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The Impact of the Knowledge-Sharing Factors on Improving Decision-Making at Sultan Qaboos University Libraries

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***Abstract*—**Knowledge has been considered an important asset in private and public organizations. It is utilized in the libraries sector to run different operations of technical services and administrative works. This study aims to identify the impact of the knowledge-sharing factors (technology, collaboration, management support) to improve decision-making at Sultan Qaboos University Libraries. This study conducted a quantitative method using a questionnaire instrument to measure the impact of technology, collaboration, and management support on knowledge sharing that lead to improved decision-making. The study population is the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) libraries (Main Library, Medical Library, College of Economic and Political Science Library, and Art Library). The results showed that management support, collaboration, and technology use have a positive impact on the knowledge-sharing process, and knowledge sharing positively affects decision making process.

***Keywords*—**Knowledge sharing, decision making, information technology, management support, corroboration, Sultan Qaboos University.

I. Introduction

IN the knowledge era, private and public organizations have increased their interest in knowledge as it is considered an important asset. Libraries are one of the sectors that utilize knowledge in all operations in divisions of information and technical services and administrative works. As a result, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) established a "Knowledge Management" (KM) department in December 2003 to provide professionals with a deep understanding of the KM concept. This was implemented through different programs, workshops, and activities [1].

Knowledge is generally an awareness, familiarity or understanding of someone or something, such as information, facts, skills or descriptions which is acquired through education by perceiving or experience or learning, or discovering [2]. In addition, [3] assumed that knowledge is "derived inductively from particular sensory experiences" (p.22). Furthermore, [4] emphasized that knowledge is actions, beliefs, and commitment.

Academic libraries have practiced knowledge management in different services such as user services, acquisition, cataloguing, and reference disk. Furthermore, [5] pointed out that knowledge is important in solving problems, planning, organizing, and learning to make effective decisions. knowledge management contributes about 86.29% to decision making [6]. Furthermore, knowledge plays an essential role in making high-quality decisions [7].

Knowledge sharing is considered one of the most important processes in knowledge management used to transfer knowledge among members of a group or an organization [8], [9].

Sultan Qaboos academic libraries recognize that the success of any organization is connected with the ability to make the right decisions and face any challenges. This depends on the knowledge obtained easily from effective systems to improve decision making. Therefore, knowledge sharing factors mainly technology, collaboration and management support are measured to identify their impact on decision making in Sultan Qaboos university academic libraries (SQU).

The study questions:

1- What are the practices of management support, collaboration, technology use, knowledge sharing and decision making at SQU libraries?
2- Is there a relationship between technology use, collaboration and management support towards knowledge sharing?
3- Is there a relationship between knowledge sharing toward decision making at SQU academic libraries?

The Study Scope

Subject limitation: The study intended to identify the impact of knowledge sharing on improving decision making in SQU academic libraries.

Geographic limitation: Data collection for this study was limited to SQU academic libraries

Time limitation: Data collection for this study took place in 2023.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is to recognize how well information specialists in SQU academic libraries know the knowledge sharing factors (information technology, collaboration, management support) used in decision making. It is believed that this study will assist information specialists in SQU academic libraries to identify how managers share the knowledge needed to make any decision where [10] stressed that this topic gives a deep understanding of the role of

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knowledge and making a decision to the organizations' performance.

II. Literature Review

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is a way of exchanging knowledge (understanding, skills, experience) among a community, people, groups, or organizations [11]. It is exchanging ideas, information, and technologies between organizations and their people [12]. Therefore, knowledge sharing is a process of collaboration among staff using both tacit and explicit knowledge to do a specific task in the organization.

Importance of Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is an essential element in any organization and it happens in different levels. It is known as a key component in the knowledge management process and it is also considered the most frequent KM process being studied and researched [13].

It helps to reduce costs, increase efficiency and collaboration among team members, and find solutions faster and easier [14]. Therefore, knowledge sharing has a positive effect on organizations through improving: job quality, innovation output, performance management, business efficiency and learning skills [15], [16], [19].

Knowledge sharing is also seen having a positive impact on academic organizations and students' performance. Reference [17], for example, found that students of educational institutions in Malaysia who use knowledge sharing platforms are advanced in their performance and productivity. It is also found that knowledge sharing has a significant positive moderating effect on exploitative learning–innovative behavior risk reduction of firms [18].

Knowledge Sharing Factors

Information Technology

Information technology (IT) is an application of technology to solve problems in organizations and businesses [20]. It is an integrated system that includes knowledge areas, technologies, social aspects, and administrative procedures which are all in need of human efforts to solving problems, making decisions, promoting creativity and innovation [21].

Using information technology in organizations and business helps provide faster and better services. It facilitates access to electronic resources, retrieve, store and makes sharing documents within organizations easier. Moreover, IT has a significant role in providing accurate and secured data, ease of operation, and high-quality information management [22].

In addition, [23] argued that IT has impact on knowledge sharing which help to facilitating of simultaneous knowledge sharing, time saving, breaking barriers in accessing knowledge, reduction in the cost of transferring knowledge and enabling the efficacy of the transference of knowledge.

In the field of library science, IT has an essential role in improving the services, starting from acquisition to the end-user. It helps users to get access to the library information sources remotely [23], [24]. It is also used in decision making in libraries where it is presented in all phases of decision making, which are gathering information, filtering information, and evaluating information. Moreover, [25] emphasized that people use technology to access different information resources that influence decision making. They added that IT applications help libraries in creating, transferring, storing, using tacit and explicit knowledge, and creating good connection with library users.

Moreover, it is observed that IT helps to improve library services quality, decrease time consuming tasks spent looking for library resources for both users and librarians, increase integration among libraries, get access to the library system remotely, avoid duplication of information sources, provide hard and soft copies of the library resources [24]-[26].

Collaboration in Knowledge Sharing

Collaboration is an interaction that takes place among a number of people who work together, adopt shared behaviors and goals to create new insights and outcomes [27]. Collaboration is seen as an important factor in knowledge sharing as it helps to generate new solutions, ideas and experiences for the work to be done [28]. It facilitates exchanging technical know-how, individual insights and working experiences [29].

In the libraries sector, collaboration is present strongly due to its importance in supporting knowledge sharing. In Indonesia, [30] clarified that librarians are encouraged to get involved in knowledge sharing which helps them to build best practices and lesson of their daily task and learn how to solve problems occurred in any library development. This influence of collaboration on knowledge sharing was also noticed in Dhaka University Library where [31] discovered that cooperative effort is one of the factors that affect knowledge sharing practice with the highest mean score 2.13, and without which it is really impossible to have such a practice.

Management Support

Management support is the amount of encouragement provided by top level and low level of management to employees aimed to enhance the knowledge sharing quality and therefore achieving overall goals of the organization [32], [33].

Usually, the success of any organization project depends on management support which helps to improve staffs' performance and the presentation of the work. When management exceedingly support staff with the knowledge they need to do their job effectively, the organization`s performance is mostly high. Therefore, managers should motivate and encourage staffs to share any creative knowledge that leads to improve works and increase productivity [34]. In addition, mangers should promote employees to learn from managers' experience and they should also influence decision making among employees based on shared knowledge [35]. Also, [36] emphasized that management support is one of the most important factors in knowledge sharing.

In library and information sciences sector, [37] stated that managers of public libraries in Iran are aware of the importance

of management support for library employs and librarians which have a significant and positive effect on sharing knowledge. Moreover, [38] pointed out that sharing knowledge in Saudi libraries of Traditional Saudi University and King Abdullah University was supported significantly by management where managers are pushing their employees for innovation and adopting new solutions to a problem they face or a task they achieve. In addition, [39] mentioned that the management of the Library and the Manuscripts House Al-bbas Holy Shrine in Iraq implements knowledge sharing among employs which enhances staff's relationships and productivity.

III. The Methodology of the Study

This study seeks to measure the impact of the knowledge sharing factors on improving decision making at Sultan Qaboos University academic libraries. A quantitative method is applied. The study used questionnaire instrument to collect data from the study sample. The study sample was the SQU academic libraries and included: Main library (42 librarians), Medical library (6 librarians), College of Economic and Political science (9 librarians), and College of Art and Social Science (3 librarians). The data were collected from 30 respondents, which represents the full questionnaire respondents from the total population.

IV. Results

TABLE I
Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristic		Count	Percentage
Gender	male	14	46.7
	female	16	53.3
Age	21-25	0	0
	26-30	0	0
	31-35	16	53.3
	36-40	3	10.0
	Over 40	11	36.7
Educational level	High school	0	0
	Bachelor	15	50.0
	Master	13	43.3
	PHD	2	6.7
Work experience	1-5 years	1	3.3
	6-10 years	12	40.0
	11-15 years	4	13.3
	16-20 years	3	10.0
	Over 20 years	10	33.3

From Table I, it is found that the highest percentage of the total study population was female (53%), while males were 46% of the total population. It was observed that the majority of respondents were in the age range of 31-35 years, comprising 53% of the total population. The second-highest age group was over 40, making up 36% of the total. In terms of educational level, the highest percentage was for Bachelors, accounting for 50% of the total population, followed by 43% for Master's degree holders, while there were no respondents with a high school education. Regarding work experience, the majority of respondents had 6-10 years of experience, representing 40% of the total sample, while 10% had 16-20 years of work experience.

Statistical Result Presentation

To answer the first question in this study (What are the practices of management support, collaboration, technology use, knowledge sharing and decision making at SQU libraries?), the study used the following descriptive statistical measure: Means, mean as % and standard deviations. The results are presented in Tables II-VI for individual items and for the overall items. In addition, Figs. 1-5 compare the practices by the different SQU libraries.

TABLE II
Means, Mean as (%) and Standard Deviations for the Management Support Items

Items	Mean score	Mean score (%)	SD
My manager thinks that encouraging knowledge sharing with colleagues is beneficial	4.60	92.0%	0.498
I am encouraged by my manager to share knowledge with my colleagues	4.50	90.0%	0.630
My manager provides me with most of the necessary help and resources to enable me to share knowledge with my colleagues	3.87	77.3%	0.860
My manager is keen to see that the employees are happy to share their knowledge with colleagues	4.00	80.0%	0.983
My manager provides adequate budgeting to support knowledge-sharing projects	3.07	61.3%	0.785
My manager empowers me to attend workshops to collect knowledge and share it later with colleagues	3.80	76.0%	0.961
My manager rewards me when work is done perfectly	3.30	66.0%	1.022
My manager welcomes good ideas that I share with my colleagues	4.20	84.0%	0.664
Management in the library encourages utilization of the knowledge sharing activities	4.13	82.7%	0.900
In my library, management supports commitment to the knowledge-sharing system	4.00	80.0%	1.017
Overall	3.95	78.9%	.626

As seen from Table II, the highest average of practices was awarded to "My manager provides adequate budgeting to support knowledge-sharing projects" with a mean of 4.60 and standard deviation of .498, followed by "I am encouraged by my manager to share knowledge with my colleagues" with a mean of 4.50 and standard deviation of .630, and we noticed that the other sentences were in the high range mean arranged from 4.13 to 3.07. The overall mean of this section was 3.95 with standard deviation of .626, which indicates that the average of management support practices is in high-level because the interval level is as follows:

- Low level: (1-2.59)
- Moderate level: (2.60-3.39)
- High level: (3.40-5)

Table III shows that the highest average of collaboration was for "I, willingly, share knowledge with other libraries, having collaboration with my library" with a mean of 4.50, and standard deviation of .682. The lowest one was for "Colleagues in my library are satisfied with current levels of collaboration" with a mean of 3.70 and standard deviation of .915. The average mean of this part was 4.14, with standard deviation of .623, which considers the average of collaboration is in a high level.

TABLE III
MEANS, MEAN AS (%) AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE COLLABORATION ITEMS

Items	Mean score	Mean score (%)	SD
I prefer to work collaboratively with my colleagues rather than work alone	4.13	82.7%	0.860
If I have options, I prefer to work with other colleagues in my library than working independently	4.10	82.0%	0.885
Colleagues in my library are satisfied with current levels of collaboration	3.70	74.0%	0.915
There is a willingness to collaborate across departments at my library	4.20	84.0%	0.714
My colleagues collaborate with university/college academics to develop library collections	4.17	83.3%	0.648
I, willingly, share knowledge with other libraries, having collaboration with my library	4.50	90.0%	0.682
Overall	4.13	82.7%	.623

TABLE IV
MEANS, MEAN AS % AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE TECHNOLOGY USE ITEMS

Items	Mean score	Mean score (%)	SD
I make extensive use of digital storage (such as online databases and data warehousing, cloud storage) to access knowledge	4.60	92.0%	0.498
My library uses technology that allows staff members to share knowledge with each other inside the library	4.33	86.7%	0.711
My library uses technology that allows staffs members to share knowledge with other libraries outside the campus	4.10	82.0%	0.712
I use technology (databases, internet) to search and retrieve knowledge	4.57	91.3%	0.504
I have access to computers and other peripherals to share knowledge	4.30	86.0%	0.750
I use data sharing among different applications	3.97	79.3%	0.809
I use standardized software to share knowledge among employees	3.53	70.7%	1.008
I ensure the security and privacy of the knowledge shared through technology	3.80	76.0%	0.847
I encourage colleagues to use technology to share knowledge	4.30	86.0%	0.466
Overall	4.17	83.3%	.498

TABLE V
MEANS, MEAN AS % AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SHARING ITEMS

Items	Mean score	Mean score (%)	SD
I share new knowledge with colleagues	4.33	86.7%	0.479
My colleagues share new knowledge with me.	3.93	78.7%	0.785
I share the information I have with my colleagues when they ask for it	4.50	90.0%	0.509
I share my skills with my colleagues when they ask for it	4.53	90.7%	0.507
Colleagues in my library share their skills with me when I ask them to	4.37	87.3%	0.556
Colleagues in my library share their knowledge with me when I ask them to	4.33	86.7%	0.547
Knowledge sharing with my colleagues is considered a normal practice in my library	3.97	79.3%	0.999
Overall	4.28	85.6%	.419

Table IV shows that the highest average of using technology was for “I make extensive use of digital storage (such as online databases and data warehousing, cloud storage) to access knowledge” with a mean of 4.60, and standard deviation of .498. The lowest level was for “I use standardized software to share knowledge among employees” with a mean of 3.53 and standard deviation of 1.008. The average mean of this part was 4.17, with standard deviation of .498, which considers the average of technology use is in a high level.

As is seen from Table V, the highest average was awarded for “I share my skills with my colleagues when they ask for it” with a mean of 4.53 and standard deviation of .507, followed by “I share the information I have with my colleagues when they ask for it” with a mean of 4.50 and standard deviation of .509, and we noticed that the other sentences were in the low range mean arranged from 4.37 to 3.93. The overall mean of this section was 4.28 with a standard deviation of .419, which indicates that the average of knowledge sharing is in a high level.

TABLE VI
MEANS, MEAN AS (%) AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE DECISION-MAKING ITEMS

Items	Mean score	Mean score (%)	SD
In my library, I can identify the current problem of services (technical, public)	4.13	82.7%	0.571
I consult my colleagues about the problem	4.37	87.3%	0.669
I collaborate with my colleagues in analyzing the problem	4.47	89.3%	0.507
I provide knowledge that needed to solve the current problem	4.47	89.3%	0.507
I collaborate with my colleagues in gathering knowledge that helps realizing the problem	4.23	84.7%	0.430
I work with my colleagues collecting knowledge to define different solutions for the current problem	4.20	84.0%	0.551
I monitor with my colleagues whether the decision is working effectively on the current problem	3.97	79.3%	0.669
Overall	4.26	85.2%	.375

The results in VI show that the highest average of decision making was for both “I collaborate with my colleagues in analyzing the problem and I provide knowledge that needed to solve the current problem” with a mean of 4.47 and standard deviation of .507 followed by "I consult my colleagues about the problem" with a mean of 4.37 and standard deviation of .669. The overall mean was 4.26 which indicates that the decision-making average is in a high level.

Fig. 1 shows that the mean score as a percentage of the libraries was at a high level. It was that the Medical library has the highest mean score as a percentage for the management support variable, followed by the college of Economic and Political Sciences, then the Main library.

As is seen from Fig. 2, the mean score as a percentage of the libraries was at a high level. The College of Economic and Political Sciences library has the highest mean score as a percentage for the collaboration variable, followed by the college of Art and Social Sciences, then the Main library.

As is seen from Fig. 3, the mean score as a percentage of the libraries was at a high level. It was found that the college of Art and Social Sciences library has the highest mean score as a percentage for the technology use variable, followed by the Main library, then the Medical library.

Fig. 4 clarified that the mean score as a percentage of the libraries was at a high level. It was found that the College of Economic and Political Sciences library has the highest mean

score as a percentage for the knowledge sharing variable, followed by the Main library, then the college of Art and Social Sciences library.

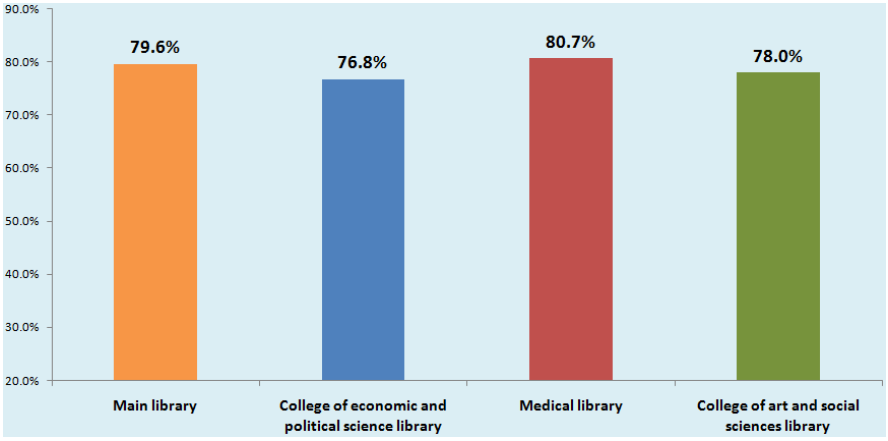

Fig. 1 Mean score as a percentage (by library) for the management support variable

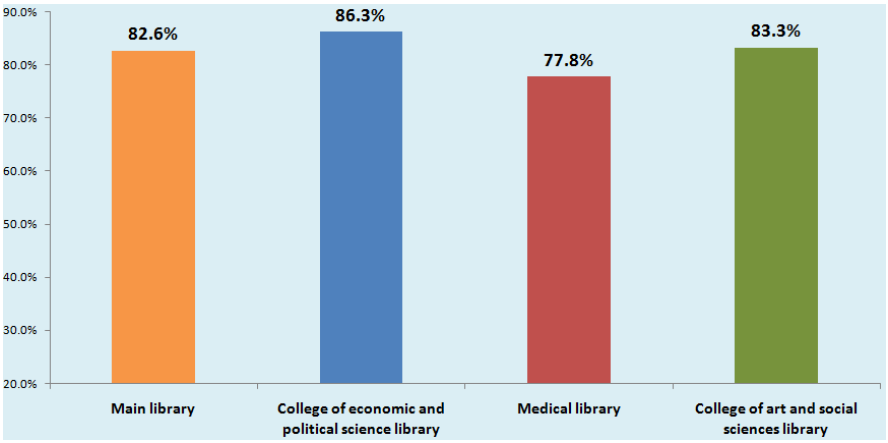

Fig. 2 Mean score as a percentage (by library) for the collaboration variable

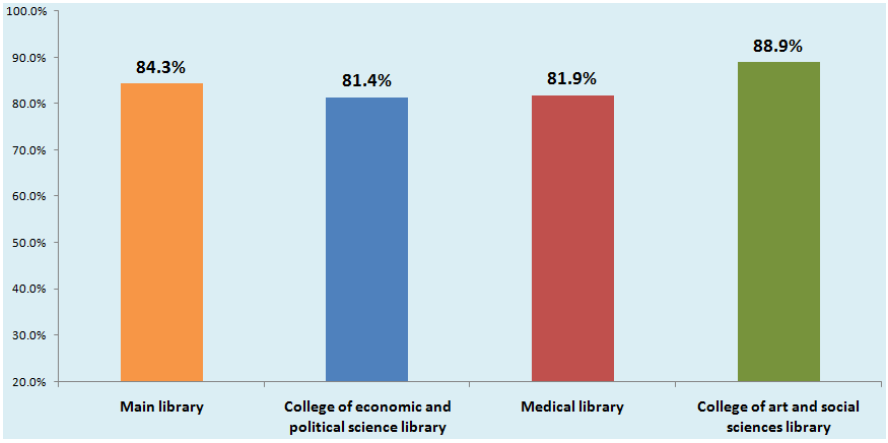

Fig. 3 Mean score as a percentage (by library) for the technology use variable

From Fig. 5, it was noticed that the mean score as a percentage of the libraries was at a high level. It was found that the college of Art and Social Sciences library has the highest mean score as a percentage for the decision-making variable, followed by the College of Economic and Political Sciences library, then the Medical library.

To answer the second question (Is there relationship between technology use, collaboration and management support towards knowledge sharing?) and the third question (Is there relationship between knowledge sharing toward decision-

making at SQU academic libraries?), the study used Pearson correlation coefficients. The results are presented as a Correlation matrix in Table VII.

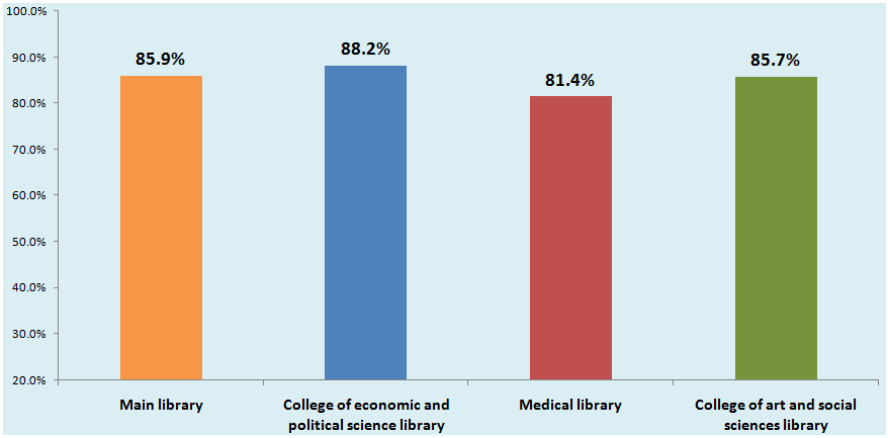

Fig. 4 Mean score as a percentage (by library) for the knowledge sharing variable

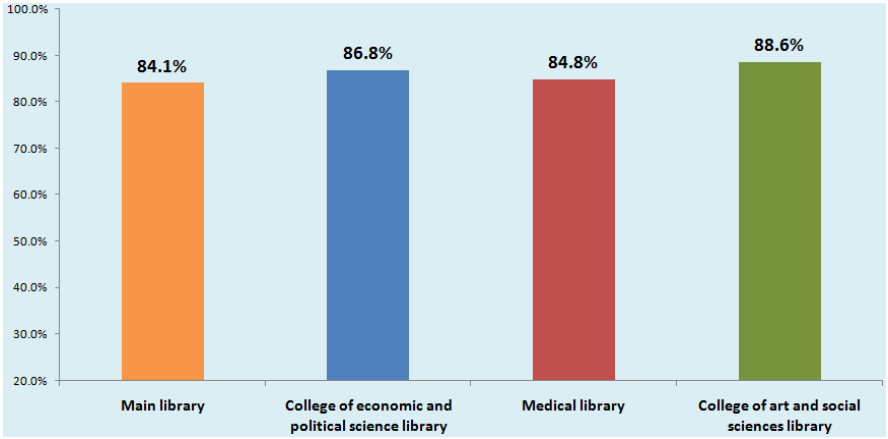

Fig. 5 Mean score as a percentage (by library) for the decision-making variable

TABLE VII
CORRELATION MATRIX: PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

Variables	Management support	Collaboration	Technology use	Knowledge sharing	Decision making
Management support	1	.660**	.527**	.405*	.349
Collaboration	.660**	1	.608**	.447*	.415*
Technology use	.527**	.608**	1	.443*	.555**
Knowledge sharing	.405*	.447*	.443*	1	.600**
Decision making	.349	.415*	.555**	.600**	1

** Indicates correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Indicates correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table VII shows the correlation matrix among the variables. Pearson correlation between collaboration and knowledge sharing was .447*, significant at the 0.05 level, followed by technology use by 443*, significant at the 0.05 level while, Pearson correlation management support and knowledge sharing was .405*, significant at the 0.05 level. These results indicate the positive relation among management support, collaboration, technology use and knowledge sharing. It is also found that Pearson correlation between knowledge sharing and decision making is .600**, significant at the 0.01 level, which means a strong correlation.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results provide a high support for the relations between knowledge sharing process and factors (management support, collaboration, technology use). The results show that management support positively influences knowledge-sharing processes as is emphasized by [37].

According to the findings, collaboration has a positive impact on knowledge sharing, which is even more effective than management support. This result aligns with a previous study [40], which also demonstrated that collaboration enhances knowledge sharing and fosters positive relationships between library users and librarians.

Additionally, the results showed that technology use in libraries has the highest positive impact on the knowledge sharing process. This finding is consistent with a previous study

[23], which also indicated that IT has a significant impact on knowledge sharing.

Lastly, the study also found that knowledge sharing has a positive impact on decision making. This finding aligns with previous research, which suggests that knowledge sharing positively affects organizations by improving job quality, innovation output, performance management, business efficiency, and learning skills [15]-[19].

From a practical perspective, the relationships among knowledge-sharing processes, factors, and decision making may provide a clue regarding how libraries can promote a knowledge-sharing culture to sustain their decision-making culture.

VI. Implications for Practitioners

This study proposes some following implications for helping managers and decision makers establish a successful knowledge-sharing strategy. First of all, the findings of this study confirm that technology use is associated with knowledge-sharing processes more than collaboration and management support. Managers need to increase the level of collaboration among librarians to support knowledge sharing and create a healthy environment to attract librarians to work as one team. Moreover, managers need to focus more on their role by listening to librarians' needs and providing them as much as they can to facilities sharing knowledge. Finally, managers must shed light on technology as it plays a significant role in the organizations that helps boost interaction among individuals in learning, business, healthcare, education, finance, and security.

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