics might influence knowledge sharing behavior differently and to a varied extent. Yet to begin with, there are different types of motivation that drive human behavior. Extrinsic motivation includes external motivation, which is concerned with the nature of the outcome, where an individual engages in a behavior to either be active or avoid an external outcome. For example, external incentives within the domain of rewards and recognition, as well as different types of external punishment (Foss et al., 2009). Further, Ryan and Deci (2000) mention additional sources of extrinsic motivation that varies between being external and internal, such as introjected regulation (e.g., self-control, ego-involvement, and internal rewards) and identified regulation (e.g., personal importance). Intrinsic motivation is the other type of motivation that is internally generated by an individual and reflects the internal drive to explore and learn in accordance with the individual's interest. Contextual variables, such as communication and feedback, might influence the intrinsic motivation through affecting psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In turn, fulfilling these needs encourages high-qualitative performance, wellness, and autonomous motivation among employees (Deci et al., 2017).

3.4.2 Motivators to Engage in Knowledge Sharing Behavior

Noteworthy, incentives that are linked to motivational mechanisms might be linked to the type of knowledge that the organization aims to motivate their employees to share. External incentives might be beneficial to encourage employees to share explicit knowledge or realized tacit knowledge such as a product. Intrinsic motivation seems to be of significant importance in regard to sharing pure tacit knowledge that might be required for a joint output. In this case, use of external incentives might cause employees to withhold necessary knowledge, yet personal relationships and participation might serve as incentive to share tacit knowledge (Osterloh & Frey, 2000). Other motivational mechanisms that might influence knowledge sharing is goal setting. Quigley et al. (2007) demonstrated an interplay between recipient and sender, where an attitude towards openly sharing knowledge is central to the provider of

knowledge and where the recipient needs to seek and integrate new knowledge to achieve a high-performance goal (Quigley et al., 2007).

Further, Wendelken et al., (2014) conducted a study investigating what motivates employees to participate and not participate in innovation communities. As extrinsic motivating factors motivating employees to participate, they found career and reputation, learning, and recognition by the firm and their peers as especially important. As intrinsic motivation, they found factors related to fun and enjoyment, general personal attitudes toward work, connectivity and community, and firms as influencing participation in innovation communities. For nonparticipants they connected their findings to social exchange theory where the participants did not perceive the benefits to exceed the costs to participate. Likewise, they found conflicting motivations and priorities. For example, fun and enjoyment versus potential stress caused by participating, and the tradeoff between spending time and resources on personal motivations or career (Wendelken et al., 2014). In a study made by Muhdi and Boutellier (2011), they found that to motivate employees to participate in virtual internal innovation-related communities, the community should offer possibilities for the employee to widen one's perspective, give the opportunity to identify colleagues having similar ideas, and find potential collaborations. Also, giving the employees the opportunity to add their own ideas and develop them in collaboration with colleagues was found as an important factor. Regarding rewards, they did not find any evidence that it would be ranked as a highly important factor for motivation (Muhdi & Boutellier, 2011).

Moreover, the decision about engaging in knowledge sharing behavior in electronic networks may be influenced positively if employees perceive that helping others by contributing knowledge is enjoyable and if there are professional reputation gains offered when contributing knowledge (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). The reputational feedback has been emphasized in other studies as well, for example, Hung et al. (2011) research showed that this type of feedback affected both the quality and quantity of knowledge contributions in terms of ideas. Also, their findings suggest that only providing economic rewards might not be adequate to motivate employees to share ideas (Hung et al., 2011). In the domain of web-based ideation systems, research suggests that the framing of feedback (positive or negative) and ideas that attract contributors from different functional areas of an organization impact the likelihood of selection differently (Beretta, 2019). Giving appropriate feedback on knowledge sharing behavior may especially be important to support formation of workplace communities (Bock et al., 2005).

3.4.2.2 Human Resource Management Practices and Job Characteristics

Minbaeva (2008) conducted research about human resource management (HRM) practices connected to extrinsic motivation, such as recognition, performance-based reward etc., positively affects sharing of knowledge. Although their research did not support that human resource practices affect intrinsic motivation, there might be some risks associated with intrinsic motivation that impact knowledge sharing. For example, employees that are

intrinsically motivated might prioritize their own goals above the goals of the organizations, as well as there might be difficulties in cooperating with these individuals (Minbaeva, 2008). Furthermore, there is some evidence that job-design might impact knowledge sharing behavior among employees. Foss et al. (2009) research shows that there are certain job design characteristics that affect the type of motivation, which might encourage knowledge sharing. To give examples of their findings, they suggest that employees' intrinsic motivation to engage in knowledge sharing is positively affected by job autonomy. Introjected motivation of sharing knowledge is positively connected to task identity, which is related to perception of meaningfulness of an employees' job and connected to completing a task. Intrinsic and introjected motivation is to a varied degree positively related to sending knowledge to colleagues. However, the opposite is true for external motivation which might be explained by the fact that the individual is focused on the external reward and shares knowledge to the point where it is given. The researchers concluded that paying attention to job characteristics might especially be important when there exists a dependence on knowledge sharing between organizational units (Foss et al., 2009).

Moreover, Wang et al. (2014) conducted research on how knowledge sharing in knowledge management systems was affected by accountability-inducing management practices (e.g., performance evaluation) and personality traits of employees (openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism). Regarding the effect of rewards on knowledge sharing, their results show knowledge sharing in knowledge management systems might be positively influenced when reward and evaluation of quality and quantity of knowledge sharing is combined. Furthermore, the positive impact of reward and evaluation was observed on all personality traits. However, the effectiveness of these varies and seem to have a higher impact on knowledge sharing for employees that possess the traits of high neuroticism and low conscientiousness. Further, to understand what underpins knowledge sharing behavior when reward and evaluation are not present, the researchers argue that the personality trait of openness to experience might be central. Employees that have higher levels of openness to experience personality traits showed a higher degree of knowledge sharing compared to employees having lower levels of openness to experience or any of the other two personality traits (Wang et al., 2014).

3.5. Enablers and Barriers to Knowledge Sharing in Organizations

3.5.1 Organizational Structure and Knowledge sharing

How firms foster knowledge sharing and innovation is something academia has been discussing for a long time. Several researchers have argued that organizational structure could be a key component when it comes to organizations' ability to innovate (e.g., O'Reilly & Tushman, 2004; He & Wong, 2004).

Chen and Huang (2007) highlight three elements of an organizational structure: formalization, centralization, and integration, which affect social interactions among employees. Formalization means that explicit procedures and rules that guide employee behavior to a high extent, where a high degree of formalization might create a barrier to internal innovation as it might hinder necessary flexibility and spontaneity (Chen & Huang, 2007; Bidault & Cummings, 1994). There is less need for employees to discuss work when the task is standardized and already determined by the organization (Chen & Huang, 2007; Sivadas & Dwyer, 2000). Having a centralized structure refers to having that the decision-making authority is given to higher hierarchical levels of the organization (Chen & Huang, 2007; Robbins & Decenzo, 2001; Tsai, 2002). Centralization has been found to have a negative effect on knowledge sharing in an intraorganizational context (Tsai, 2002), and might reduce involvement, communication, and commitment among those who cannot participate in decision-making (Chen & Huang, 2007; Damanpour, 1991; Sivadas & Dwyer, 2000). Further, the degree to which subdivisions work interrelatedly is connected to integration and gives opportunities for employees to learn from each other (Chen & Huang, 2007; Germain, 1996; Sciulli, 1998).

Conversely, an organizational structure that possesses the characteristics of being more decentralized, integrated and less formalized might be beneficial in terms of giving employees the autonomy and motivation enabling them to share and apply knowledge through engaging in social interactions to a higher degree (Chen & Huang, 2007). These characteristics of the organizational structure, in combination with a supportive organizational climate, has been argued to positively moderate the relationship between knowledge management and organizational innovativeness (Chen et al., 2010). However, in a study conducted by Willem and Buelens (2009), they did not find any evidence that centralized coordination has an effect on knowledge sharing. In addition, the level of formalization should be balanced. Due to the fact that knowledge is context-dependent, it might be challenging to form principles for organizational structures that can be deployed to optimize knowledge sharing within organizations (Willem & Buelens, 2009).

3.5.2 Knowledge Sharing Across Organizational Boundaries

Teigland and Wasko (2003) investigated the relationship between the individual knowledge workers' performances and boundary spanning communication activities. As information and communication technology has evolved, workers are now enabled to effectively communicate despite differences in time and space. This new information trading, which spans across external and internal boundaries, seems to improve the individual workers performance. Hence, creating an organizational structure which allows for a high degree of flexibility in terms of knowledge integration, can support innovation and lead to sustainable competitive advantage (Teigland & Wasko, 2003). Moreover, the research pair suggest that organizations with interest in creative solutions and knowledge management, need to implement an organizational structure for knowledge integration which balances and supports both efficiency and flexibility, and further allows for informal information trading. This information trading needs to occur

across boundaries and through personal and electronic networks. Additionally, one critical component to sustain knowledge exchange in the network is the norms of reciprocity (Teigland & Wasko, 2003).

Although social relationships and cooperation in a new product development context is clearly essential and beneficial in regard to fundamental performance objectives, such as quality and speed of development and creating a competitive advantage, there are several challenges that have been identified in relation to teamwork in the innovation process. For example, there are knowledge boundaries in the context of product development, which gives insights to why knowledge might both be advantageous and disadvantageous in regard to innovation (Carlile, 2002; Carlile, 2004). Carlile (2002) studied four dependent functions involved in new product development and production to examine the differences in structuring knowledge within these functions. Further, the research explored the knowledge boundaries that occur across functions when these together are a part of the creation and production of a product (Carlile, 2002). Three approaches to boundaries in relation to new product development were recognized and discussed. The syntactic approach offers a view that a shared syntax facilitates communication and information processing tools are used to integrate knowledge across boundaries (Carlile, 2002; Shannon & Weaver, 1949). The semantic approach is based on the argument that collaboration and communication might be challenging even when there is a shared syntax, as a result of different interpretation by individuals. Lastly, the pragmatic approach “*recognizes that differences in knowledge are not always adequately specified as differences in degree or interpretation, but that knowledge is localized, embedded, and invested in practice*” (Carlile, 2002, p. 453).

Based on the reasoning that there exist knowledge boundaries in organizations, common knowledge can be used to efficiently share knowledge across the boundaries. However, Carlile (2004) explains that barriers might arise in the knowledge sharing process when the actors’ ability to use the common knowledge varies or when the knowledge of actors cannot be expressed through the use of common knowledge such as when an actor has specialized knowledge (Carlile, 2004). Also, working in a geographically dispersed, cross functional team presents some challenges to collaboration. Sole and Edmondson (2002) mention that teams that are trying to solve a local problem may have access to a broad variety of situated knowledge while working in dispersed cross functional teams. However, it might take time to recognize the usefulness of knowledge that is possessed by team members at another site. The researchers emphasize awareness of relevant situated knowledge and knowledge about who knows what is important to access useful knowledge and not only looking for knowledge within a local community. Additionally, appropriability of such knowledge is critical to enable the team to integrate that into its tasks. Yet, there may exist different norms and practices at different sites, which might create difficulties when a team wants to appropriate remote knowledge (Sole & Edmondson, 2002). Furthermore, different compositions of teams with members that possess different skills and knowledge might be a source of ideas that later could be turned into innovation (Edmondson & Harvey, 2018; Garvin & Levesque, 2006).

From an idea generation perspective, there is some evidence that sharing of ideas between group members in brainstorming might generate a higher number of unique ideas compared to the number of unique ideas generated by members brainstorming individually (Paulus & Yang, 2000). Yet only focusing on the composition of the team to capture positive effects of diversity of competence and perspectives do not improve performance (Edmondson & Harvey, 2018). Specifically, attributes of the new product development include degree of team complexity, team diversity, temporary membership, fluid team boundaries, and organizational infrastructure, which might create challenges for the team. For instance, team communication might be challenged by different mental models of team members, shifting situations, and lack of clear boundaries (Edmondson & Nembhard, 2009). On the flip side, Edmondson and Nembhard (2009) explain that there are benefits associated with the challenges of new product development teams such as building project management skills when faced with project complexity, developing network collaborations and resilience. Moreover, Subramaniam and Youndt (2005) describe that the social capital of an organization is essential to the value of the human capital. Giving an organization's core knowledge worker the opportunity and support development of the ability to share knowledge and network is of significant importance to efficiently capture the value of human capital investments (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005).

3.5.3 Organizational Position and Roles

Further, Huysman et al. (2002) highlight the managers role as a human portal for knowledge, where a manager can bridge different types of knowledge within an organization by looking beyond their own business unit. The manager can be viewed as a knowledge broker, who facilitates knowledge sharing and the knowledge brokers come in various forms. For example, a broker that handles a specific boundary in a community (boundary-spanners), a broker that establishes informal connections at different places (roamers), and brokers that transfer information from the front (outposts) (Huysman et al., 2002; Wenger, 1998). However, managers might struggle to share knowledge due to lack of time, although they might be aware that knowledge sharing would be beneficial (Riege, 2005; O'Dell & Grayson, 1998).

Moreover, trust in management has been researched, and Renzl (2008) provides evidence that it might influence employees' willingness to share knowledge within and between teams, as well as the way employees interact with each other (Renzl, 2008). With regards to social interactions, Morrison (2014) highlights the concept of 'upward voice', which is when employees communicate ideas, suggestions etc. to a member of the organization that has a higher position in the organization. In contrast, when employees decide to not communicate ideas, the employees are considered to be silent (Morrison, 2014). Employees might decide to not express their suggestions or concerns to a person in a higher position when, for instance, no gain or a potential loss is associated with raising their voice, they do not want to waste their time, or fear the potential consequences (Detert, Burris, & Harrison, 2010). Alternatively,

employees might withhold their ideas and concerns just because they believe that their managers will not act on those (Detert & Burris, 2016).

Further, Høyrup et al. (2012) describes the concept of "employee-driven innovation", which refers to:

The generation and implementation of new ideas, products, and processes - including the everyday remarking of jobs and organizational practices - originating from interaction of employees, who are not assigned to this task. The processes are unfolded in an organization and may be integrated in cooperative and managerial efforts of the organization. Employees are active and may initiate, support or even drive/lead the processes (Høyrup et al., 2012, p. 8).

Høyrup et al. (2012) explains that employee driven innovation is a bottom-up process, which begins at the worker level. It is a social process where several actors, such as employees and managers, interact. However, organizations may have a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes or top-down processes for innovation (Høyrup et al., 2012). Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) explains that when it comes to decisions about major innovations, the operational employees might be excluded from participating in these decisions. Usually, the employees involved consist of individuals from the top management level and/or units focused on strategy or R&D (Kesting & Ulhøi, 2010). Although innovation and creative work might be assigned to a specific group of people, innovation may occur among "ordinary" employees with different roles and at different organizational levels (Smith et al., 2012). "Ordinary" employees (in this thesis also referred to as "operational workers") refers to employees that have no formal job tasks related to being innovative (Høyrup et al., 2012). Although they may not have the responsibility or decision-making authority with regards to innovation, they have context-dependent operational knowledge acquired through their daily tasks which can be useful for coming up with ideas and its implementation (Kesting & Ulhøi, 2010). Additionally, there may be additional benefits to including employees from the entire organization. Not only with regards to generation and implementation of ideas, also to the recognition of ideas that bring value to the organization. Burkus (2013) suggests that including employees and distributing the process of approving ideas across the organization through the use of specific methods could help to combat the potential negative bias toward creativity under uncertain conditions. This as practicality may be preferred in an uncertain environment compared to new and creative ideas. Spreading the approvals of ideas across the organization could potentially foster a culture which recognizes and develops new ideas throughout the organization (Burkus, 2013).

Moreover, examination of the relationship between power and knowledge sharing has been given only a little attention in research. However, there are a few exceptions. For example, Liao (2008) investigated the influence of manager's social power on R&D employees' knowledge sharing behavior, where the researcher found that knowledge sharing behavior is impacted by manager's reward and expert power. Other types of social powers, such as legitimate and

reference power, were also examined, yet the findings suggested an indirect impact of these on knowledge sharing behavior (Liao, 2008).

3.5.4 Organizational Culture

Furthermore, there is some research that has investigated the characteristics of the organizational culture with regard to knowledge management in organizations that promote creation and dissemination of knowledge (e.g., Janz & Prasarnphanich, 2003; Chen & Huang, 2007). McDermott and O'dell (2001) describe that there is a visible and invisible dimension to organizational culture. The first consists of an explicit set of core values and the latter an implicit set of core values. They both might guide employees' interpretation of colleagues' behavior as well as affect knowledge sharing among employees within an organization. Also, there may be subcultures of the organizational culture which can be more or less supportive of knowledge sharing behavior (McDermott & O'dell, 2001). Both knowledge sharing and application can be fostered by an organizational climate that is characterized by a higher level of cooperation and innovativeness. Mainly because this type of climate promotes social interactions among employees through enhancement of trust, coordination and communication among employees. In turn, knowledge management in organizations is positively affected (Chen & Huang, 2007). Further, a knowledge centered culture encourages activities such as learning and cooperation within the organization (Janz & Prasarnphanich, 2003). An organizational climate that is characterized by valuing the employees in terms of their effort, learning, and cooperation might influence the social relationships and mechanisms that support knowledge sharing through trust and reciprocity. Simultaneously, it might to some degree prevent withholding knowledge from colleagues, which would eventually result in distrust (Černe et al., 2014).

Smith (2001) argues that organizational environments that rely on openness, collective ownership, and trust impact acquisition and sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge positively. Also, acquiring and sharing knowledge should be rewarded with extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, such as bonuses, recognition by colleagues, or be given developmental opportunities (Smith, 2001). These findings are further supported by other researchers and studies. For instance, Al-Alawi et al. (2007) conducted a study where they focused on investigating the significant factors of an organizational culture that plays a key role in knowledge sharing between employees. They suggest that knowledge sharing in organizations is benefiting from factors such as communication and trust among employees, the organizational structure, reward and information systems that promote and support knowledge sharing (Al-Alawi et al., 2007).

Further, the norms that encourage knowledge sharing between sender and recipient in combination with incentives related to group performance seem to influence knowledge sharing behavior positively (Quigley et al., 2007). Also, the informational resources available (e.g., team external network and diversity) are a beneficial factor for innovation by a team when

it is integrated with individual factors. However, being open toward diverse perspectives is emphasized, hence might foster feelings of being comfortable to contribute and considering different perspectives when forming insights (van Knippenberg, 2017). Further, perspective-taking might serve as a moderator between intrinsic motivation and creativity, where it has been observed that the presence of intrinsic motivation and perspective-taking together might be associated with higher production of ideas (Grant & Berry, 2011).

3.5.5 Leadership Style

Moreover, leadership style is an organizational factor that has implications for knowledge management practices. According to Donate and de Pablo (2015), a leadership style that is knowledge oriented and incorporates a mixture of the two styles, transactional and transformational, have been shown to be an important factor to realize innovation in technology firms through the influence of knowledge management practices on R&D activities. The transactional feature of leadership style contributes to practices in the area of knowledge exploitation (i.e., transfer, storage, and application) through monitoring and rewarding these practices. Simultaneously, the feature of transformational leadership encourages refinement of capabilities and application of knowledge. Also, the exploitation of knowledge (i.e., creation) might be supported by knowledge-oriented leadership style. As a result, the integration of knowledge management practices, mediated by a knowledge-oriented leadership style, might improve organizations' innovation performance, yet with potentially different effects on type of innovation (Donate & de Pablo, 2015).

Another type of leadership style is empowering leadership which was studied by Srivastava et al. (2006). They studied management teams in hotels, where they found that in team performance, knowledge sharing is a key component and helps teams to integrate different sources of expertise while working in for example, new product development and cross-functionally. Also, empowering leadership, which is concerned with giving autonomy and power to employees, was shown to be positively associated with knowledge sharing. Potentially because it both creates a need and more opportunities for employees to engage in knowledge sharing behavior (Srivastava et al., 2006). It has also been found that empowering leadership might indirectly impact employee creativity, mediated by the experience of psychological empowerment of employees (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

4. Empirical Findings

*This chapter presents the empirical data collected from the conducted interviews. In total, 23 interviews were conducted across five different industries. The collected empirics have been summarized and presented in three main categories a) **Attitudes and Motivation**, b) **Enablers** and c) **Challenges and Barriers**, with adhering subcategories. Further, the answers from the respondents with- and without leadership or managerial responsibilities, are intertwined in order to give the reader a more comprehensive understanding. The letter “O” indicates that the answer is given by an operational worker without managerial responsibilities, while the letter “M” indicates an answer given by a respondent with managerial or leadership responsibilities. Lastly, a summary of the empirical findings is presented at the end of this section. To facilitate the reader, the empirical findings and analysis will be presented by following a similar structure.*

4.1 Attitudes and Motivation

4.1.1 Attitude Towards Current Ways of Sharing-Ideas

The majority of the respondents said that they had an internal platform or interface for sharing ideas within their company, and further expressed a positive attitude towards the current way of sharing ideas. Respondents O2, O6 and O9 said that sharing ideas today is easier or better compared to a couple of years ago. Respondents O10 thought that the current platform for sharing ideas was good. Respondent O9 also shared ideas through companywide platform and liked this way of working as it increased transparency and accountability:

“I think it’s good, I like it! Because it’s, everything is out there. It’s not that you can, the Board of Directors can’t say ‘I don’t know what kind of ideas are coming in’ because everything is public. Nothing is hidden.” - Respondent O9

Respondents M1 and M3 with managerial and leadership responsibilities expressed a tendency to like the current way of working with idea-sharing within the organization. In contrast, M10 said the current way of working with idea-sharing in the organization could be improved:

“I think it could be improved. We don’t see too many people actually submitting ideas for now. It’s like max five per month, but even last month there was none at all.” - Respondent M10

Moreover, despite the positive attitude towards the current situation of sharing ideas, seven of the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities thought it was easier to share ideas face-to-face. Respondent O1, claimed that it was easier to share and explain complex issues, or ideas, Face-to-Face. Respondent O5 reasoned that one could see the person behind the idea while respondent O3 emphasized that it was easier to share criticism in person. Another

reason for preferring Face-to-Face interaction mentioned by respondent O3 and O8, was that the ideas that were brought up via digital platforms were perceived as “bigger”. This meant that the idea or problem would involve more people than just the team, hence a certain hesitation towards sharing the idea digitally, presented itself. However, respondents O8, O9, O10 and O12 preferred sharing ideas digitally as they thought it was easier to follow up on the idea and allowed for more structured feedback.

“I think it’s easier to follow up an idea by a computer than in a team meeting /.../ I don’t think that you will highlight it [the idea] as much as in a digital tool.” - Respondent O10

Among the respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities some respondents said that sharing ideas in person was unnecessary in an initial phase, others said it varied depending on the person or that it was the best way to share ideas. M3, M6, and M7 took the last year as an example that employees can properly share their ideas and interact through digital channels. M9 talked about the benefit of sharing ideas digitally as it allows sharing wherever you are, which saves resources. On the other hand, M5 said digital ways of sharing ideas could be useful, however, digital channels could not substitute for the creative power of employees working together in person. M8 also highlighted the benefit of employees sitting in a room together, mainly because it could make things happen faster. However, M8 added that it did not imply that employees could not be creative in a digital space.

4.1.2 Motivation: Improving Long-Term Work Environment

Among the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities, different motivational factors for sharing ideas were mentioned, however one of the frequently occurring themes was to improve the efficiency of the work environment. For example, respondent O4 wanted things to go smooth and fast, and make things better while respondent O5 and O7 were motivated to increase efficiency and to find new ways of working. Solving problems were also mentioned in relation to improving the Long-Term Work environment: Respondent O1 said that if a problem occurred it had to be fixed directly, and that the reward was to have a system without flaws. Respondent O8 summarized the motivation for sharing ideas or problems as:

“I think it’s going to be better for all of us. Like in the long run, if you bring up something for the whole company and it’s business-minded, [the company] is always going to grow/.../ Maybe there will be some people starting here in the future, they will not have the problem if I bring it up now.” - Respondent O8

Respondent M4 and M5 connected the motivation of team members to share ideas to the customer. They said that team members wanted things to work and reckoned that the team loved the customers and would feel ashamed if something did not work (respondent M4), while also expressing a desire to be close to the customers (respondent M5). Also, respondent M5 mentioned a motivator of team members was creating an aligned understanding and shared goals across teams. Further, giving the teams responsibility and trust to work and deliver toward

goals was also stated as important for motivation of team members (respondent M5). Further, some respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities said they themselves were motivated by wanting the best for the company and its customers (respondent M3, M4, and M5) and encouraging and empowering employees (respondent M2, M3, M7, M8).

4.1.3 Motivation: Receiving Feedback, Recognitions and Rewards

The respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities mentioned that receiving recognition, career opportunities or rewards was a source of motivation. Likewise, feedback on the shared-idea or having the opportunity to follow the development of the idea, increased the motivation for sharing ideas more frequently. Respondent O8 described that they got partly evaluated through a scale, dependent on the number of ideas that they had shared. This could eventually affect the salary, status or lead to a promotion. Respondent O11 mentioned the company having internal rewards for different contributions. The respondent had been nominated in the category ‘thinking outside the box’ and even though the award was given to someone else, it was described as a positive experience:

“That made me happy because then I’m doing something right.” - Respondent O11

Similarly, to receive recognition for contributing with innovative ideas, and the feedback on the idea itself was considered motivating for several respondents. Respondent O2 mentioned that it was motivating when the feedback resulted in a collaboration which was unexpected. Respondent O3 and O4 also talked about feedback on ideas as something positive, while O6 pointed out that the ability to follow the progress of the idea was motivating:

“I would say if I can see the changes that they have made, if I can see progress... see that it [the idea] actually helps... that motivates a lot.” - Respondent O6

Receiving feedback as source of motivation was also touched upon by respondent O9, who claimed that that it was a problem if an idea was not feedbacked fast enough:

“It doesn’t need to be fast for it [the idea] to be implemented but I need to know that someone has my idea and looking at it fast.” - Respondent O9

The respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities highlighted giving team members the ability to follow the idea and its development in various ways were important for motivation of idea-sharing. Receiving feedback on ideas (respondent M8 and M10) and being part of the idea development process (respondent M7 and M9) was mentioned as important to create engagement and motivation among employees to share ideas. Respondent M7 said that a culture that includes transparency and recognition for ideas is a motivator. Mainly because the lack of these could potentially make those people keep the good ideas for themselves. As a consequence, the company could miss out on business opportunities. Respondent M10 emphasized that employees need incentives to share ideas and said that team members were mainly motivated by being recognized by organizational members when sharing ideas or

making contributions. Likewise, E1 mentioned that some employees may be motivated by rewards and appreciation expressed by leaders and management, as well as being motivated by interacting and communicating with colleagues.

4.1.4 Motivation: Personal Development and Interests

Personal motivational factors for sharing ideas were also discussed during the interviews. One of these personal motivational factors were self-fulfillment, which for respondent O4 meant sustainability. Respondent O4 said when working with sustainability, it felt like he or she was doing something good. Moreover, finding new ways of doing things was also discussed by respondent O4, together with O5 and O6, while the opportunity for them to develop new capabilities was touched upon by respondent O6). Also, the opportunity to receive interactive feedback and learn for colleagues in other units, was considered a motivation by several respondents (for example respondents O3, O4, O6 and O9). This was mentioned several times in different contexts, for example as it being one reason for sharing ideas or problems in the team or across units. Respondent O1 exemplified the benefits of taking feedback and learnings from colleagues at other departments:

“If you take the [other department], you can... You can learn a lot from them. A picking or a packing co-worker doing their job for 8 hours a day and.. they really make the thoughts about it... And there you really can get... Really valid and good ideas out of that because they know how they can improve their working environment and how to get more efficient, and get the job done in an easier and better way.” - Respondent O1

Respondent M4, M6, and M9 discussed personal drive, interest, and job satisfaction as an observed motivator of their team members to share ideas. Respondent M9 mentioned having a passion for exploring new things and new ways of working, as a motivation for team members to share ideas. Having an internal drive was also mentioned by E1, as a motivating factor of employees to share and develop ideas. M6 highlighted job satisfaction intertwined with team members' interest:

"Generally people in my team are more of the creative types in a sense, I mean, if you work in an innovation team you just generally enjoy exploration and then trying to find solutions to challenges or even helping people." - Respondent M6

As motivation for themselves to share their team members ideas, the areas that were mentioned were feeling encouraged by being involved in different projects and increasing efficiency (respondent M2), problem-solving (respondent M10) involving people (respondent M6) and forming relationships (respondent M1). Some societal benefits were highlighted, such as sustainability (respondent M5 and M9) and saving costs and promoting health (respondent M6).

“For me personally sustainability is a very big thing for me. ././ If it is contributing for the well-being and good climate I think like that, that motivates me. it is basically the sustainability goals, what are the extra features that are coming with this type of solution. that is what really motivates me and pushes me in that sense.”
- Respondent M9

4.1.5 Motivation: Ownership of ideas

The respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities mentioned ownership of ideas as a motivator of team members to share ideas. Respondent M1 and M4 highlighted having an impact as a motivator of team members. Mainly in the sense that team members were motivated by seeing their ideas be implemented and be able to make changes. This was also touched upon by respondent O4, O6 and O9, who found it motivating to see the idea being implemented. Respondent O9 stated:

“I usually get to see it implemented directly into the business. That’s usually what gets me going when I give an idea.” -O9

Respondent O4 also touched upon ownership of ideas, in the format of being able to follow an idea which he or she had expressed. Also, the respondent highlighted that this was not always the case for other employees:

“I feel like I can follow it through but I... Assume that some other people feel like it is just taken away from them and that someone else is doing something about it.”
- Respondent O4

Besides, having ownership of ideas was expressed by respondents M2, M3, M5, and M7 as crucial for encouraging employees to share their ideas and create engagement. Letting employees own their ideas (respondent M3) and the importance of feeling ownership (respondent M2) was discussed regarding what motivates employees to share their ideas.

“I think to feel ownership and to feel motivated because that naturally generates a lot of the ideas, that you feel included and you feel like you own the work, so to say.” - Respondent M2

4.2 Enablers

4.2.1 Organizational Culture

When asked about opportunities and risks related to idea-sharing, respondent O2 claimed to not have thought about it before due to the open and relaxed environment within the firm and mentioned that the firm was very open and wanted their employees to share things. Similarly, respondent O12 explained:

“I am very used to this open dialogue and this open discussion /../ I never had this feeling within [company name] that nobody listened to my ideas or to my concerns. That I had never.” - Respondent O12

Respondent M2, M3, and M5 mentioned especially being open towards testing and learning, as well as towards failure and success. M6 highlighted that people in their organization always listen to ideas and are not afraid to share ideas as part of their organizational culture. Respondent M7 talked about built-in feedback mechanisms in the culture, meaning that ideas that are considered to be of high quality and value to the company will receive positive feedback. Also, respondent M7 highlighted the value of a culture that is characterized by teamwork and seeing the greater benefit of working in a big context rather than only considering one's perspective to promote idea-sharing and innovation related activities. Furthermore, transparency and trust were emphasized by respondent M5, M7, and M9. Respondent M5 mentioned the importance of communicating clear goals across the organization and giving trust to the teams to enable idea-sharing and innovation. Respondent M7 said transparency is important as the early phases of innovation are everywhere in the organization. Additionally, Respondent E1 and M9 stated that transparency is important to enabling employees to feel involved.

4.2.4 Organizational Activities

Other factors which seemed to act as an enabler were the overall organizational encouragement. Several respondents expressed that they were given room for failures and mistakes, and that their employer organization had more of a test-and-learn approach. Respondent O1 said that it was acceptable to make mistakes as long as they learned something from it. Similarly, respondent O9 thought that innovation was about trial and error, and that one needed to be brave enough to try new things although the risk of it not working was present. The organizational encouragement was also visible through the respondents' ability to receive recognition or rewards for their ideas or innovations. These recognitions or rewards could come in different forms. Examples brought up were receiving attention from company owners (respondent O4), basis for promotion (respondent O8) and receiving prizes (respondent O12).

Many respondents with managerial and leadership responsibilities mentioned various ways of highlighting employees' contributions and ideas. Respondent M1 said they celebrate the best ideas at internal galas and celebrations. Other respondents mentioned they celebrated annually by having prizes for success and failures (Respondent M3) and having smaller awards for ideas and innovations (Respondent M6). Respondent M7 and M9 highlighted having internal events and activities that enable employees to get recognition for their ideas, create engagement around an idea, network and connect with other employees in the organization. In turn, it could help to realize the ideas. Also, they mentioned their organization allowing employees to develop their careers through sharing and developing ideas. Additionally, respondent M7 stressed the importance of involving all employees in the organization:

“The key thing there is that innovation is a team sport, it's not that you sit in one room or one person is focused on innovation, so it's a lot about driving engagement and sharing ideas, and often daring to try new things. The key pillar when we drive innovation at [company name] is that these early phases are everywhere in the organization.” - Respondent M7

Furthermore, having internal events and specific forums for recognizing employees for their ideas was further mentioned by respondent M10. In contrast, respondent M4 said they had no specific reward for ideas apart from having idea-sharing as part of employee performance evaluation. Yet, employees could be invited to meetings to discuss a particular idea further. Respondent M7 mentioned initiative taking as a part of the general performance. Also, self-motivation was considered as an important part of the idea-sharing and development and emphasized the need for employee engagement in different contexts by respondents M1, M3, and M6. For instance, to move forward if one believes in the idea (respondent M3), need for employee engagement to drive the development of the company (respondent M1), and driving the development of an idea (respondent M6).

4.2.2 Leaders and Colleagues

The support from colleagues and leaders was touched upon by several respondents. In many cases, the respondents had informal exchanges with colleagues and/or leaders regarding their new idea or suggestion. The reason being was to get some sort of support for the idea or suggestion, before sharing the suggestion to a wider group of the organization. Respondent O8 explained that when there were any fears or doubts concerning the new idea, she consulted her leader for support, who offered to help if needed. Respondent O12 shared a similar point of view:

“My boss is very good and he has encouraged me to ‘whatever you see just grab it and we change it and we will talk about it’... So that is good!” - Respondent O11

Furthermore, engagement from the managers in the idea-sharing process was mentioned by respondent O9, who expressed that the leaders’ activity on the company's idea-sharing platform was an important form of encouragement:

“I think that helps people to engage more and be more willing to give ideas. They know that it’s gonna get noticed.” - Respondent O9

Among the respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities, respondent M7 said it was part of the role to share and encourage employees to share their ideas. Respondent M9 described its role as a leader as facilitating idea-sharing and idea development by contributing with its expertise and making and finding ways to approach ideas. Respondent M10 talked about giving support as, for example, being a project leader.

Respondent M1, M2, and M8 mentioned their leadership style as being encouraging when employees share their ideas. Respondent M2 said the encouragement was mainly executed

through delegation and involvement. Respondent M3 highlighted the importance of challenging team members to share their ideas in the organization and seeing employees' needs as a way to encourage team members to share ideas. Also, respondent M5 discussed communication as a way of leading people and the leader as an initiator of change. E1 discussed the manager's role and the importance of the leader being encouraging towards employees even if they do not understand the ideas fully or if they appear fuzzy at the initial stage. Furthermore, respondent M1, M3, M5, M8, and E1 talked about giving autonomy to support employees sharing their ideas and developing these further. M1 talked about enabling employees to share ideas without the involvement of M1 as a leader to promote idea-sharing among employees and across the organization to a larger extent. M3 emphasized that employees and leaders in their organization have a shared responsibility in regard to ideas and innovation. M5 said that giving responsibility to the teams makes them grow and be engaged, and the importance of leaders giving autonomy and trust to teams was highlighted:

"I think it is really important to give the teams the strength to find out 'what do we have to deliver to reach the goals' instead of telling them 'Please, I want you to run this project.'" - Respondent M5

Also, Respondent M8 mentioned giving freedom to employees to come up with ideas, as well as playfulness as a critical component to encourage idea-sharing and exploration among employees. E1 highlighted the degree of autonomy that is given to employees to work on ideas as one of the factors that affect idea-sharing among employees. Depending on the type of the idea, M3 and M4 mentioned they tried to connect team members with other people in their organization to share the idea further.

Encouragement and communication from the top management and leaders was also mentioned by respondent O9, M3, M5, M8, and E1 as key components of encouragement from the organization to support idea-sharing among employees. Manly as a way to encourage people in the organization by communicating goals and expectations which spans top-down in the organization. M8 circled it:

"That of course starts at the top management level that flows down streams. If there is an attitude flowing from there in the top-level communications, like quarterly reports or some others, forums that get communicated all through the line to every employee. That sets the tone." - Respondent M8

Further, E1 discussed alignment between the messages and priorities that are communicated top-down and the perception of these messages and priorities from bottom-up as one of the most important aspects to promote idea-sharing among employees. I

4.2.3 Organizational Structure

Respondent M1 said their organization is striving to have a less hierarchical organizational structure. Respondent M2 mentioned the value of being a flat organization where employees are challenged to develop their ideas and share them across the organization. Respondent M5 highlighted the strength of working in smaller teams in a large organization and working cross-functionally and finding a structure that invites all employees to come up with ideas to leverage the different sources of knowledge and expertise across the organization. Respondent M5 continued discussing the need for an agile way of working and collecting ideas that emerge daily in the organization. Mainly to be able to be flexible with regards to collecting feedback from customers and potentially change prioritizations in the development phase. Respondent M8 talked about implementing an agile way of working to cope with a history of the tendency to work in silos due to different communication structures and cultures within the organization. Further, respondent M8 stressed the need for avoiding working in silos to enable idea-sharing to a larger extent between departments.

Furthermore, the respondents mentioned different ways of organizing and structuring to promote ideas sharing among employees. Respondent and M3 explained that their internal unit supported the execution and launch of initiatives, which had increased the speed to the market. Respondents O4, O5, O6, M2, M4, M6, and M10 described they have a team that helps to connect people across the organization. Moreover, respondent M8 and M9 mentioned having a platform as a tool to collect ideas which are managed by a group of people in the organization. In contrast, respondent M1 and M4 said they mainly received ideas from their teams through email or in person, which they later shared and discussed with other people in the organization at meetings.

4.2.5 Communication Channels

Some of the platforms which the companies used incorporated boundary-spanning communication amongst departments, and others were closed with little to no possibility to receive input from fellow colleagues. Respondent O3 mentioned that most idea-sharing occurred face-to-face and if the idea was sent in as an online request, one specified which department the idea belonged to. Hence, only the leader or manager for that department could see the request. O4, O5, O6, M3 mentioned that the organization had implemented dedicated innovation groups recently, which included employees from various departments who evaluated the ideas or problems which were sent in. Respondent O5 thought this way of working was very good. Likewise, respondent O6 indicated that boundary spanning idea-sharing respondent occurred frequently and that it was positive:

“I would say a lot, yeah... I would say that is one of the biggest perks of the work, that you share these ideas... The key to developing things.” - Respondent O6

All the respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities mentioned forums, such as digital channels or regular meetings, for discussing ideas across the organization. Having specific communication channels and meetings or workshops were mentioned by respondent

M6 and M9. Also, meetings, where leaders discussing ideas given by employees (respondent M4) and having company-wide meetings (respondent M1), were mentioned. Furthermore, respondent M7 talked about having internal events to allow employees to present and communicate their ideas to other people in the organization. Moreover, the responses to sharing ideas in person or digital were mixed. Respondents M3, M6, and M7 took the last year as an example of how people can properly share their ideas and interact through digital channels. On the other hand, M5 said digital ways of sharing ideas could be good, however, they could not substitute for the creative power of working together in person. M8 also highlighted the benefit of sitting in a room together, mainly because it could make things happen faster. However, M8 added that it did not imply that people could not be creative in a digital space.

4.3 Challenges and Barriers

4.3.1 Resources and Misalignment Between Daily Work Tasks and Idea-Sharing Activities

Both respondent O3 and O10 discussed insufficient IT structures and IT hours as a challenge when sharing innovative ideas. Because of structural reasons, the hours spent on IT had to be allocated elsewhere, leaving new ideas at a standstill even though it was a valid idea which could improve the overall efficiency of the work. Similarly, the allocation of time and the prioritization of new ideas, was discussed as a barrier to sharing ideas. It seemed to be frustrating when ideas were not prioritized, or if the development of the idea was dependent on the receivers' ability to allocate time for the idea. Respondent O10 highlighted the problem:

“When I get an idea, it depends on how much is on my schedule right now. How much time can I put aside for this project? And that’s the same about all ideas. The idea has come to the right person but that person may not have time. Because it’s reporting seasons or it could be something like that, which makes the project wait a long time.” - Respondent O10

Respondent M1, M2, and M4 expressed the need for competence in the area of IT to share and implement ideas more frequently.

The aspect of time was touched upon by several respondents. Respondent O8 said that the reason for preferring to communicate ideas via email instead of via the internal idea-sharing platforms, was because it was faster, and the respondent knew that the colleagues regularly checked their email. Respondent O9 and O12 also mentioned time as a barrier, where O9 expressed concerns regarding time-to-feedback being too long and leading to the person sharing the idea being discouraged. Respondent O12 highlighted that time was a critical issue when complex ideas were shared, as they often needed longer meetings in order to answer questions. Further, respondent M6 said that the general challenge was getting enough resources, time, and commitment to developing the ideas.

“I think the general challenge is more like getting enough resources, time and commitment. For actually doing something about the ideas, because that is usually

where the limitation starts, so, there are a lot of good ideas and there are limited resources to work on them." - Respondent M6

Respondent M1 said there was a lack of both time and competence in regard to the number of incoming ideas for the leader to give feedback on. E1 stressed the importance for managers to have time to listen to and understand the ideas shared by team members. Respondent M2 discussed that time needed to be set aside to be able to discuss ideas between departments, yet the time was lacking to carry out these activities more frequently. Respondent M4 said that team members might be impatient to wait for idea implementation and that more time or resources were needed to cope with this challenge. Respondent M9 talked about the biggest challenge as time since they had other daily tasks to carry out. Respondent M10 mentioned time as a lacking resource when striving to reach out to employees in the organization. The employees would need time to check communication channels to get necessary information related to idea-sharing and innovation.

E1 talked about the challenge for employees to engage in idea-sharing and allocate time and effort when having daily work tasks that have to be prioritized. Respondent M7, who had managerial or leadership responsibilities, said there is an interest in new ideas among their employees, yet many people tend to focus on their daily work tasks. Consequently, it might be difficult to be engaged in what happens in other parts of the organization. Respondent M9 talked about the balance and compromise employees face when they have to distribute their time to work with daily tasks and engage in idea-sharing. Also, respondent M10, discussed the problem of finding available people that can spend time on innovation projects as it is not a part of their daily work.

*"Usually it's not directly part of their daily business so they would need to neglect other activities which usually they cannot do, because the alignment is very much interested in their daily work [that] goes on. Uhm, So I think that's a big problem."
- Respondent M10*

Only respondent O10, which did not possess any managerial or leadership responsibilities, talked about the challenge of employees committing too much time to innovation or idea-sharing, and the risk of them neglecting their daily work tasks.

4.3.2 Organizational Structure and the Size of the Organization

During the interviews, different barriers related to the size of the organization and the organizational structure was touched upon. Barriers related to firm size were shared by respondent O5, O6, O10 and O12. Respondent O5 discussed how it could be difficult to be seen in many big companies and that many times, the firm chose to see the employees they thought would be good for the job. However, respondents felt that since the firm introduced the dedicated innovation team, anyone got the opportunity to share ideas or participate in an innovation project. This dedicated innovation team was based on a combination of skilled employees and each employee could apply to be part of the team. Respondent O6 said that it

sometimes was hard to communicate with departments operating in other countries and concluded that it probably would have been more intimate and easier to follow through an idea in a smaller firm. Here, the transparency aspect was lost between both department and top management.

Furthermore, the large size of the organization was emphasized by some of the respondents with managerial and leadership responsibilities as one of the main challenges when it comes to idea-sharing among employees. Respondent M3 said employee engagement was required to drive and develop ideas further in the organization. Respondent M3 continued that some parts of the organization work closer or far away from each other, which sometimes can create inefficiencies and skewed estimations of potential ideas to implement. Also, respondent M5 discussed the size of the organization with a broad offer to the market as a challenge, especially in the context of striving towards working in small cross-functional teams and sharing ideas among all employees in the organization. At the same time, changing the structure takes time (respondent M5). On the other hand, respondent M1 highlighted the difficulty of being a smaller subsidiary to a large parent company, mainly due to having different cultures and ways of working and continued that there was a lack of meeting people from different parts of the organization.

4.3.3 Communication Structures

From a few respondents, issues around the structure of the idea-sharing process were raised. These issues were partly due to having received a lot of ideas or problems through several channels, as well as not knowing who, or which department, to direct the idea too. The first concern was discussed by respondent O4, who said that the company had tried to solve this problem by introducing a dedicated innovation group who received all ideas, however the company still received many great ideas which were at risk to be forgotten about. Respondent O8 expressed concern about sharing ideas on their internal platform and was not sure about how “big” the idea would be perceived. The second issue related to whom to direct the idea too, was touched upon by respondents O2, O3, O5, O6, O9 and O10. One example was given by respondent O2:

“As I look at it today, our problem might be... You know sometimes when you come up with an idea, you don't really know whether to... Who to tell... I might, as a logistic man, come with an idea that might have to do with sales... So, where do I... Who do I tell, you know? Do I tell it within the logistics group or might it have something to do with sales... So, for the organization, I think it would much easier if we would have some sort of input for, for receiving ideas for any kind.”
- Respondent O2

Barriers related to communication and boundary-spanning communication were also brought up during the interviews. Respondent O2 discussed how there were no set rules for communicating an idea digitally and therefore making it difficult to find the right way to do so. Similarly, respondent O4 highlighted the challenge of some people having it more difficult

than others to communicate and explain their idea in a text format, but that it did not mean that the idea in itself was bad. Respondent O6 thought it was a difference in sharing ideas through a digital device, compared to face-to-face communication, as the dialogue after sharing the idea was different. In the digital arena, absence of the happier first reaction and the quick follow up from the receiver, made it harder to communicate.

Other challenges of boundary spanning communication which respondent O2, O6 and O12 discussed, related to difficulties in accessing, or utilizing, the interface for sharing ideas. Respondent O13 thought that the tool used today was not great for interaction and that it was more of a one-way communication, instead of involving people across the organization. Respondent O6 wished for a more open dialogue, an interface where ideas could be shared during all office hours and where the idea-sharer could follow the process. The challenge of respondents not being able to follow the process of the idea, or 'follow the idea', was something that was touched upon and respondents O6, O9, O10, O11 and O12 mentioned this as a barrier. Respondent O9 expressed it as a big issue when sharing ideas with other departments, since they lost the ability to track the progress of the idea.

Respondent M8 said a major challenge when communicating across the organization is having different communication structures within the organization. Respondent M8 expressed a need for having more pathways and connections across the organizations to share ideas more frequently. A similar challenge was mentioned by respondent M10 regarding having different communication channels and systems. E1 talked about the potential misalignment between the tools used in the organization for collecting and evaluating ideas, which could occur if the people responsible for the tool believe the tool will manage itself. Respondent M2 said that discussing ideas between departments where necessary, yet time-consuming, and challenging to find a time where the relevant people were available. Respondent M6 also emphasized the obstacle with finding a date and time where people could meet from different departments, as last-minute changes occurred frequently due to emergent issues arising in the business (respondent M6). Moreover, different understanding and interpretation could sometimes create inefficiencies when sharing and discussing ideas according to respondent M8. Respondent M10 had observed misunderstandings when communicating within the organization. However, misunderstandings were tried to be eliminated by having a shared culture and language within a specific area.

4.3.4 Evaluation and Communication of Ideas

E1 discussed the challenge that might occur when team members are sharing their ideas to managers as there may be barriers to understanding the origin of the idea and then twisting it to a certain organizational context or business perspective. Hence, how well communicated the idea is to the closest manager influences the evaluation of the potential business value of an idea. O1, O2, O5, O7, and O12 talked about challenges connected to communicating ideas to their colleagues and prioritizing ideas. O1 mentioned that there may be different risks or problems connected to ideas which might not be apparent initially. O2 and O7 discussed that there could be challenges communicating the ideas in a digital format and not knowing whom

to direct their ideas to. O5 said that some ideas are given higher priority than others due to urgency, and O12 said that creating innovation involves complexities that need to be discussed. Therefore, longer meetings allow for asking questions and discussing ideas.

Respondent M7 said that the biggest challenge in the area of idea-sharing was not the number of ideas, rather how to prioritize those. Respondent M7 further discussed the importance of the team, manager, and position in the organization for shaping the idea and to be able to describe the value of ideas from different dimensions. Also, respondent M7 emphasized that the presentation of the idea mattered to create engagement among employees. It might be challenging when employees present their ideas and focus on what they have been doing rather than the value the idea creates. Respondent M8 said that from a company-wide perspective, there was a challenge to know the quality criteria for ideas to find the balance between receiving quality ideas and an adequate number of ideas. Respondent M1 stated that the idea-sharing might be facilitated by showing the return on investment to get needed resources, yet challenging to estimate at the early stage of the idea development.

By some of the respondents, the area of customer value and business value related to idea-sharing were discussed. One of the challenges described by the respondents was connected to finding the value of ideas in relation to the organization's strategy and objectives. Furthermore, finding the business value of ideas was mentioned by E1 as a general challenge connected to communicating ideas among employees. Mainly because while they have much knowledge about daily practices and clients, they may have less knowledge about commercializing ideas.

"It [the challenge of idea-sharing] depends on the nature of the idea here. /.../ How to communicate the business value I would say and then also when they communicate with one another, especially when using a tool. It's always important that this, this tone, or that it's a community of people that share feedback that is kind and not harsh in any sense." - E1

Respondent M3 highlighted that some ideas might look attractive and therefore get more attention from the organization. However, while the initial attractiveness might be aligned with consumer behavior, it might not be aligned with the impact the idea would have on the business.

"If something would have an immediate impact in our field, it's typically against [company name] strategy. But, still in line with consumer behavior, so then it becomes a more strategic question to go on with the idea or not because it might change our distribution mix or overall strategy." - Respondent M3

A similar challenge was described by respondent M4 that said that sharing and communication are affected by the potential application area of the idea. For some ideas, usually having a local or team related impact, respondent M4 could suggest other employees in the organization that the employee with the idea could get in contact with. However, for ideas that were applicable on a wider company scale or relevant for other departments, the idea had to be sent for further investigation. Additionally, the idea had to include a clear description of the problem that the

idea aimed to solve, and an estimation of the organizational benefits achieved by developing and implementing the ideas. The problem formulation and estimation of organizational benefits could in some cases take time to formulate (respondent M4).

4.3.5 Leader as a Broker

The challenge of being a leader was brought up, in the sense that their current way of working made them a broker in the idea flow. Respondent M1 expressed receiving a large number of ideas and a need for an internal communicator to handle these. M4 expressed a wish for allowing team members to directly submit ideas to the relevant people or unit. Respondent M8 discussed a similar challenge and the tendency to work in silos within the organization. Yet improvements in the organizations have been made during recent years.

"If you're a front liner you have to talk to your team leader, that come to the second line center leader that talks to the business leader, that talks to the private area maybe. Then you have to go down all the way in the next, so that's, having that direct communication was harder." - Respondent M8

Furthermore, the challenge of finding the right people in the organization was mentioned. Having the right mix of competencies (respondent M2 and M7), getting insights from experts (respondent M3) as well as making sure that the ideas are shared with the right audience (respondent M10) was critical to idea-sharing, yet considered as a challenging part which organizations tried to solve by the use of different methods and communication channels.

4.3.6 Organizational Culture and Hierarchy/Organizational Position

Respondents O3, O4, O6, O8, O10, and O11 touched upon how the degree of involvement in the innovation process highly depends on the role or on the contacts the respondent had. For example, respondent O8 thought it was easy to find the right people for one's idea, if you had the right tools and right contacts. Respondents O3 said that most of the things they wanted to be part of, they could not be involved in due to it being digital and involved the IT department. Also, respondent M10 expressed uncertainty regarding if they are reaching everybody in their organization and if they received the information they would like to share. As of today, they did not receive as many ideas that they needed from employees in the organization. Further, respondent M10 mentioned the challenge of communicating the ideas in the right place to reach the right audience. Respondent M1 mentioned the need for having a forum for sharing ideas where employees could participate.

Another barrier to sharing ideas was slow recognition from management and not being taken seriously. Respondents O6 and O9 expressed difficulties to get the managers to take time and interact with the ideas shared on the internal platforms. Respondent O9 thought that the fact that the CEO or another top manager would comment or like idea-proposals, would encourage the other employees to share more or do the same. Respondent O6 expressed a challenge concerning not being taken seriously:

“The biggest problem I would say is not being taken seriously. From where I am, I am not in the highest ranking in departments and things like that... So when I am in a project, I am usually there from the customer perspective, sharing my voice from there... And the hierarchy, you can notice it sometimes when people have nicer education, better pay and stuff like that. The voice of the little man becomes a little bit... Unnoticeable.” -Respondent O6

Among the respondents with managerial and leadership, some mentioned organizational culture. Respondent M5 talked about the challenges of changing mindset and change to new ways of working, especially among the members of the top management team. Further, respondent M8 highlighted the challenge of cultural differences and different organizational practices within the organization, which could hinder idea-sharing among employees. Apart from these, none of the respondents mentioned any additional present challenges with idea-sharing connected to the organizational culture.

4.3.7 Discomfort of Sharing Ideas Outside Comfort-Zone

Other barriers touched upon was the discomfort of sharing ideas outside the ones comfort zone, which was expressed by respondent O5 and O8, alongside with the barriers of people preferring the old way of working which respondent O8, O10 and O11 found to be frustrating. For example, Respondents O5 discussed the fear of sharing ideas concerning unknown areas, which was considered to be outside the comfort zone. Meanwhile, respondent O8 sometimes saw a risk of sharing ideas in unknown areas as colleagues potentially would not like the responders to be as ‘active’, and therefore see their colleague as a threat. Respondent O11 expressed frustration over colleagues not wanting to change things:

“I think that is frustrating if people don’t want to try new things, because I think we need to try to do things in another way. And when I meet people that are scared of trying new things, like “oh we tried that 10 years ago and it didn't work”... Then we can try it in another way now I believe. That is frustrating for me.” - Respondent O11

Also, M2 said that team members are more or less comfortable with sharing their ideas further in the organization, which could create a barrier in those cases when an employee is not comfortable.

Table 8: Summary of Empirical Findings

			O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5	O 6	O 7	O 8	O 9	O 10	O 11	O 12	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 4	M 5	M 6	M 7	M 8	M 9	M 10	E 1	
Motivation	Intrinsic/ Extrinsic Motivation	Improve long term work	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x			x	x	x		x	x				
		Receiving Feedback, Recognitions and Rewards		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x							x	x		x	x
		Personal Development and Interests	x		x	x	x	x			x					x	x		x	x	x			x		x
		Ownership of ideas				x		x			x					x	x	x		x		x				
Enablers	Organizational Culture and Organizational Activities	Organizational culture	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	
		Organizational Activities	x			x					x	x			x	x		x	x		x	x		x	x	
	Leaders, the Team and Top Management	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	
	Organizational Structure and Communication Channels	Organizational Structure							x	x						x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
		Communication Channels		x	x		x	x			x	x		x		x		x	x	x	x	x		x		
Challenges	Lack of Resources and Communication of Ideas	Resources and Misalignment between daily work tasks and idea-sharing activities	x	x	x					x	x	x		x	x	x		x		x	x		x	x	x	
		Communication Structures		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x						x		x		x		
		Evaluation and Communication of Ideas	x	x			x		x						x	x		x	x			x	x			x
	Leader as a Broker and Organizational Structure	Leader as a broker							x							x	x	x				x	x		x	
		Organizational Structure					x	x	x			x		x	x		x		x							x
	Organizational Position and Culture	Organizational Culture and hierarchy			x	x		x		x		x	x			x				x			x		x	x
Discomfort of Sharing ideas				x		x				x	x	x				x										

5. Analysis

In this chapter, the empirical data collected is analyzed and discussed in relation to the previous literature. Firstly, a discussion around Attitudes and Motivations is outlined, followed by Enablers and, lastly, the Challenges and Barriers. These discussions are organized around the themes and concepts found in the empirical data.

5.1 Attitudes and Motivation

5.1.1 Attitude Towards Current Ways of Sharing-Ideas

The collective empirical findings show that knowledge and idea-sharing occur through both face-to-face interaction as well as through exchange aided by technology (e.g., idea-sharing platforms), something which Wang and Noe (2010) also have highlighted in theoretical research. Moreover, both the respondent groups showed tendencies of a positive attitude towards the current way of sharing ideas in their respective firms. The idea-sharing today was considered easier or better compared to a couple of years ago, due to most of the respondents having access to an internal idea-sharing platform or interface. This aligns with Teigland and Wasko (2003), which highlight that Information and Communication Technology facilitates the communication between individuals since it decreases the importance of time and space. Hence, the technology increases flexibility and improves the information trading intra-organizationally. One of the respondents without leadership responsibilities reasoned that their platform increased transparency and accountability for all participants, including top management. For example, leaders and top management could no longer claim to not know about certain ideas, propositions or problems, since they also had access to the platform. This could be attributed to the norm of reciprocity, which Teigland and Wasko (2003) argue to be a critical component to sustain knowledge exchange within the established network.

As highlighted by Bock and Kim (2002) the motivation to share knowledge within the organization must be fostered. This was also something that was shown in the data collected in this research. For example, some respondents said that they preferred sharing ideas face-to-face or in digital teams-meetings, as they mainly perceived the ideas shared on the platform as “bigger”. Others said that they thought the informal feedback (the reactions of peers) was faster when sharing face-to-face. One of the participants noted that their platform could indeed be improved and while ideas were shared, the flow of such was inconsistent. One explanation for the inconsistency could be that although the respondents were collectively positive towards sharing ideas digitally, many had a preference for sharing ideas face-to-face as it was easier when the idea was perceived as complex, and that the face-to-face interaction enabled them to see the reaction of their peers or counterparts when sharing ideas. The initial feedback received could act as a support for sharing the idea to a wider audience, or as an opportunity for improving it. Therefore, this informal feedback could be perceived as a way for the idea-sharer

to validate and “test” the idea before sharing it digitally and hence, involving the wider organization.

The difference between the respondents’ attitudes and their actual behavior aligns with the research of Björk et al. (2014): idea-sharing systems can help organizations to adopt a more open approach toward ideation, but does not automatically guarantee that the employees are motivated to dedicate time and effort to ideate, and share ideas on the platform. Rather, the individual motivation varies, and the answers given by the respondents confirmed the reasoning of Foss et al. (2010), that the motivation, attitudes, and behaviors, need to be understood on an individual level, in order for knowledge sharing or idea-sharing to occur at the organizational level.

5.1.2 Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation

Since knowledge sharing (including idea-sharing) is a key-component in firms, the motivation for sharing it must be fostered (Bock and Kim, 2002). Across the data collected, different motivational factors for sharing ideas were brought up by the respondents. For example, some respondents found motivation for idea-sharing in the opportunity to learn from colleagues and/or finding new ways of doing things. Other respondents discussed self-fulfillment, interests and personal drive, as well as the feeling of ownership of their idea and job satisfaction, as a source of motivation for sharing ideas within their organizations. Likewise, respondent E1 highlighted the interaction and communication between fellow employees as an observed source of motivation. Among the respondents with managerial and leadership responsibilities, some mentioned alignment between personal interest and work as a motivating factor to share ideas with the organization. Similarly, the interview expert E1 also highlighted similar attributes as a motivation for employees to develop and share ideas.

The motivation which the respondents found in learning new things and finding new ways of doing things, can be connected to the psychological need of competence which Ryan and Deci (2000) described as an intrinsic factor of motivation. In contrast Wendelken et al. (2014) describes learning as extrinsic motivation, for why employees choose to participate (or not) in innovation communities and rather claims fun and enjoyment, general personal attitude towards work, connectivity and community as intrinsic factors which influence employees’ motivation. Thus, learning as an intrinsic or extrinsic motivation seems to be connected to if the employee has an internal drive to engage in learning as well if it is the organization which offers opportunities for the employees to engage in learning. Nevertheless, empirical data shows that learning and opportunities for learning might contribute to increased motivation for idea-sharing amongst employees. Organizations could establish ways for all employees to partake in different types of learning activities to support employees' motivation for sharing ideas and further foster knowledge sharing behavior.

Another frequently occurring theme of motivation was to increase the efficiency of the work environment. Likewise, problem-solving was mentioned as motivation for some respondents for sharing ideas. One way to interpret this could be that both managers and employees were

motivated to share ideas in order to improve the long-term work environment, for their own sake and for potential customers. Two respondents with managerial responsibilities noted that giving teams responsibility, trust to work and the freedom to deliver according to a set goal, was also an important factor for motivation. This aligns with the description of extrinsic motivational factors, which is directed towards external motivation and concern with the nature of an outcome (Foss et al., 2009). More specifically, Foss et al. (2009) mentions that the individual engages in a certain behavior or aims to engage in such, in order to activate or avoid the external outcome. Thus, having an *impact* and making the work tasks or environment better for themselves, colleagues or customers, is found to be a source of motivation for many employees.

Expected monetary rewards were only mentioned by some of the total respondents as a motivational factor and were not perceived as the main motivational factor. One respondent with managerial or leadership responsibility explicitly mentioned that monetary rewards, or something of more value than, for example, movie tickets, would be nice to receive as a way of saying “thank you” for sharing an idea. This somewhat aligns with the research of Bock and Kim (2002), which highlights that expected rewards are often wrongfully believed to be the main motivation for knowledge sharing. Instead, expected associations and contributions are more important for the employees when sharing their knowledge (Bock & Kim, 2002). Additionally, Hung’s et al. (2011) findings show that economic rewards as the only motivator might not be adequate to encourage idea-sharing. However, it should be noted that there is a possibility that the respondent with managerial or leadership responsibilities do perceive monetary rewards as a motivating factor for their team members to share ideas, yet not mentioning it. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that extrinsic motivational factors, such as monetary rewards, do not affect employees’ motivation to share their ideas directly or indirectly. Further, several respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities mentioned receiving feedback, recognition and rewards as motivation when sharing ideas. In this group, 10 out of 12 listed either career opportunities, the ability to get feedback on the process or progress of the idea, or receiving rewards, as sources of motivation. Similar findings were expressed by the expert respondent E1. In contrast, the respondent group with managerial and leadership responsibilities perceive it differently, as only 2 out of 10 mentioned these factors as a source of motivation for their teams. These motivational factors could be classified as extrinsic according to Foss et al. (2009), which shows that such initiatives increase the motivation for sharing ideas more frequently.

The feeling of ownership over their idea, also described as the ability to follow it or ability to see it being implemented, was found as a source of motivation in both the sample groups. In the respondent group with no managerial or leadership responsibilities, 3 out of 12 said that the ownership of the idea was motivating, whereas 5 out of 10 respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities said that owning the idea was motivating. Simultaneously, the lack of ownership or lack of the ability to follow the progress of the shared idea, was often discussed in terms of being frustrating in both groups. This was also touched upon by the interviewed expert, E1. One explanation for these differences could be that non-managerial respondents are not used to being able to “own an idea” and therefore, they feel ownership over the idea when

receiving feedback or recognition related to it. In contrast, managers might be more used to owning, for example, a project, the team's performance or an idea, hence why they use such a description when talking about motivation for idea-sharing.

The respondents' answers discussed above, align with those of Wendelken et al. (2014) who explain that career and reputation, learning, and recognition by the firm as well as their peers, is especially important for motivating employees to partake in innovation communities. Muhdi and Boutellier's (2011) research shows that developing ideas and finding potential collaboration partners for the idea development could motivate employees to share ideas. Likewise, employees might be motivated to share knowledge if they perceive helping others as enjoyable and if there are professional reputation gains associated with sharing knowledge (Wasko & Faraj, 2005), where reputation feedback could affect the quality and quantity of shared ideas (Hung et al., 2011). One could argue that giving an employee feedback on the shared idea is to recognize their effort and, therefore, it might lead to a positive contribution in terms of motivation. Nonetheless, it seems to be of high importance to motivate the employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities by allowing them to follow the progress of their ideas, and by feedbacking and recognizing their efforts, in order to foster the feeling of ownership. One could argue that promoting ownership over the idea, could increase the employees feeling of autonomy in the work-environment. The job autonomy could act as a trigger for the intrinsic motivation, which has been highlighted by Foss et al. (2009). The initiatives which are created in the organization should not only focus on increasing efficiency in the idea-sharing process, but also factors which aim to fulfill the employees' intrinsic motivation. By doing so, the firm might positively contribute to the employee's psychological need for competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This could lead to high-qualitative performance, increased wellness and the firm might find itself having employees with an autonomous motivation to contribute further to the business (Deci et al., 2017). One could argue that the incentives given to employees should have long-term and short-term characteristics to motivate employees to share their ideas. For example, career opportunities, seeing the development of the idea or having the opportunity to be part of innovation projects could be viewed as long-term incentives. On the other hand, short-term incentives could be more focused towards learning, instant feedback from both peers and managers, transparency and rewards of different sorts.

5.2 Enablers

5.2.1 Organizational Culture and Organizational Activities

Among the respondents with and without managerial and leadership responsibilities, a commonly mentioned key factor for idea-sharing was the organizational culture. One prominent characteristic found in several interviews was the presence of an open culture and mindset in the organization. In particular, a culture characterized by openness towards testing and learning seemed to be important for employees independent of their role or position in the organization. Trust and encouragement, from both colleagues and managers, were also highlighted by the many of the respondents as factors that made them feel comfortable with

sharing ideas. Also, a culture where ideas were valued by both managers and colleagues seemed of importance. This aligns with Smith (2001) who argues that openness and trust are two of the crucial factors which affect idea-sharing among employees positively. Some of the respondents expressed that a presence of openness and encouragement in the organization could counteract potential fears of sharing ideas with their colleagues. One possible explanation could be that an organizational culture that values effort and learning among employees could affect knowledge sharing among employees positively through trust and reciprocity, which might prevent employees from withholding knowledge (Černe et al., 2014).

Furthermore, Smith (2001) argues that employees should be rewarded for sharing knowledge to foster continuous knowledge-sharing behavior within the organization. For example, by receiving recognition from colleagues, getting opportunities to develop, or receiving bonuses (Smith, 2001). In line with this, seven respondents with managerial and leadership responsibilities mentioned various ways of rewarding and recognizing employees for their ideas and contributions through the use of organizational activities. However, none of the respondents reported that they currently did receive any monetary rewards for sharing ideas, rather they received an award of “honorary” type. Among both respondent groups, having organizational activities, such as internal celebrations, events, and offering career development opportunities, were frequently mentioned as a way to encourage idea-sharing among employees. However, the reported implementation of these organizational activities varied across the sample. From an idea-sharing perspective, the organizational activities were mainly viewed as a way to make ideas visible, give employees the opportunity to receive feedback from different sources, recognition, and to create engagement among employees. Also, a few of the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities mentioned that the ideas they shared were taken into consideration when the job performance and promotional discussion came about.

5.2.2 Leaders, the Team and Top Management

Encouragement from the managers in the idea-sharing process was mentioned as an enabler for idea-sharing, according to some respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities. This encouragement could come in forms of openness, supporting, and pushing for the worker to share ideas. The role of the leader in the idea-sharing process was briefly touched upon by the respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities. In general, some organizations had communication structures that allowed employees with and without managerial responsibilities to share their ideas across the organization and reach relevant employees. In other organizations, the leaders were the main receivers of their team members' ideas where they tried to share the ideas further to relevant employees in the organization. Communication of ideas across the organization were in some cases enabled through the leader contacting other people in the organization or giving suggestions to employees of whom to get in contact with. Srivastava et al. (2006) explain that empowering leadership, where the leader gives autonomy and power to employees, might have a positive effect on knowledge sharing among employees. Both of these two aspects of empowering leadership were mentioned by respondents with and without managerial or leadership

responsibilities. Some respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities expressed feeling encouraged by their managers when they were given support. Likewise, the majority of the leaders emphasized that giving autonomy and trust to their employees were a crucial part to encourage their team members to share their ideas.

A finding among the respondents was that the closest team and leaders were frequently interacted with to share ideas. Hence, they tended to be especially important for the development of the idea. Also, many of the respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities and respondent E1 discussed the role of the leader in the idea-sharing process. They emphasized the importance of encouragement and recognition from top-and middle management to support idea-sharing among their team members. Liao (2008) research highlights that the social power exerted by managers in an R&D context does impact knowledge sharing behavior of employees. The results showed that managers' ability to administer and control rewards for a desired behavior (reward power) and the belief of subordinates that managers have expertise and knowledge in a specific area (expert power) had a direct influence on R&D employees' knowledge sharing behavior. In contrast, Liao (2008) did not found support for direct influence of other types of social power, such as managers ability to control and administer punishment if subordinates choose to not comply (coercive power), the belief of subordinates that managers have the right to control and administer the behavior of subordinates (legitimate power), and the desire of subordinates to identify with the manager and to gain approval of the manager (reference power). Thus, the type of social power that managers choose to exert may influence and have implications of knowledge sharing behavior among R&D employees. Although half of the respondents in this research do not work within a R&D context, the social power exerted by leaders may influence knowledge sharing among non-R&D employees to some extent as well. As mentioned previously, several respondents mentioned feedback, recognition, and rewards from leaders and colleagues as a source of motivation to share their knowledge and ideas.

Furthermore, five of the total respondents expressed that their managers and top management were crucial for idea-sharing and aligning the organization. According to Renzl (2008), having trust in management might influence knowledge sharing. Individuals that perceive the climate as trusting may show a higher willingness to document knowledge. Therefore, managers could enhance the knowledge flow in the organization by supporting trusting relationships. When sharing knowledge, one might be afraid that sharing knowledge will make the sender lose parts of the unique value. As a consequence, fear of losing one's unique value mediates the effect of trust from management on knowledge sharing within and between teams, where trust in management is associated with a reduction in fear of losing one's unique value (Renzl, 2008).

5.2.3 Organizational Structure and Communication Channels

Some of the respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities discussed characteristics of the organizational structure that enabled idea-sharing among employees. Less hierarchical and decentralized organizational structure were mentioned by two and working in small teams and combat working in silos within the organization was mentioned by two other

respondents. Also, agility and flexibility were brought up, as well as organizing activities to invite all employees to share their ideas. This way of structuring and fostering idea-sharing within the organization by the use of establishing a certain structure has similarities with the reasoning of Chen & Huang (2007). They mention the structural characteristics of decentralization and integration that provide employees with motivation and autonomy, which could support employees to both share and apply knowledge by interacting with colleagues more frequently.

In comparison, the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities did not highlight organizational structure as an enabler to idea-sharing. However, their answers indicated that organizational structure could be more or less advantageous when it came to the ease or difficulties of finding relevant employees in the organization to share their ideas with or the speed of potential implementation of ideas. For example, organizations that had a dedicated unit and structure of idea-sharing was expressed as a structure that made them feel included to share ideas and participate in innovation related projects. Willem and Buelens (2009) argue that the degree of formalization must be balanced to foster knowledge sharing within organizations. Yet, formulating common principles that could guide the construction of organizational structures with regards to facilitating knowledge sharing could be challenging as knowledge is context dependent (Willem & Buelens, 2009).

During the interviews with the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities, it was made clear that various channels for communicating ideas were used within the different organizations. Informal communication routes, such as discussions, meetings or informal conversation were a common way of sharing ideas amongst all respondents. However, formal communication routes, such as digital platforms, interfaces for communication and communication software were in most cases established. Some respondents expressed that the usage of the latter was encouraged by the organization. Common for the digital tools and channels specific for idea-sharing, was that they either invited the majority of the employees in the organization to submit their ideas or only included some employees based on, for instance, their team belonging or expertise.

Furthermore, ten of the respondents mentioned that they had an internal unit or a selected group of people that were responsible for collecting ideas, evaluating ideas, and/or developing ideas. Sharing ideas to these units or groups of people was either enabled by digital communication channels or platforms, or by sharing the ideas to the leader digitally or in person which the leader then passed to relevant employees. As Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) discuss, organizations usually have a specialized unit or group of people that are dedicated to members of the top management teams or employees working with R&D related activities. Consequently, employees not working with R&D related activities or have a managerial position in the organization might be neglected (Kesting & Ulhøi, 2010). However, having forums for discussing ideas across the organization, such as through digital channels or regular meetings at team or corporate level were mentioned by respondents. Teigland and Wasko (2003) claim that information technologies could support an organizational structure that allows higher efficiency and flexibility of knowledge integration. Regarding the usage of digital channels,

the purpose of these varied. Some organizations used it for idea submissions, others for making ideas and projects visible across the organization. The common factor was that they enabled idea-sharing among employees in different positions within the organization and across geographical areas. Yet, the effectiveness of idea-sharing varies depending on the nature and scope of the idea as well as the idea-sharing structure deployed by organizations. In some cases, employees from different parts of organizations had to be contacted specifically to evaluate and develop the idea.

5.3 Challenges and Barriers

5.3.1 Lack of Resources and Communication of Ideas

A common barrier to sharing ideas and reason for arising problems was lacking resources in various forms. The aspect of time was touched upon by several respondents, who expressed frustration when things took a long time. This could be either time-to-feedback or the time it took for the idea to actually develop, and the inability for the idea-sharer to follow the process. Also, time was highlighted as a needed resource to enable idea-sharing more frequently between organizational units. Some of the respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities discussed how the daily work tasks clashed with idea-sharing. These respondents meant that the company had expectations of them, or their team members should share ideas, and still manage their daily work tasks. With no time allocated for idea-sharing this oftentimes leads to some sort of compromise on the respondent's behalf. This was also highlighted by the interviewed expert, E1. However, only one of the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities but working with R&D related activities, discussed the balance of time spent on idea-sharing in comparison to the daily work tasks. This respondent meant that it was a problem if colleagues spent too much time on sharing ideas or engaging in shared ideas, as they had daily work tasks to do simultaneously. From one point of view, this could be a sign of misalignment between the organizational expectations of the employees, and their lack of time allocated for it. Similar barriers have been observed by Riege (2005) that argue that lack of time and space for sharing knowledge can create a barrier. Another explanation for the difference between the respondents' answers, or lack thereof, could be that the leaders and managers act as a moderator between the operational employees working with R&D activities and employees not working in R&D related activities. That could also be a sign of the organization expecting some of their employees to innovate, while others are less prioritized to do so during work hours.

Some respondents with managerial and leadership responsibilities discussed the challenge of prioritizing and evaluating ideas. Likewise, identifying the business and customer value of ideas was expressed by some respondents to be essential to implement and scale the idea, yet challenging on a team level to find out sometimes. Also, among the respondents some expressed that it could be difficult to communicate ideas and find the business value in general, and even harder to do it digitally. Some respondents mentioned that they had experienced misunderstandings when communicating between different parts of the organization. While this might not be a barrier in itself to express and share the idea between a sender and receiver,

it may be a barrier when it comes to understanding the essence and recognizing the value of an idea. Consequently, it may create a barrier to get the idea shared to relevant people in the organization as well as developing the idea further. Burkus (2013) explains that the major problem to innovation might not be the number of ideas, rather to recognize the value and find the good ideas in an uncertain environment when there might be a negative bias toward creativity. Therefore, the approval of ideas could be distributed across the entire organization to account for the potential bias and open up to democratization of ideas. Apart from democratizing the recognition of ideas, employees who have supported an idea are invited to participate in projects. Likewise, the ideas that gain enough support will be approved and the supporters of the approved ideas are given a share of the potential profit generated by the project (Burkus, 2013). Thus, prioritization and evaluation of ideas might be difficult to carry out for the employees responsible under certain circumstances. However, it might be beneficial for organizations to spread the approval ideas across the organization to both democratize and facilitate recognition and implementation of valuable ideas.

Moreover, the issues of communicating ideas came in various forms, such as not knowing whom to communicate the idea to in the organization, where and how to share the idea, or the business impact that the idea would have. Although digital communication channels might enable employees sharing ideas to some extent, there might be limitations with regards to how the idea can be communicated. The challenge of communication has been discussed in several studies. Carlile (2002) discusses knowledge boundaries that exist in the context of new product development, and highlights that a shared syntax might facilitate knowledge sharing across organizational functions. However, although there might exist a shared syntax, individuals may make different interpretations which could create a boundary when communicating across functions in the organization. Also, Sole and Edmondson (2002) argue that recognizing the usefulness of knowledge at another site might take time. Therefore, it is important for team members to be aware of knowledge that is situated locally as well as knowledge that is dispersed at other locations in the organization (Sole & Edmondson, 2002).

Another possible explanation for the difficulties the respondents are facing regarding communication of their ideas could be due to the type of knowledge they wish to share. In terms of innovations, the combination of tacit knowledge possessed by team members and the interaction among them in a new product development team is essential to creating new knowledge (Madhavan & Grover, 1998). The concept of knowledge can be divided into explicit and tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994), and can be shared through various forms (Hendriks, 1999). Explicit knowledge is "know-what" and can be expressed through language. Hence, it can be both codified and stored (Smith, 2001). On the contrary, tacit knowledge is a "know-how" type of knowledge which might be hard to codify and store. Rather, tacit knowledge is incorporated into procedures and obtained through learned behavior (Howells, 1996). Further, the interactions between tacit and explicit knowledge are crucial to knowledge creation (Nonaka, 1994), and successful utilization of employees' accumulated knowledge could create a competitive advantage (Smith, 2001).

As Chen and Huang (2007) mention, the social interactions that take place when employees share knowledge might enable the organization to more effectively utilize the knowledge shared as employees build relationships and networks in the process of sharing knowledge. Likewise, leveraging the social relationships created when employees are cooperating is essential to creating new knowledge (Kogut & Zander, 1992). In the case of explicit knowledge, the respondents might find it relatively easy to codify and communicate this type of knowledge through digital channels or face to face through the use of formal language. In contrast, as tacit knowledge is embedded in procedures and obtained through learning, employees might find it difficult to codify it and then share it. Further, the type of knowledge might guide how it could be shared to other people in the organization. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that knowledge creation occurs through different processes and behavior depending on if the knowledge is tacit or explicit. These are the four steps: socialization (tacit to tacit), articulation (tacit to explicit), combination (explicit to explicit), and internalization (explicit to tacit) of knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Following Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) reasoning, the context and existing forums for sharing ideas which are rooted in individuals' knowledge, might come with certain limitations and advantages related to the type of knowledge the employees want to share as well as related to the existing knowledge of the individual. This aligns with Bordia et al. (2006) argue that the interaction context might be connected to having certain benefits and costs. Therefore, some ideas having the characteristics of being possible to articulate or combine might be appropriate to being communicated through digital channels or face to face communication. In contrast, ideas that can only be shared through socialization and internalization processes could benefit from contexts that allow the employees to observe, imitate, apply and learn new knowledge.

5.3.2 Leader as a Broker and Organizational Structure

Among the respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities, some mentioned the challenge of being a leader in the idea-sharing process. The challenge was mainly due to either receiving more ideas than the leader could cope with, or that they had to connect team members with other employees in the organization that could help the idea-sharer further. In some organizations there were official units with a group of people handling the ideas that usually were submitted through digital communication systems, in others the team leaders are the main receiver of team members ideas and had to communicate it to other employees in the organization if the ideas should be shared to other units. Huysman et al. (2002) explain that the leader can act as a human portal for knowledge, and the leader can transfer the knowledge from its own business unit to another. Yet, lack of time among managers might impede them from sharing knowledge (Riege, 2005; O'Dell & Grayson, 1998).

The respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities did not mention that they perceived the leader as a broker as a direct challenge. This could be due to lack of insights into the number of ideas that leaders are receiving and potentially lack of resources to handle these. While sharing an idea, an employee might not recognize and be aware that the manager is being overburdened with ideas. Rather, they might perceive the situation as taking too long when

waiting for feedback, feeling unheard, or longer implementation times as the leaders have to evaluate and prioritize the ideas that are received. Yet, firm size and organizational structure was mentioned as a barrier by some of the respondents. This was often connected to lack of transparency, visibility, and inability to follow the idea when the respondents desired to share ideas with people working at other units in the organization, both nationally and internationally. That could indicate a less integrated organizational structure that might give employees less opportunities to learn from colleagues (Chen & Huang, 2007; Germain, 1996; Sciulli, 1998). Also, the decision-making authority might be allocated to the higher hierarchical levels of the organization (Chen & Huang, 2007; Robbins & Decenzo, 2001; Tsai, 2002). Hence, a tendency of more centralized organizational structure, which consequently could lead to reduced communication, commitment, and involvement (Chen & Huang, 2007; Damanpour, 1991; Sivadas & Dwyer, 2000).

5.3.3 Organizational Position and Culture

Some respondents discussed how the degree of involvement in the innovation process highly depended on the role or on the network the respondent had established. A barrier mentioned by the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities to sharing ideas was slow recognition from management and not being taken seriously. For example, one of the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities not working on R&D related activities experienced that the hierarchy could be very prominent sometimes. Even though the respondent had specific customer insights and context-dependent knowledge, the respondents felt that that ideas or suggestions could sometimes be overseen because of having a lower organizational position. The finding is consistent with Detert and Burris (2016) that argues that employees might decide to not share their ideas when they do not believe that managers will act on the ideas that are shared. Also, wasting time and fear of consequences are some factors that employees might perceive to be influential when facing the decision of sharing or withholding ideas from managers (Detert et al., 2010). Additionally, a few of the respondents with managerial or leadership responsibilities reported cultural differences within the company as a barrier to sharing ideas between organizational departments. McDermott and O'dell (2001) explain that subcultures within an organization exist. These subcultures can differ or oppose the formal organizational culture, and the cultural differences, which might support knowledge sharing to various degrees.

Furthermore, the role of organizational position as a barrier to idea-sharing and involvement in the innovation process, was mentioned more frequently by the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities with no or low degree of R&D related activities compared to the respondents without managerial or leadership responsibilities with medium or high degree of R&D related activities. Simultaneously, the contrary difference was observed in the sample group of respondents with leadership or managerial responsibilities. Here, the respondents with leadership or managerial responsibilities working R&D related activities, perceived the organizational position as a challenge, compared to respondents with leadership or managerial responsibilities not working in R&D related activities. In this group, the respondents expressed that their team-members often did not know who the idea should reach. Further, these

respondents expressed that they wanted to collect ideas across the whole organization to a larger extent than what was done today. They also faced cultural differences and having different organizational practices when reaching across organizational levels and units to share ideas.

These findings align with Nesheim and Gressgård (2014), who argue that the opportunities for employees to share ideas and knowledge might be dependent on the type of work the employees do. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) stress that operational employees may not be involved in the innovation process and related decisions. However, they possess context-dependent operational knowledge that are valuable both in terms of getting new ideas and further implementation. Consequently, companies might miss opportunities to access valuable knowledge among employees (Kesting & Ulhøi, 2010). Hence, from an innovation perspective, it is crucial that the organization leverage the knowledge of operational employees, although they may lack the formal authority to make decisions about the development of ideas. Giving the ability to the core knowledge worker of an organization to engage in knowledge sharing and building networks is especially important if the organization wants to capture the value of their investments in human capital (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005). Høystrup et al. (2012) presents the concept of employee driven innovation which spans bottom up, starting at the job level and continues by interactions among employees and managers. As an example, employees could be given freedom to develop and continuously improve their daily work without interventions from managers. That would allow the organization to potentially leverage on the context-dependent knowledge possessed by employees without managerial position (Høystrup et al., 2012). Hence, organizations could potentially benefit in terms of idea-sharing and idea implementation by adopting an approach in line with the concept of employee driven innovation. Additionally, the knowledge of employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities could be captured by offering them opportunities to be involved in development and implementation of ideas with support rather than force from management.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, the conclusions are presented. Firstly, answers to the sub-research questions will be presented, in order to guide the reader to the final answer to the main research question. The answers given to the research questions are followed by the practical implications, which are stated for employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities, for employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities and lastly, to the organization. Thirdly, the theoretical contributions and limitations of this research will be discussed, and finally, recommendations for future research will be given.

6.1 Answer to the Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore how knowledge sharing among employees at the early stage of the innovation process can be encouraged with a focus on intra-organizational idea-sharing occurring among employees with and without managerial or leadership responsibilities in large organizations. Sub-research questions were constructed to produce a nuanced understanding of the main research question and these will be answered first, followed by answering the main research question.

6.1.1 Answers to Sub-Research Questions

The sub-research questions to the main research question were focused on motivation, enablers, and challenges and/or barriers related to idea-sharing among employees. These will be answered below.

➤ *What motivates employees to share their ideas?*

The following sources of motivation for idea-sharing among employees were identified in this research:

Intrinsic motivation

- Self-fulfillment
- Willingness to Learn
- Find New Ways of Doing Things

Extrinsic motivation

- Improving the Long-Term Work Environment
- Feedback, Recognition and Rewards
- Ability to Follow the Idea

The research conducted found both intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation for idea-sharing. The intrinsic factors are highly personal to the employee, and while this research found a few common factors, there is likely to be many more. This means that while the organization

might not be able to directly affect intrinsic motivation, they could still try to implement initiatives that nourish or encourage them to some extent.

Intrinsic motivational factors for knowledge- or/and idea-sharing, mentioned by several respondents, were *Self-fulfillment*, *Willingness to learn* and *Finding new ways of doing things*. Self-fulfillment is often connected to interests or the employees personal drive, something that could explain why some employees share more ideas than others. Further, the employee's willingness to learn and the employees strive to find new ways of doing things, were prominent sources of motivation. The empirical data shows that learning and opportunities for learning, might contribute to increased motivation for idea-sharing amongst employees. In those organizations where, for example, different courses for learning had been introduced, the employees considered it a positive experience. Another way to stimulate these intrinsic motivational factors could be to give the employees the possibility to learn from each other and solve problems together. Organizations should therefore consider establishing ways where all employees partake in different types of learning activities, to further foster a collective knowledge-and idea-sharing behavior. The learning activities do not need to be connected to the employees work task, rather they should be implemented with the intention of giving employees the possibility to consume new knowledge in general. Also, the leaders play an important role to recognize their team's intrinsic motivational factors. Leaders could therefore strive to give teams responsibility, trust their work and give them freedom to deliver according to a set goal.

The extrinsic motivational factors could be directly impacted by the organization. *Improving the long-term work environment*, *Feedback, Recognition and Rewards*, and *Ability to Follow the Idea* was found to be extrinsic sources of motivation for idea-sharing in both respondent groups. Many employees found it motivating to improve their long-term work-environment, both for their own benefit and future employees'. This should not be taken for granted by the organization, and firms should try to encourage such suggestions from all different departments and organizational levels. Moreover, what was found to be highly motivating for employees without managerial responsibilities, was receiving feedback on the shared idea. The employees also considered the recognition and rewards received for sharing the idea, both from fellow peers as well as from leaders and top management, as highly motivating. Further, the feeling of ownership over the idea, also described as the ability to follow it or ability to see it being implemented, was a prominent source of motivation among employees with- and without managerial responsibilities. Thus, firms should consider to what extent feedback occurs, what kind of recognition the employees get for their contribution and to what extent the firm allows the employee to follow the progress of the shared idea, hence allowing them to feel ownership over it.

➤ *What enables idea-sharing among employees?*

The following enablers for idea-sharing among employees were identified in this research:

- Organizational Culture
- Organizational Activities
- Leaders, the Team, and Top Management
- Organizational Structure
- Communication Channels

This research has found that *Organization culture and the Organizational activities, the Leaders, the team and top management*, as well as *Organizational structure and Communication channels* enables idea-sharing amongst employees. To enable idea-sharing, certain characteristics of the organizational culture fosters idea-sharing, and is further supported by organizational activities. The prominent characteristics of the organizational culture found are trust and openness. Also, the characteristic of transparency within the organization is important. Organizational activities, such as internal events and idea-sharing activities, allow employees to engage in idea-sharing, as well as enhance the organizational culture of trust, openness, and transparency. Additionally, organizational activities can be a way through which organizations can motivate employees to share their ideas and create a forum in which employees can develop ideas by finding relevant people to collaborate with and get feedback on their ideas.

Moreover, leaders and top management are important actors to enable ideas-sharing among employees. A leadership style that empowers and encourages employees to share their ideas might influence to what degree employees share ideas, to whom they share and what they share. Giving autonomy and power to employees are key characteristics of a leadership that could enable idea-sharing among employees. Likewise, let employees drive implementation of ideas in certain areas. In those organizations where there is no forum for sharing ideas such as a digital channel, the leaders become critical actors to share employees' ideas further in the organization. Also, the top management team sets the tone for idea-sharing in the organization as they communicate the priorities top-down. Further, the organizational structure and communication channels enable employees to share their ideas more or less frequently and to what ease employees can get in contact with relevant people in the organization. Finding ways to work in smaller teams, being a decentralized, less formalized and well-integrated organization could enable idea-sharing. Having an internal unit that manages the idea flow in combination with a digitalized channel could give employees more freedom to share their ideas and the units could support employees to find the relevant people in the organization to develop their ideas further.

➤ *What are the challenges and/or barriers for idea-sharing among employees?*

The following challenges and/or barriers for idea-sharing among employees were identified in this research:

- Lack of Resources
- Communication of ideas
- Leaders as a Broker
- Organizational Structure
- Organizational Position
- Organizational Culture

The empirical data collected shows *Lack of resources, Communication of ideas, Leaders as brokers and Organizational structure*, as well as *Organizational position and culture*, to be barriers to idea-sharing among employees. Lack of resources and communication of ideas were the first challenges expressed by many respondents. The main resources needed, which create a barrier to idea-sharing among employees, was time and IT-related competence. Time is a critical issue when it comes to finding time to share ideas between organizational departments, as well as time needed for employees to balance daily work tasks *and* engage in idea-sharing. Also, it takes time to develop an idea. The challenge of getting IT-related resources is usually present when employees want to share and implement ideas between teams and across organizational departments. IT resources are multidimensional and while some respondents need IT resources to more efficiently share their ideas, other respondents need IT resources to evaluate and implement ideas. Furthermore, evaluating and finding the business value are other challenges employees are encountering when they would like to share their ideas. These two are interconnected since employees need to find the business value in the ideas to sort out their relevance and attractiveness which will then be input for evaluation when the idea is passed to colleagues within the team or shared with other organizational departments for evaluation. The closest manager and team members are critical to shaping the idea and developing it further.

Moreover, leaders are a central part of the idea-sharing process, yet their degree of importance in the organization varies. The leaders who are the main receiver of ideas seem to sometimes be overburdened with ideas, which hindered them to evaluate and feedback all the incoming ideas and further distribute these to relevant people. In other organizations, there might be an official unit handling the ideas which give more autonomy and employees to share their ideas and get feedback. Further, organizational culture and organizational position may create barriers and challenges to idea-sharing among employees. Especially, cultural differences and having different organizational practices could have different impacts on knowledge sharing across the organization. Further, the organizational position could potentially affect the extent to which employees are expected to be involved in idea-sharing and development. Likewise, some positions may be more or less advantageous in terms of network position and the ability to find relevant people in the organization to share their ideas with. However, the organizations could go towards an employee driven innovation, bottom-up approach by giving more freedom

to employees to drive idea implementation and continuous improvements without managers interfering and foster interactions between employees and managers. That could enable organizations to potentially leverage the context-dependent knowledge possessed by employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities or formal involvement in R&D. Also, the cultural aspects could be challenging, especially when managers need to change their mindset or communication. The top management and middle management seem to be important actors that influence an organizational culture that fosters idea-sharing among employees.

6.1.2 Answer to Main Research Question

By summarizing the answers to the sub-research questions, the main research question of this thesis can be revisited and answered:

How can employees working in large organizations be encouraged to share knowledge at the early stage of the innovation process?

Based on the similar patterns found among employees with and without managerial or leadership responsibilities, seven concepts were identified which could encourage employees working in large organizations to share knowledge in the form of ideas. The following seven concepts are linked to motivation, enablers, and challenges and/or barriers and provide a nuanced understanding of how employees working in large organizations can be encouraged to share knowledge through the expression of ideas:

- Individual motivators
- Organizational structure
- Communication channels
- Organizational culture
- Leaders, the team, and top management
- Organizational activities
- Organizational position

Firstly, *Individual motivators*, such as self-fulfillment, willingness to learn, and finding new ways of doing things, were found as intrinsic motivators. Also, improving long-term work, getting feedback, recognition, and rewards, and being able to follow the ideas were found as extrinsic motivators. Stimulating these through relevant job tasks that align with interests, encouragement from leaders and colleagues, and providing various organizational activities and opportunities for personal development could help encourage employees to share their ideas.

Secondly, the characteristics of the *Organizational structure* could have various impacts on idea-sharing among employees. Especially, having a well-integrated organization that is decentralized and less formalized could encourage idea-sharing among employees. Likewise, working in smaller and cross-functional teams or/and having dedicated innovation units where

employees are invited to participate could positively impact idea-sharing among employees as it might contribute to network opportunities and being involved in approval of ideas.

Thirdly, the *Communication channels* within the organization, and how these are used, could help encourage idea-sharing among employees. Having a digitalized channel, in combination with an internal unit that manages the idea flow, could give employees more freedom to share their ideas. With the support of the internal units, employees could find relevant people in the organization, who could help develop the employee ideas, easier. While the usage of digital communication channels could encourage employees in large firms to share ideas, face-to-face communication is also considered to be important when it comes to encouraging the employees to participate in idea-sharing. Thus, by complementing each other, these two ways of communicating could contribute to employees feeling encouraged to share ideas.

Fourthly, building an *Organizational culture* that incorporates trust, openness, and transparency could help to encourage employees to share ideas. Likewise, aligning the organizational culture and organizational practices across business units might benefit idea-sharing among employees.

Fifthly, *Leaders, the team, and top management* were found to be critical in encouraging employees to share ideas. Leaders can encourage employees to share ideas by having an supportive and empowering leadership style and giving them autonomy. Also, they can enable idea-sharing among employees through connecting employees to relevant people, help to develop and communicate ideas, and foster social interactions. Additionally, top management can encourage idea-sharing by clearly communicating priorities top-down.

Sixthly, *Organizational activities* could help to encourage employees to share their ideas. The organizational activities could provide employees with forums as well as give time and space for idea-sharing. Also, organizational activities could allow employees to be recognized and rewarded for their ideas at, for example, internal events. These could also foster characteristics of openness, trust, and transparency within the organization. Further, organizational activities, such as projects where employees develop ideas with colleagues, could lead to further career opportunities for employees.

Lastly, *the Organizational position* could affect idea-sharing among employees. Different organizational positions may come with different expectations and opportunities for employees to share their ideas. Also, the organizational position may influence employees' opportunities to network and find relevant people to share their ideas with. Employees could be encouraged to share their ideas by implementation of an employee-driven approach to innovation in organizations. That could create organizational positions that allow employees to develop and drive the implementation of ideas to a larger extent and foster interactions across organizational positions.

The conceptual model, seen in Figure 1 below, summarizes the concepts mentioned above which to some extent might explain how employees working in large organizations can be

encouraged to share knowledge at the early stage of the innovation process. Concepts that could enable employees to share knowledge in the form of ideas in one context could be challenges and/or barriers to knowledge sharing in another context. Likewise, the enablers might be interconnected to support knowledge sharing at the early stage of the innovation process and the challenges that may influence one another. Thus, organizations who strive to encourage employees to share knowledge in the form of ideas, should take into consideration the conceptual model. However, important to note is that the model does not explain the potential relationships or interconnection between the concepts.



Figure 1: Conceptual model

The conceptual model includes elements adhering to each concept, which might help to explain how knowledge sharing among employees in large organizations can be encouraged at the early stage of the innovation process.

6.2 Practical Implications

The authors would like to highlight the practical implications of the findings on an individual, managerial, and organizational level. The practical implications of this research distinguish between employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities and employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities. However, the implications might intersect. By applying the practical implication in an organizational context, the authors hope that knowledge sharing through the expression of ideas could be encouraged among employees working in large organizations.

Employees without managerial or leadership responsibilities should try to interact with colleagues, share ideas to the degree they feel comfortable with, as well as trying to take steps out of their comfort zone. Further, seek a job in an area that aligns with interests and personal drive that one cares about to potentially increase motivation for sharing ideas with colleagues. Likewise, developing an openness toward giving and receiving feedback from colleagues on ideas could have positive implications for both the individual's personal development and the development of the organization. Also, choosing a company with a mission that employees connect with to be motivated to improve long-term work, acquire a positive attitude and strive for continuous improvements. Apart from that, it might have a positive impact on idea-sharing behavior. It could also possibly contribute to self-fulfillment.

Further, *employees with managerial or leadership responsibilities* can encourage idea-sharing among team members in several ways. Having an encouraging and empowering leadership style could support their team members to feel comfortable sharing ideas with their managers. Likewise, giving autonomy and support as well as letting employees take and feel ownership of ideas could potentially affect team members' motivation for sharing ideas positively. It is important to care and listen to team members to motivate and enable them to share ideas. Also, to get to know them, for example, learning about their interests and what motivates them.

Further, clear communication from management, prioritizing idea-sharing, and continuously recognizing employees for sharing ideas might encourage employees in large organizations to share ideas. Optimally, it should start from top management to permeate the organization and its different units. Hence, the top and middle management should show their team members that they care and value team members and their ideas to encourage knowledge sharing among their team members at the early stage of the innovation process. That could be achieved by the top and middle management communicating expectations and connecting knowledge sharing to the organization's core values.

Regarding *the organizational implication* of this research, these highlight the organizational structure, culture, and activities for encouraging employees to communicate their ideas in various ways to let both employees and ideas be recognized. Transparency, trust, and openness are three cornerstones that might help to encourage idea-sharing among employees, which can be strengthened by an appropriate organizational structure and organizational culture. Although there might not be one best way to organize or general principle that can be applied, forming

an organizational structure that allows employees to make decisions in certain areas and work cross-functionally can be advantageous for supporting idea-sharing within the organization.

Further, the empirical findings point towards that organizations could adopt a decentralized approach where employees are involved in, for example, internal events, approval of ideas, and projects. This could support idea-sharing among employees by creating network opportunities and give employees the opportunity to be part of the project connected to their idea as well as decide about the implementation of ideas, going towards an employee-driven innovation approach. These activities could enable employees to feel ownership of their idea, something that the empirical findings suggest is impactful on their motivation. Moreover, it connects with the practical implication of having adequate communication channels that enable employees to discuss their ideas with colleagues working at other departments, which opens up to include different perspectives and interactive feedback. Further, organizations should adapt their communication channels and forums and have in mind the *type* of knowledge they would like their employees to share on these channels to reduce the risk of miscommunication.

Moreover, the findings also suggest that employees might be more motivated to contribute with new ideas if the rewards were focused on recognizing them and their ideas as valuable to the organization. For some employees, rewards may be suitable, while others might be more motivated by being given opportunities to engage in learning activities or develop their careers. Likewise, a combination of these might be adequate. One possible way to increase and/or sustain motivation for idea-sharing amongst employees could be to implement and align short-term and long-term incentives in the organization. For example, career opportunities, seeing the development of the idea or giving the idea-sharer the opportunity to be part of the projects, could be long-term incentives. Short-term incentives could be focused on learning, securing instant feedback from both peers and managers, transparency, and rewards of different sorts. The combination of the organizational short-term and long-term incentives could potentially increase the existing motivation for idea-sharing amongst employees, hence giving them and their ideas opportunities to be recognized and grow.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to the previous literature and understanding of knowledge sharing among employees in large organizations at the early stage of the innovation process. The research focused on the early stage of the innovation process where idea generation and sharing are cornerstones. By combining perspectives on idea-sharing of employees with and without managerial or leadership responsibilities as well as one expert, this research contributes to the understanding of motivation, enablers, and challenges and/or barriers that employees encounter when they share knowledge through the expression of ideas.

The empirical findings implied that the concepts of *individual motivators*, *organizational structure*, *communication channels*, *organizational culture*, *leaders*, *the team*, and *top-management*, *organizational activities*, and *organizational position* should be considered to encourage knowledge sharing among employees working in large organizations at the early

stage of the innovation process. Yet, there are several limitations to this research, which narrow the scope of its theoretical contributions. Simultaneously, the limitations of this research might provide ideas for future research. These will be discussed below.

6.4 Research Limitations

This research comes with certain limitations that must be addressed. As a first limitation, there may be ambiguity concerning what the individual respondents mean and perceive as an *idea*, as this was not addressed explicitly during the interviews. Also, this research has been focused on idea-sharing as one way to investigate knowledge sharing among employees. As highlighted in Chapter 1 Introduction and Chapter 3 Literature, there are various ways through which employees can share knowledge with colleagues. By investigating idea-sharing, the research is limited to providing explanations where knowledge sharing occurs through the expression of ideas. Therefore, the empirical findings may not apply to all ways or contexts through which knowledge can be shared. Moreover, there might be linguistic barriers present, as several of the employees interviewed did not have English as their mother tongue. Likewise, there could be a risk of respondents not accurately recalling situations and details that would be of significant value to research to explain the phenomena. Additionally, the interview captures the respondents' own behavior, attitudes, and views on idea-sharing. That implies that there might be a difference between the respondents' description of their behavior with regard to knowledge sharing and their actual behavior, which might be possible to capture if the respondents had been observed in their everyday work environment.

A second limitation is regarding the literature review and method deployed to conduct this research. Conducting the literature review in parallel to collecting the empirical data might come with certain limitations. As the researcher chose the narrative review and abductive approach to be able to iterate between data and theory, it is possible that the iteration between these has mutually guided the authors to be unintentionally selective and biased when searching for literature and analyzing the empirical data. Consequently, the approach might have influenced the authors' reasoning, inferences, and conclusions made. Additionally, the research does not accurately show the relationship between enablers and barriers presented. Therefore, guidelines regarding how to overcome the challenges and/or barriers, as well as how to implement the enablers in organizations, might need other types of research and methods than presented in this research.

Another concern related to limitation of this research is the literature and choice of selecting specific frameworks. It is possible that the outcome of the analysis and the practical implications would have been different if another theoretical framework had been applied. This research investigates and distinguishes between concepts identified in empirical findings and analysis, and outlines some concepts that could help to explain how employees can be encouraged to share ideas in large organizations. However, the research is limited to provide concepts that have been found in the empirical data and reviewed literature, treating idea-sharing as one way of sharing knowledge. There might be other factors and factors of relative importance for knowledge sharing occurring through the expression of ideas as well as

depending on how or what type of knowledge that is shared. Some examples of other factors could be personality, work environment, the relationship between the sender and recipient, and socio-cultural aspects. These have not been addressed thoroughly by this research.

Furthermore, there might be underlying patterns that a qualitative research method does not capture. Therefore, the motivators, enablers, and challenges found in this study might not highlight the direct relationship between these. Rather, it could guide researchers and employees towards certain areas that could be considered in future research. Likewise, as mentioned in Chapter 3 Methodology, there might be a thin and blurry line between what can be classified as R&D activities and not. With this, the generalizability of large organizations across several industries and roles might also be limited. Another limitation of the research is that it concerns a relatively small sample size, making it complicated to draw too general conclusions. Therefore, the authors propose that this research should be viewed as a guide towards an interesting area for future research. Likewise, the research could guide individuals and organizations who wish to investigate the concepts and assess if these would bring value to them.

6.5 Future Research

This research creates several suggestions for future research. As the research had a qualitative approach, the first recommendation is to conduct quantitative research with a larger sample size to investigate the associations among motivating factors, enablers, and challenges and/or barriers to idea-sharing. Likewise, to examine the underlying patterns and potential causes related to sharing knowledge through idea-sharing among employees in large organizations. Also, the authors suggest future researchers conduct further qualitative studies to provide more in-depth explanations of both idea-sharing and other ways of sharing knowledge.

Furthermore, it may be fruitful to investigate industry-specific patterns connected to idea-sharing among employees, to highlight potential differences between industries. Also, including a larger group of employees from different geographical areas or focusing on comparing idea-sharing in small and large firms, could be of interest. As this research did not examine idea-sharing in a particular context, future research could also focus on idea-sharing in a certain context or narrow the scope by focusing on employees working in a specific position or department. Additionally, study idea-sharing in practice to see how employees interact using other research designs, such as experimental or field observation, to investigate knowledge sharing and identify influential factors. Lastly, investigating idea-sharing with attention to the degree of innovation would be an interesting area of research.

On a final note, the authors of this thesis hope to see the above proposals of future research being investigated. Many factors on the topic of idea-sharing amongst employees are yet to be discovered, and many puzzling phenomena of knowledge sharing are to be explored.

7. References

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8. Appendix

Appendix A – Interview Guide Respondents without Managerial or Leadership Responsibilities

General information:

This interview will be held in English, and you will be answering questions anonymously. However, in order to analyze this information, we would like to record the interview - are you okay with that?

The interview will touch upon idea and problem sharing in your company as well as participation in the innovation process at your company.

Formal questions:

- What's your name?
- What do you work with?
- Do you have any managerial or leadership responsibilities in your current role? (e.g., team-leader)
- How long have you been working at the company?

Defining innovation

- Could you shortly describe what innovation is for you?

Idea-sharing in the organization today

- How do you share your ideas or problems at your workplace today?
 - a) *Does your company have some sort of device/interface for sharing ideas or problems?*
 - b) *Do you like/dislike this way of working with sharing ideas?*
- What do you see as the greatest challenges or barriers when you want to share ideas/problems in your organization?
 - a) *If yes, what barriers?*
 - b) *If not, why do you think that is?*
- To what degree do you share ideas and problems with colleagues working at other units in your organization?

Attitudes toward knowledge sharing

- What motivates you to share your ideas and problems?
- Do you have any fears connected to sharing your ideas and problems?
 - a) *If yes, what fears?*
 - b) *If not, why do you think that is?*
- What would be your ideal version of sharing ideas, problems and knowledge to others?

Factors affecting idea-sharing

- What frustrates you about sharing knowledge, ideas, and concerns in your

organisation?

- What opportunities and risks do you see with sharing your ideas, suggestions and concerns?
- Do you feel any differences in sharing ideas, suggestions, or concerns through a digital device such as a computer or phone compared to sharing these face-to-face?
 - a) *If yes, what differences?*
 - b) *If no, why not?*
- How do the firm encourage you to explore and express your ideas?

Prerequisites for idea-sharing and involvement

- What would you need from the organization in order to share your ideas/problems more frequently?
- What would make you feel more involved in the innovation process at your company?
- If there was a digital solution for sharing ideas and problems, what features of such would you appreciate?

Appendix B – Interview Guide Respondents with Managerial or Leadership Responsibilities

General information:

This interview will be held in English, and you will be answering questions anonymously. However, in order to analyze this information, we would like to record the interview - are you okay with that?

General questions:

- What's your name?
- What do you work with?
- Do you have any managerial or leadership responsibilities in your current role? (e.g., team-leader)
- How long have you been working at the company?

Defining innovation

- Could you shortly describe what innovation is for you?

Idea-sharing in the organization today

- How does your team share ideas or problems at your workplace today?
 - a) *Does your company have some sort of device/interface for this?*
 - b) *Do you like/dislike this way of working with sharing ideas?*
- What do you see as the greatest challenges or barriers when you want to share your team's ideas/problems in your organization?
 - a) *If yes, what barriers?*
 - b) *If not, why do you think that is?*
- What routines, processes and systems do you have for sharing internal information/knowledge?
- How do you communicate the impact that your employees have for your organization today?
- To what extent do you feel that your organization absorbs information about ideas and problems and uses that as input for improvements or innovations?
- To what degree do you share ideas and problems with colleagues working at other units in your organization?

Attitudes toward knowledge sharing

- What role in the idea/problem-sharing process do you have as a leader?
- What motivates you to share your team's ideas or problems?
- What do you observe as factors of motivation for your team in terms of idea sharing?
- What would be your ideal situation for your team to share ideas, problems and knowledge?

Factors affecting idea-sharing

- How do the firm encourage you to explore and express your team's ideas?
- Do you observe any obstacles connected to the team's sharing of ideas/problems?
 - a) *If yes, what obstacles?*
 - b) *If not, why do you think that is?*

- Do you feel any differences in sharing your team's ideas, suggestions, or concerns through a digital device such as a computer or phone compared to sharing these face-to-face?

Prerequisites for idea-sharing and involvement

- What would you need (from the organization) in order to share your team's ideas/problems more frequently?
- If there was a digital solution for sharing ideas and problems, what features of such would you appreciate?

Appendix C – Interview Guide Expert

Defining innovation

- Could you shortly describe what innovation is for you?
- How do you define innovative behavior?

Employees Involvement and Motivation for Idea-sharing

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of including operational employees in the early stage of the innovation process?
- What motivational factors have you observed among employees that motivates them to share their ideas or problems?
- What are the barriers when sharing ideas within an organization?
- What would you say are the most common ways for employees to express their ideas and problems in an organizational context?
- How can digitized knowledge sharing systems be used to collect and promote idea and problem sharing among employees?
- What are the organizational prerequisites or contextual factors that encourage or hinders idea-sharing among employees?

The Role of the Manager

- What is the manager's role in the idea-sharing process among employees and in organisations?
- Are there any challenges connected to communicating their ideas to other employees or managers?
- What are the main barriers for managers when engaging employees in idea-sharing or problem sharing?

Appendix D - Coding Chart

Global Themes	Themes	Concepts	Codes Examples	Example Quotes
Motivation	Intrinsic/ Extrinsic Motivation	Improve long term work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improving the efficiency of the work environment ● Solving problems ● Connectedness with organization and customers 	<p>“Since I have been in the organization so long I have such a big heart for what.. What [company name] stands for”</p> <p>“When you are working with and for a reason. And In the team I am, we are constantly facing different problems and so on, and my team are always.. We always want the customers best, so... So that motivates me. To always be better and always find new ways of working. to be more efficient, and ehm... To find, to find the best... Way for our customers basically. that motivates me.”</p>
		Receiving Feedback, Recognitions and Rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Getting Recognition, Opportunities or Rewards ● Feedback on the progress 	<p>“One should not underestimate that people are engaged in their own ideas. I think that what is interesting is that you get recognition for your ideas, you get attention and in the end, if the idea is good, you get an initiative starting around it and more people can come and contribute around it. And help you to realize your ideas.”</p> <p>“A strong sense of autonomy, combined with the knowledge that there is always a kind of a home base a safe harbor to go back and find, to get feedback. And to share and , but still be out there a lot. But come home. I think that’s important, a strong sense of autonomy and the self governance. Eh, but a sense of community and sense of team work still.”</p>
		Personal Development and Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self fulfillment ● Opportunity to develop own capabilities ● Personal drive and interest 	<p>“In most cases, there are their [the team members] area of interest. Or some of them having this passion to basically try to explore new things and new ways of doing things that motivates most of them.”</p> <p>“We are working a lot with sustainability and we have something we call “we care”.That drives me, yes sometimes. It is not like I work with that alot but when I do it actually feels like I am doing something good. and it is a nice feeling.”</p>
		Ownership of ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having an impact ● Feeling ownership of ideas 	<p>“I love to share power with my employees and to actually feel that they can... They can have an impact on how we work, on what we do and how we do it.”</p> <p>“As a leader I really like people working together and I see the strength in cross-functional teams with different kind of skills working together. sitting in the same boat, running the same goals and delivering together.”</p>

Enablers	Organizational Culture and Organizational Activities	Organizational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open culture and mindset ● Transparency and trust 	<p>“We have a quite open, open minded climat where we share ideas and challenge each other I would say.”</p> <p>“That is really part of the culture and mindset that change that the leaders will be able to set up clear goals, be transparent and just give the organization what they need... And have trust.. To the teams and the organization.”</p>
		Organizational Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal Recognition and Rewards ● Development of career 	<p>“We do it in our internal communication, we also celebrate the best ideas yearly, at galas and at a party.”</p> <p>“We had, last Friday, an [internal event] where we showed all of our innovations from last year and there were participants... It was a fully digital event where we had from all our different countries, innovators sharing what they have done and what they had taken to the market and how they worked with customers on deriving ideas.”</p>
	Leaders, the Team and Top Management	Leaders and Colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeling supported by colleagues/leaders ● Encouragement from management team/manager ● Give employees autonomy and authority 	<p>“Part of my role is to see that this is similar ideas, this part we should do together rather, to be more focused and to get something out quicker in the market. And this is something that is duplicated, that we should avoid to do and that is misaligned. So it's both kind of encouraging and stopping different initiatives.”</p> <p>“And personally I try to be very encouraging of people, team members coming up with ideas or searching out new ideas. Eh, and giving them a large amount of freedom to do that.”</p>
	Organizational Structure and Communication Channels	Organizational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dedicated innovation/expert group ● Working cross functional/across the organization 	<p>“So you set up these cross functional teams that makes it possible to take care of everyday ideas. sop that is exactly how we are changing the way of working right now and that is actually maybe the most important thing, that we are able to take care of every day ideas.”</p> <p>“We also created a [name of business unit], almost a year ago when the pandemic started.. and there we are a group that comes from different parts of the company, and we get, like, problems from people around, like at [business unit], or wherever, that we solve. so we actually created a team that is working with solving problems right now, and come up with new ideas.”</p>
		Communication Channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sharing ideas through different channels/system ● Digital ways of sharing ideas 	<p>“We have a different ways of channeling innovation and ideas. We have one company wide eh, tool called [name]. Which is an ideation tool, eh, board maybe. Anyone in the company can submit ideas for change or for betterment.”</p> <p>“It is digitall of course. We share everything in team groups, groups with different projects that we are in. Now, it is not so many innovations that we do project-wise now so that is kind of on a</p>

				stand still.”
Challenges	Lack of Resources and Communication of Ideas	Resources and Misalignment between daily work tasks and idea-sharing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of IT/ Time/ Money /Leaders ● Problematic when things take time ● Lack of time to prioritize/engage in idea-sharing activities ● Idea-sharing not aligned with daily work tasks 	<p>“We get a lot of ideas about IT and our IT system that we use in our working life, our everyday life. I think that is an obstacle that we have not been able to do the things people have been saying for quite a long time.”</p> <p>“You need to take the time. and I think that is one of the biggest barriers. You need to put some time into this topic, and also discuss between departments what we are doing. And often it is not often as easy to find that time.”</p>
		Communication Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Problems with sharing ideas cross-unit ● Harder to express ideas digital ● Not being able to follow the progress 	<p>“Everyone worked pretty much within their own turfs and didn’t communicate that much which was of course, eh, hindered the development and created, using different cultures in different parts of the organization.”</p> <p>“There’s not really a set of rules that say “oh you need to do exactly this or that” so that makes it a challenge to communicate, to always find the right way of communicating. meaning that, for instance if i send out an email to 5 or 10 people, I can’t always be sure of all of them reading it because they might have different access to email.”</p>
		Evaluation and Communication of Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finding the business value of ideas ● Idea formulation/communication ● Idea evaluation 	<p>“Our biggest challenge is not the number of ideas that comes up but rather pick out them and prioritize - which are the good ones to go for?”</p> <p>“Sometimes the complexity of the innovation that is hard to do in a short way. So often you need a longer meeting or something like that, where you are able to eh. To take questions and then time is the critical issue I would say.”</p>
	Leader as a Broker and Organizational Structure	Leader as a broker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of connections ● Broker 	<p>“I would like people to share ideas without me having to be a part of it. and that people can, like cheer for each other’s ideas. uhm, that you could in the platform, eh, maybe send in ideas and my feedback would be seen for everyone.”</p> <p>“But it is only me as a leader that can go and cryss the bottom and where it says “put your proposal here” and fill it it... That I really like. And then I just send them and then the teams [microsoft teams-group] get it. But maybe the team members can do it as well, so it does not always have to go through me.”</p>
		Organizational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Problems related to firm size ● How to find the right people ● Organizational misalignment 	<p>“Ee have some difficulties within the company as well. [Company name] is a very big organization, and in my team we are working very close with the [geographical location], but we also have our organization abroad and also in all other countries basically. So it could be very difficult [to share ideas], both with other functions but other countries could be some difficulties.”</p> <p>“Like we are a fairly big company, so I think the main challenge, if you have a great idea and your</p>

				not, expect someone else to go with it and run for it and just put it out there and don't follow up on it you might be disappointed."
	Organizational Position and Culture	Organizational Culture and hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lacking/slow recognition from management ● Degree of involvement dependent on role/contacts ● Cultural misalignment 	<p>"It also starts with the top management and i think the top management in these kinds of companies are the hardest ones to change."</p> <p>"Everyone worked pretty much within their own turfs and didn't communicate that much which was of course, eh, hindered the development and created, using different cultures in different parts of the organization. And of course there are, there will be cultural differences within if you are in a large organization like ours."</p>
		Discomfort of Sharing ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fear to share ideas outside comfort zone ● Less comfortable with sharing ideas 	<p>"For some type of personality it's easier than it is for others I would say. So that's probably would be the main challenge, to make sure that.. our commercial functions are typically fairly good at this, but then we have like brilliant minds that's in the tech side that might not be as comfortable."</p> <p>"If you go into something that is really not your area or so... That could be a fear for me to share ideas or thoughts."</p>