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Knowledge Sharing Practices Among Visually Impaired Students at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

Abstract

The study is conducted with the purpose to determine the attitude, perception and the pattern of knowledge sharing among visually impaired students of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India. Appropriate pattern was formulated for data collection wherein schedule was used to gather data from 76 visually impaired students, the data so collected was analysed using SPSS (ver.23). The results formulated out of the analysis confirms that the visually impaired students consider knowledge sharing as a best practice as they frequently practicing it among their peer groups through various channels of communication e.g. audio material, URLs of websites, etc. The purposes of KS, the reasons which motivate and those which reduce the practices of so were also highlighted. In addition, the study also provides suggestive measures which will improve knowledge sharing practices among these students. Further, it is anticipated that the present study will help in developing a general understanding and awareness regarding knowledge-sharing behaviour of visually impaired students. Moreover, the study is a good contribution to literature because of dearth on the current topic.

Keywords: Knowledge, Knowledge Sharing, Visually Impaired, Perception, Attitude, Aligarh Muslim University, Maulana Azad Library.

1. Introduction

Knowledge is the combination of information with experience and considerations which has become a key resource to attain success for every individual in the present era. Knowledge is both tacit as well as explicit; tacit knowledge is the personal experience while explicit knowledge is in the transmittable form. The effective use of both type of knowledge is significant for the success (Nonaka, 1994), which can be best possible by sharing knowledge. Knowledge sharing is the action which is executed by the arrangement of information and know-how to help others or to work together by taking care of issues, growing new thoughts or accomplishing strategies; it can be empowered and encouraged while it cannot be, constrained (Gibbert and Krause, 2002). It is considered as one of the most important component in knowledge management process because it is quite difficult to encourage and motivate people to share knowledge (Gupta, 2008). Knowledge sharing has a significant role which cannot be neglected, as it helps to develop critical as well as crucial thinking among students and acquire more than what is being imparted in formal learning. It also supports the development of community literacy as information shared by community members stimulate literacy rate of community members rather than the information which is obtained from outside community because within community information is characterised according to the need of such community, accessibility as well as the relevancy of using it by most of the community members (Ahmadpour, 2014). Technological advancement has revolutionised the educational sector by providing new channels for learning and knowledge sharing (Potelle and Rouet, 2003). Sharing is equally beneficial for visually impaired students as they also need to access knowledge to enhance their capabilities as their sighted colleagues. According to Friend (2009), "Visually impaired is a term which is used to describe the people who are partially-sighted or completely blind". Therefore, the present study is conducted on visually impaired students at Aligarh Muslim University to determine their knowledge sharing

practices, at what level they are familiar with the concepts of knowledge sharing and practicing it.

2. Knowledge Sharing and Students Learning

When it is about the learning of disabled students then mentors must be knowledgeable in information technology especially in assistive or adaptive technologies as well as disability services then only they can assess disabled students in their academics and carrier potentials using technological facilities and a healthy communication between mentor and student will result in achievement of academic and carrier goals of these students (Khalil, 2008). When teachers successfully accomplish their role as an information transmitter then it is the duty of students to adopt interactive learning as a group participant and decision maker which is beneficial in many ways such as higher student achievement, better communication skills, improved group dynamics as well as active knowledge sharing (Emmer and Gerwels, 2002). Knowledge sharing has three generations which includes; “traditional way of sharing knowledge which is the concept of codification and storage; second generation focuses on the social component; personalisation and the way people co-operate and communicate. Formal and informal opportunities can be used like mentoring, coaching or face-to-face meetings. Codification is mostly used as a starting point, where new employees can find out what employees know and what knowledge is available; Personalisation is used to see the application of the available knowledge, the third generation focuses on social networks, which are the new ways to get in touch with experts and to search for knowledge outside the organisation” (Bellefroid, 2012). Sharing can be concluded as a conscious act by a person who takes interest in the learning exchange despite the fact that there is no urge to do as such (Agarwal and Snekkenes, 2017).

3. Literature Review

Knowledge sharing possesses an unbeatable role in learning and development process for an individual. Factors which can motivate and encourage knowledge sharing among students are trust, attitude and ICTs (Haq and Haque, 2018). Students had positive attitudes towards knowledge sharing and its importance in learning process while they usually avoid sharing the knowledge related to their curriculum which leads to marking or grades, other factors which make them to avoid sharing are competition among students to outperform their fellow students as well as lack of depth in peer relationships (Yuen and Majid, 2006). Moreira et al (2019) highlighted that 3D printing technologies can support knowledge sharing among visually impaired students, for the production of works of art media which can be interpreted and understand by visually impaired. Various sources are available and used by students to fulfil their information needs amongst those top sources for seeking study-related information for students are internet, teachers and their fellow mates. The basic motives of knowledge sharing were to develop concepts discussed in formal teachings as well as to develop relations among peers. Barriers in sharing were lack of time, lack of sharing culture and lack of depth in relationships which can be rectified through group assignment as more sharing is performed among group members (Majid and Chitra, 2013).

With the advancement in technology Web 2.0 tools emerged which are the next generation of internet access as it provides a platform for academic interaction to sighted people as well as provides an opportunity to visually impaired people for active participation, it also had positive influences towards knowledge sharing. There is a significant relationship between students’ attitude and use of social media for sharing knowledge. Amongst these tools students are widely making use of Facebook and WhatsApp for exchange of knowledge. For

the sake of escalation of academic performances institutions should enhance the use of social media and its use to set up off-class students to students as well as student to teacher group discussions (Omatayo and Salami, 2018). Visually impaired students are also using these tools like WhatsApp, you tube, etc. at higher rate for different purposes which includes sharing knowledge as well as for seeking job opportunities, while barriers in using such tools for visually impaired students were compatibility with screen readers and non-availability of JAWS software in different languages (Khowaja and Fatima, 2019).

Availability of different channels has made sharing easy. Thus, the information literacy is rapidly shifting to production of information, collaborating and sharing information in mass (Mackey and Jacobson, 2011). Graff (2006) highlighted that there is a positive correlation between students' academic performances and their perception towards online community because web tools have a significant role to help students in learning and knowledge sharing which improves academic performances as well. Visually impaired users face problems in using web even with the help of assistive technologies, Therefore, librarians and web developers should ensure that their websites must be accessible to these persons as well (Oppenheim and Selby, 1999). Students perceived knowledge sharing as advantage which provides desired results and satisfaction to share their knowledge between different individuals while simultaneously expecting rewards and attractive results by doing so (Moghavvemi, 2017), whereas still some of them consider knowledge sharing as a risk for the one who shares the information because of losing a competitive advantage over the other by providing important information (Sankowska, 2012).

It is clear from the available literature that there are a number of studies conducted on knowledge sharing in organisation as well as among the students but there is dearth of literature in the context of visually impaired students perception and attitudes towards knowledge sharing practices and at what extent they are comfortable in sharing. As number of visually impaired students is increasing those who are pursuing personal development and independence through higher education, thus, it is desirable that their knowledge sharing pattern should be thoroughly investigated. Therefore, the present study is an effort to identify the knowledge sharing practices among visually impaired students to highlight their perception and attitudes regarding knowledge sharing.

4. Aim and Objectives

The main aim of the study is to determine the knowledge sharing perception and its application among visually impaired students, objectives listed below are to be covered in the due course of study.

- To determine the perception regarding knowledge sharing.
- To identify the frequency of sharing knowledge.
- To identify the medium preferred for sharing knowledge.
- To identify the material shared by them.
- To determine the purpose for sharing knowledge.
- To identify the motivational factors in sharing.
- To identify the hindrances faced in sharing knowledge.

5. Scope and Methodology

The present study was conducted by using purposive sampling technique, to determine Knowledge Sharing Practices among Visually Impaired Students at Aligarh Muslim

University. Total of 76 visually impaired students enrolled in PhD, post graduate, under graduate programmes taught in the university during the year 2018-19 (as per the record of Disability Unit, AMU) are considered as a sample for the study.

Investigators followed survey method and make use of schedule as a data collection tool; questions in the schedule were designed by going through literature on the following specific points:

- Perception of visually impaired students regarding knowledge sharing.
- Frequency of sharing knowledge.
- Material shared and medium preferred for sharing.
- Purpose for sharing, factors motivate and factors hinders for sharing.

Investigator pre-tested the drafted schedule on 5 visually impaired students and it was observed that respondents didn't find any ambiguity and were comfortable with the questions and options put forth. After finalising the schedule investigator visited braille section of the central library and departments of the University to gather precise data from these students. The responses thus received were analysed using SPSS (version 23) for making conclusion and interpretations.

6. Analysis & Interpretations

To make it more understandable results and interpretation of the analysed data is divided in respective headings.

6.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents

The study was conducted on 76 visually impaired students to determine their knowledge sharing perception and practicing behaviour, among those 52 (68.4%) were males and 24 (31.6%) were females. Students under study were enrolled in different courses of study viz. 16 (21.1%) in PhD, 23 (30.3%) in post-graduation and 37 (48.7%) in undergraduate programmes (table 1).

Table 1 Demographic Information of the Respondents

Category	Division	No. of Respondents (N=76)	Percentage	Total
Gender	Male	52	68.4	76
	Female	24	31.6	
Course	PhD	16	21.1	76
	Post Graduate	23	30.3	
	Under Graduate	37	48.7	

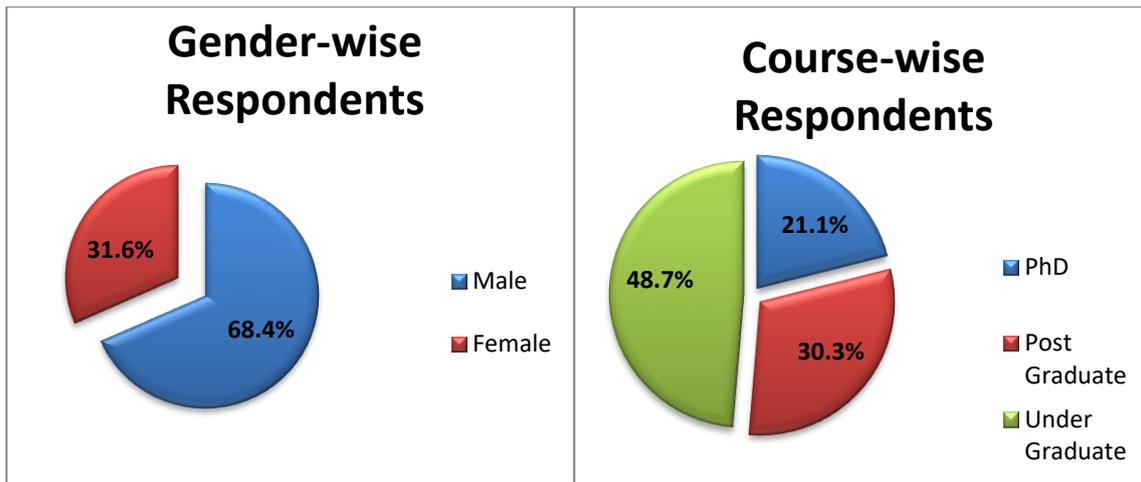


Figure 1 Gender-wise Respondents Figure 2 Course-wise Respondents

6.2 Perception Towards Knowledge Sharing

Visually impaired students were asked regarding their perception towards knowledge sharing by asking them few positive as well as negative statements and they are about to record their perceptions as “Strong agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree”. Results recorded in table 2 reveals that majority of these students’ i.e. 85.53% “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that ‘sharing knowledge with peers would benefit all while’ 14.47% responded as “neutral” with it, the other statement which was “agreed or strongly agreed” by majority (78.95%) is ‘student should voluntarily share within their peer groups’, 21.05% of them were “neutral” for this statement. When they were asked that “sharing is caring” then 73.68% were either “strongly agreed or agreed” with this point of view, 19.74% are “neutral” on this. The statement ‘students should voluntarily share information with their peers’ also yielded somewhat similar responses as 67.10% are “strongly agreed or agreed” with it, 21.05% responded as “neutral” on it. On the other hand, an adequate number of the respondents rejected three statements those presenting knowledge sharing in somewhat negative context. The statement “‘knowledge is power’ we must not disseminate’ responded as “disagreed or strongly disagreed” by 82.89%. Similarly 73.68% rejected the statement ‘Knowledge sharing is a type of plagiarism’ by responding as “disagreed or strongly disagreed”, another statement, ‘it is better to avoid sharing information with peers to grade better’ also received “disagreed or strongly disagreed” responses from 65.79%, which clearly reveals that these students are having a positive perception towards knowledge sharing and are aware of its benefits.

Table 2 Perception towards Knowledge Sharing

Perception	No. of Respondents (N=76)				
	SA	A	N	D	SD
I feel that it is important to share knowledge for benefit of all	39 (51.31%)	26 (34.21%)	11 (14.47%)	0	0
Students should share knowledge with their peers only when approached	20 (26.31%)	40 (52.63%)	7 (9.21%)	8 (10.53%)	1 (1.31%)
Students should voluntarily share their knowledge with peers	15 (19.74%)	36 (47.37%)	16 (21.05%)	7 (9.21%)	2 (2.63%)
I feel that “sharing is caring”	22	34	15	5	0

	(28.95%)	(44.74%)	(19.74%)	(6.58%)	
It is better to avoid sharing information with peers to grade better	3 (3.95%)	5 (6.58%)	18 (23.68%)	12 (15.79%)	38 (50%)
I believe "knowledge is power" we must not disseminate	2 (2.63%)	8 (10.53%)	3 (3.95%)	51 (67.10%)	12 (15.79%)
Knowledge sharing is a type of plagiarism	0	9 (11.84%)	11 (14.47)	15 (19.74%)	41 (53.95%)

Note: SA=Strongly Agree; A= Agree; N= Neutral; SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree

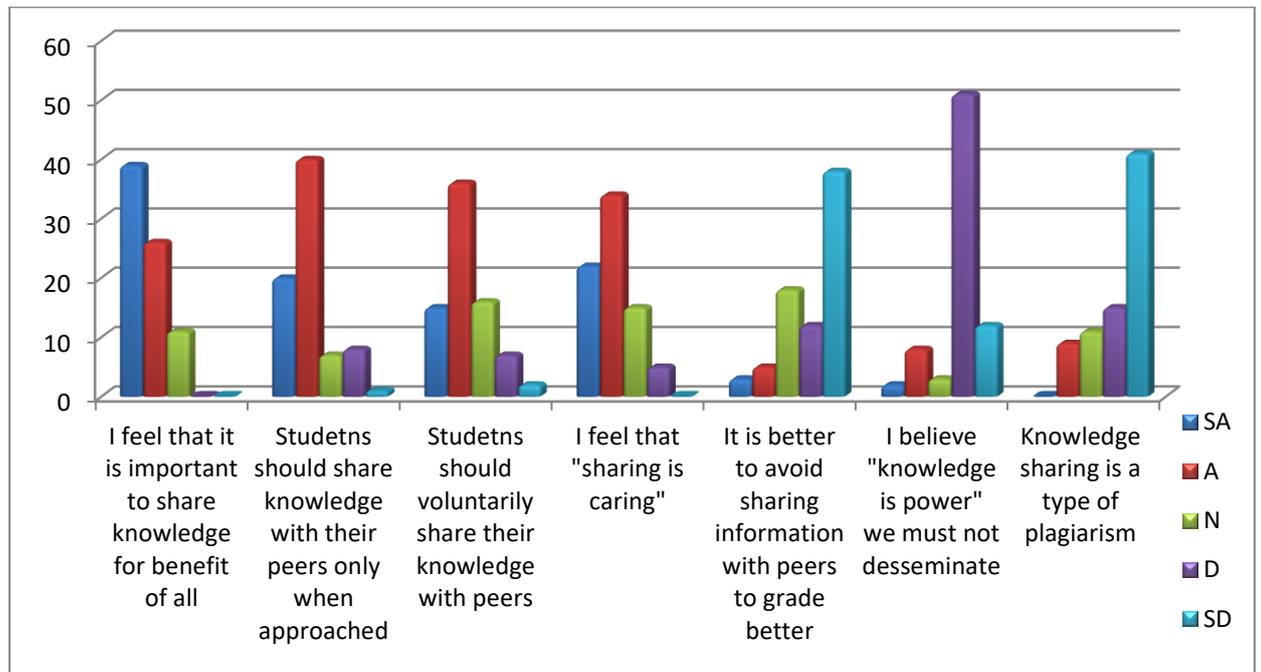


Figure 3 Perceptions towards Knowledge Sharing

6.3 Frequency of Knowledge Sharing

Respondents were enquired how frequently they are sharing knowledge, table 3 reveals that maximum number of them i.e. 28 (36.84%) are sharing knowledge frequently followed by 21 (27.63%) who are sharing occasionally, 14 (19.18%) sharing rarely and 13 (17.10%) are sharing very frequently, while none of them mentioned that they are not interested in sharing.

Table 3 Frequency of Knowledge Sharing

Frequency	No. of Respondents (N=76)	Percentage
Very frequently	13	17.10
Frequently	28	36.84
Occasionally	21	27.63
Rarely	14	19.18
Never	0	0

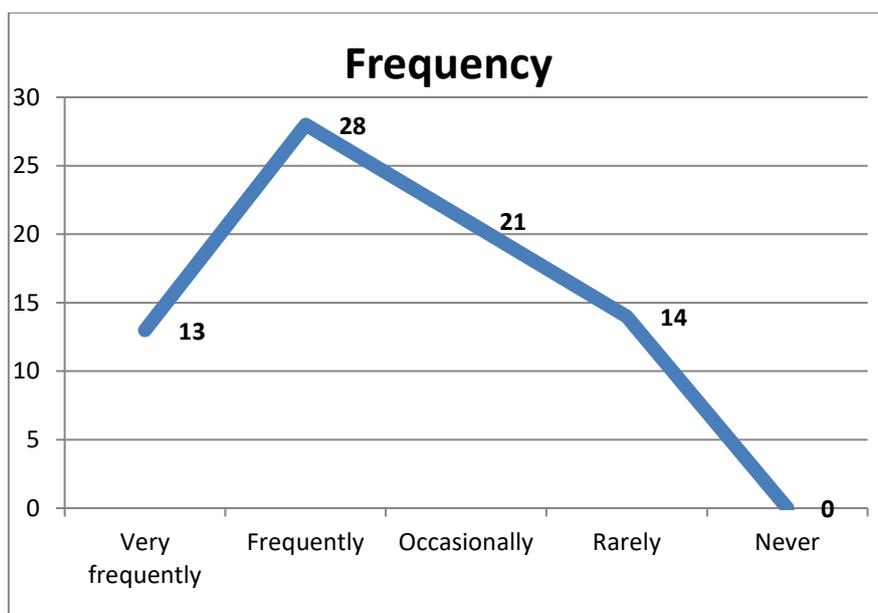


Figure 4 Frequency of Knowledge Sharing

6.4 Type of Material Shared

Knowledge is transmitted in different forms within peer group. Therefore, these students were asked regarding the materials which is usually shared by them table 4 show that majority of these students are sharing knowledge in the form of audio material with their peers 56 (73.68%) followed by URLs of websites by 55 (72.37%), class notes by 53 (69.74%) and articles by 48 (63.16%). While the least shared material by these students are books/books chapters, PowerPoint presentations and assignments by 37 (48.68%), 33 (43.42%) and 31 (40.79%) respectively.

Table 4 Type of Material Shared

Material Shared	No. of Respondents (N=76)	Percentage
Class Notes	53	69.74
Assignments	31	40.79
Articles	48	63.16
PowerPoint presentations	33	43.42
URLs of websites	55	72.37
Books/Books chapters	37	48.68
Audio Material	56	73.68

Note: Multiple responses were allowed

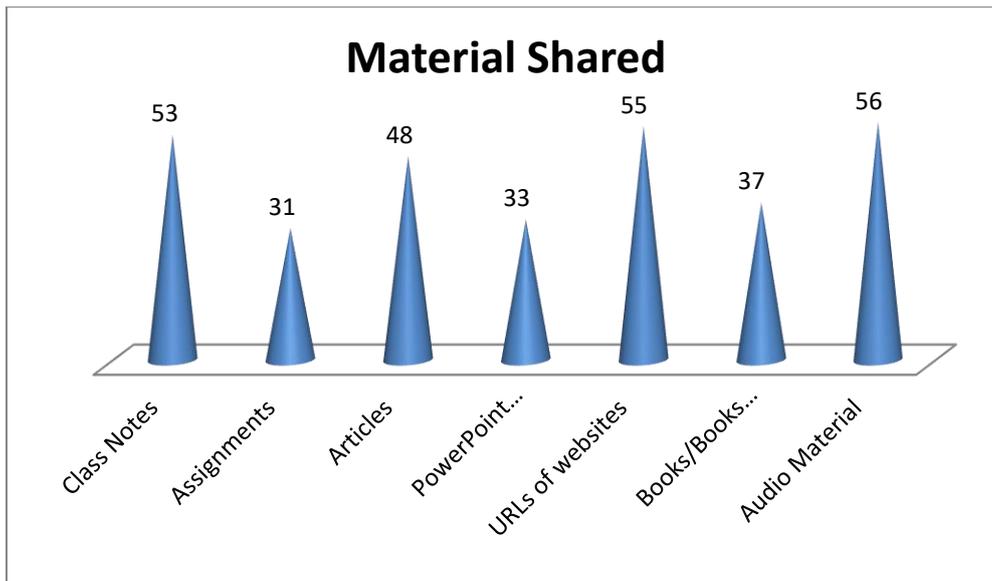


Figure 5 Type of Material Shared

6.5 Medium Preferred to Share Knowledge

In the present technological era, different channels are available through which an individual can share their knowledge with ease. Thus, students were asked about their preferred mediums, results from table 5 reveals that the most preferred medium among these students is social media mentioned by 60 (78.95%) followed by mobile phones by 59 (77.63%), face-to-face transmission by 49 (64.47%) and the least used medium is e-mail only by 36 (47.37%) students.

Table 5 Medium Preferred to Share Knowledge

Medium	No. of Respondents (N=76)	Percentage
Face-to-Face	49	64.47
E-mail	36	47.37
Mobile Phones	59	77.63
Social Media	60	78.95

Note: Multiple responses were allowed

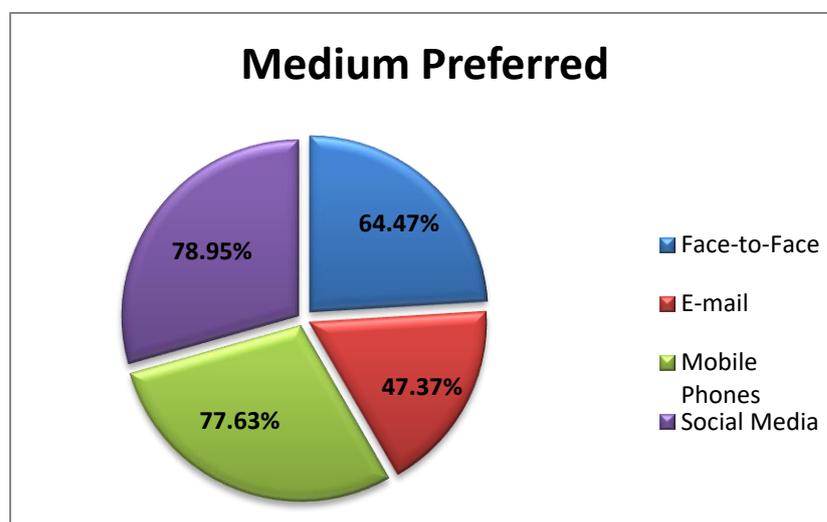


Figure 6 Medium Preferred to Share Knowledge

6.6 Purpose for Knowledge Sharing

Respondents were asked about their purposes for sharing knowledge with other. Results recorded from these students (table 6) reveals that majority of these students are sharing knowledge ‘to improve their understanding about concepts learnt in the class through sharing ideas with other students’ 63 (82.89%) followed by ‘self-satisfaction’ by 58 (76.31%), ‘to feel belonged to and fit into a group’ by 53 (69.74%) and ‘to help others’ by 49 (64.47%). The least mentioned purpose is ‘to develop relationship with other students’ by 38 (50%) and ‘for receiving rewards’ as mentioned by only 25 (32.89%) students.

Table 6 Purpose for Knowledge Sharing

Purpose	No. of Respondents (N=76)	Percentage
To improve understanding of concepts learnt in the class through sharing ideas with other students	63	82.89
To develop relationship with other students	38	50
To feel belonged to and fit into a group	53	69.74
To gain respect from others by portraying image of a knowledgeable person	42	55.26
Self-satisfaction	58	76.31
Help others	49	64.47
For receiving rewards (in class or in online participation)	25	32.89

Note: Multiple responses were allowed

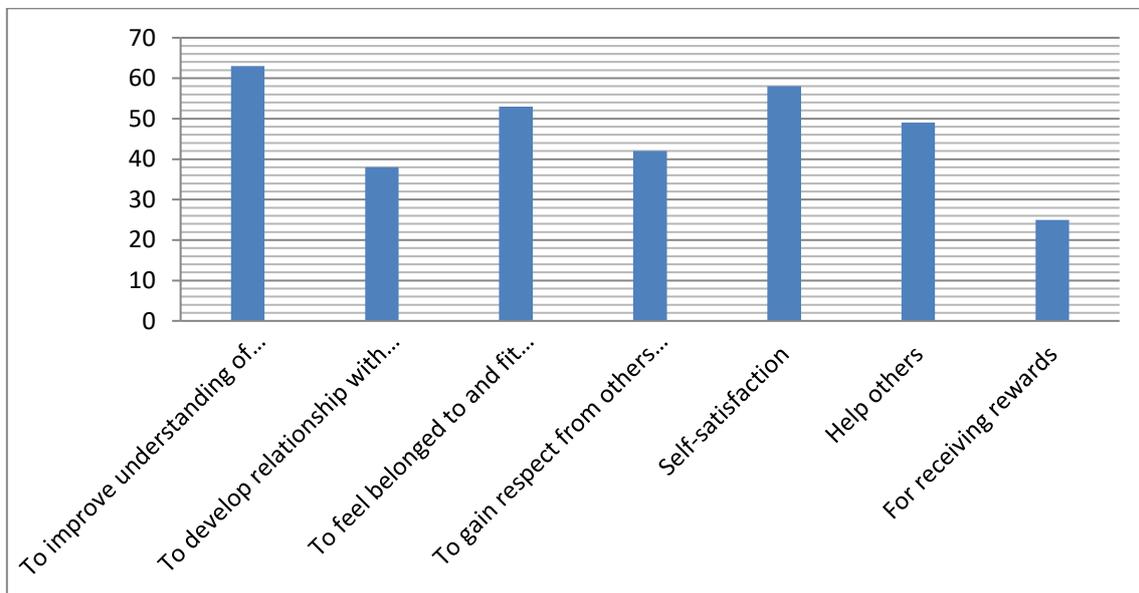


Figure 7 Purposes for Knowledge Sharing

6.7 Motivations in Knowledge Sharing

Respondents were asked for the factors which motivates and encourage them to share knowledge with their peers, table 7 reveals that the most contributing factor is ‘to learn from each other’ by 68 (89.47%) followed by ‘encouragement in interaction and communication with each other’ by 63 (82.89%) and ‘preparing group assignments’ by 58 (76.31%) while the

least contributing factors are ‘working on collaborative research papers’ by 41 (53.95%) and ‘to build relations’ by 40 (52.63%) students.

Table 7 Motivation in Knowledge Sharing

Motivation	No. of Respondents (N=76)	Percentage
To learn from each other	68	89.47
Working on collaborative research papers	41	53.95
Preparing group assignments	58	76.31
Preparing PowerPoint presentations	49	64.47
Encourage interaction and communication among each other	63	82.89
To build relations	40	52.63

Note: Multiple responses were allowed

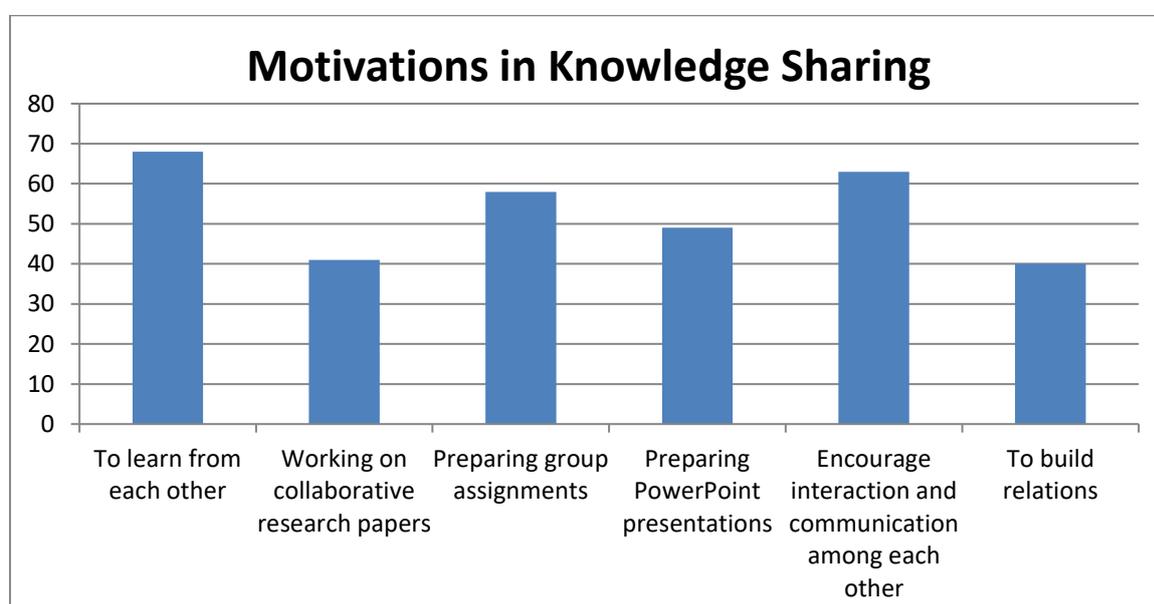


Figure 8 Motivations in Knowledge Sharing

6.8 Hindrances in knowledge Sharing

Visually impaired students are asked about the reasons which becoming hindrance for them in sharing knowledge. Table 8 reveals that majority of these students mention that they are ‘afraid to provide the wrong information’ 65 (85.53%) followed by ‘lack of depth in relationship with others’ and ‘afraid that a mismatch opinion offend others’ by 57 (75%) students and ‘they could be perceived as show off’ by 56 (73.68%) students. On the other hand the least opted hindrance by these students are ‘they don’t know what to share’ by 36 (47.37%), ‘lack of appreciation of knowledge sharing’ by 34 (44.74%), ‘afraid that others would perform better’ by 27 (35.53%) and only 20 (26.31%) mentioned the problem of ‘lack of time’.

Table 8 Hindrances in Knowledge Sharing

Hindrance	No. of Respondents (N=71)	Percentage
Lack of depth in relationship with others	57	75
Afraid that others would perform better	27	35.53

People only share with those who share with them	46	60.53
Do not want to be perceived as a “show off”	56	73.68
Afraid to provide the wrong information	65	85.53
Shy to provide own opinion	54	71.05
Lack of time	20	26.31
Lack of appreciation of knowledge sharing	34	44.74
Afraid that a mismatch opinion offend others	57	75
Do not know what to share	36	47.37

Note: Multiple responses were allowed

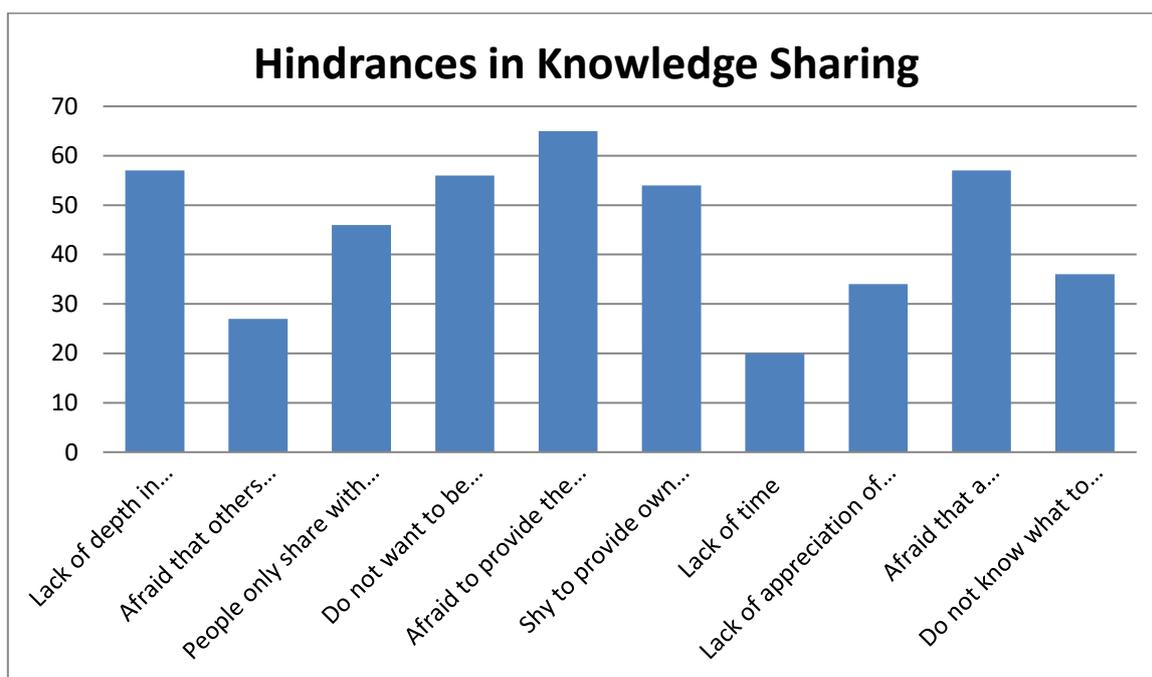


Figure 9 Hindrances in Knowledge Sharing

7. Major Findings and Suggestions

The present study is conducted at AMU, Aligarh in which 76 Visually Impaired students were selected as a sample to determine their perceptions and practices of knowledge sharing by using schedule for data collection among those 68.4% were males and 31.6% were females, enrolled in various courses of study. It is encouraging to note that the respondents generally possessed positive attitude towards knowledge sharing and were aware of its importance in the learning process which also reflects their cognizance and consciousness about concepts. They are sharing knowledge frequently (36.84%), occasionally (27.63%), rarely (19.18%) and very frequently (17.10%) majority of them are sharing knowledge in the form of audio material with their peers (73.68%), URLs of websites (72.37%) and class notes (69.74%), mediums preferred by them for sharing are social media (78.95%), mobile phones (77.63%) and face-to-face transmission (64.47%). Purposes mentioned by these students for sharing are to improve their understanding about concepts learnt in the class through sharing ideas with other students (82.89%), self-satisfaction (76.31%), to feel belonged to and fit into a group (69.74%) and to help others (64.47%). Motivations in sharing are to learn from each other (89.47%), encouragement in interaction and communication with each other (82.89%) and preparing group assignment (76.31%). The Study also highlighted that the hindrances which are being faced by these students in sharing are afraid to provide the wrong

information, lack of depth in relationship with others and afraid that a mismatch opinion offend others.

Based on the findings following suggestions are put forth to improve knowledge sharing practices among visually impaired students:

- There should be formal forum through which visually impaired students can improve their relations with others and gain benefit with the shared knowledge.
- To enhance knowledge sharing, visually impaired students should be assigned group assignments and presentations with their sighted colleagues.
- Workshops and seminars can be made mandatory to encourage visually impaired to participate and collaborate with others which helps them grow.
- Students should be motivated to share knowledge beyond just their friend group as experiences of others will provide solutions to academic problems.

8. Conclusion

Knowledge Sharing is highly encouraged because it involves people to contribute and participate in knowledge production which can later be accessed, retrieved, stored for future use and then creation on new knowledge to begin the process again. Active and voluntarily sharing of knowledge is an essential element of effective and meaningful learning, therefore, students are expected to share knowledge among their peers for benefit of their own as well as for others. From the results of the present study it is concluded that visually impaired students of AMU are sharing knowledge amongst their peers whether they are visually impaired or not. Though they perceive knowledge sharing differently but still they are aware of its benefits and practicing it, the study also provides suggestions which can be implied by authorities to inculcate knowledge sharing practices among the students which only serves them for betterment.

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