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ENHANCING AGING WORKERS' PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE SHARING: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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Abstract: *The aging workforce is becoming increasingly prominent in labour-intensive industries such as construction, where the retirement of experienced workers poses a significant risk of tacit knowledge loss. As older employees possess deep experiential and intuitive knowledge essential for productivity, safety, and operational continuity, ineffective knowledge transfer can lead to reduced organizational performance. This conceptual paper examines the behavioural determinants of knowledge-sharing practices among aging construction workers through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). By synthesizing existing literature on knowledge sharing, aging workers, and TPB, the paper identifies how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape workers' intentions to share knowledge. A TPB-driven conceptual framework is proposed, positioning knowledge sharing as a key predictor of aging workers' productivity. The model offers theoretical insights into the psychological and social mechanisms influencing intergenerational knowledge transfer and highlights organizational strategies needed to foster effective knowledge-sharing environments. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of aging workforce dynamics and provides a foundation for future empirical research aimed at enhancing productivity through structured knowledge-management practices.*

Keywords: *Aging workforce; Knowledge sharing; Construction industry; Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB); Workers' productivity*

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Introduction

The aging workforce has become a defining feature of global labour markets as increasing life expectancy and declining birth rates reshape demographic patterns worldwide. In many countries, older individuals remain active in employment longer, driven by economic necessity, personal choice, or policy shifts encouraging later retirement. This demographic transition is particularly significant for labour-intensive industries such as construction, where mass retirements have intensified labour shortages and heightened the need to retain experienced workers. Older employees contribute invaluable tacit knowledge, accumulated expertise, and professional maturity that support organizational continuity, productivity, and workplace safety (Jaqua & Karkas, 2024). Their role in mentoring younger workers and sustaining institutional memory is therefore critical for long-term industry performance.

However, population aging also introduces economic and organizational challenges. Recent evidence suggests that population aging can significantly inhibit "new quality productivity" by slowing the diffusion of emerging technologies and weakening technological absorptive capacity (Chen et al., 2024; Obasi & Benson, 2025). This underscores the critical need for effective knowledge management (KM) strategies to offset the erosion of the demographic dividend (Chen et al., 2024). Despite the wealth of experience possessed by aging workers, construction firms often lack structured mechanisms for intergenerational knowledge transfer, leading to a loss of tacit knowledge that undermines organizational resilience (Mylona et al., 2026). Generational differences and limited technological proficiency continue to hinder exchange, particularly as Industry 4.0 requires workers to upskill for AI-integrated environments (Obasi & Benson, 2025). Consequently, substantial knowledge loss occurs when senior workers retire—a problem intensified by the fact that experienced engineers are currently retiring faster than new professionals can be recruited (Mylona et al., 2026).

To better understand and address these challenges, this study adopts the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a guiding framework for analysing knowledge-sharing behaviour among aging and younger construction workers. TPB posits that an individual's intention to perform a behaviour is shaped by three components: attitude (personal evaluation of the behaviour), subjective norms (perceived social expectations), and perceived behavioural control (confidence in ability to perform the behaviour). Applying TPB to the construction context provides insights into how older workers' willingness to share knowledge—and younger workers' willingness to receive it—is influenced by personal motivation, workplace expectations, and perceived competence, including digital literacy. Integrating TPB thus enables a systematic examination of psychological and social factors that facilitate or hinder intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Literature Review

Types of Knowledge Possessed by Aging Workers in the Construction Industry

The knowledge held by aging workers in the construction sector is multifaceted, comprising both explicit and tacit dimensions. Explicit knowledge—encompassing technical manuals, project documentation, and formalized procedures—remains relatively simple to codify through modern digital management systems (Beach et al., 2024; Xiahou et al., 2025). However, the most critical asset held by senior professionals is tacit knowledge, which is experiential, intuitive, and forged through decades of hands-on problem-solving (Amaechi et al., 2025; Mylona et al., 2026). This form of knowledge is particularly indispensable in construction, where high-risk environments and project complexity demand rapid, situational

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judgments that standardized written protocols cannot replicate (Amaechi et al., 2025; Mei et al., 2024). Consequently, the departure of senior workers without effective "storytelling" or mentoring frameworks poses a significant threat to organizational continuity and safety performance (Mei et al., 2024; Taylor et al., 2026).

Research indicates that tacit knowledge remains a cornerstone of the construction industry, with recent scholarship emphasizing its role as a "strategic resource" essential for maintaining operational efficiency and competitive advantage (Chen et al., 2025). This experiential knowledge makes aging workers vital repositories of institutional memory, safety protocols, and craftsmanship (Mylona et al., 2026). However, the industry continues to struggle with knowledge loss, as aging professionals frequently withhold their expertise due to situational pressures like time urgency or a perceived lack of reciprocal benefit in project-based environments (Chen et al., 2025). Furthermore, traditional knowledge management systems often fail to capture the nuanced, context-dependent nature of this information, leading to the departure of critical expertise as senior workers retire (Taylor et al., 2026).

From the TPB perspective, aging workers' attitude toward knowledge sharing influences whether this tacit knowledge is transferred. If they perceive sharing as meaningful, beneficial, or aligned with professional identity, their intention to share increases. Conversely, if they view tacit knowledge as personal "capital" or fear losing relevance, negative attitudes hinder transfer.

Factors Influencing Effective Knowledge Sharing between Aging and Younger Workers

Knowledge sharing in multigenerational construction teams is shaped by a complex interplay of organizational, individual, and technological factors. Organizational enablers—specifically transformative leadership, formal reverse-mentoring programs, and digital recognition systems—are now recognized as essential for bridging the gap between aging professionals and digital natives (Mylona et al., 2026; Obasi & Benson, 2025). Positive interpersonal dynamics, grounded in mutual respect and trust, facilitate the flow of tacit knowledge; conversely, intergenerational communication silos, diverging work-life philosophies, and low psychological safety serve as significant barriers (Chen et al., 2025; Taylor et al., 2026). Recent studies suggest that without a "digital-humanistic" culture that values both craftsmanship and technological agility, firms risk a total breakdown in knowledge continuity (Obasi & Benson, 2025).

Individually, aging workers' intention to share knowledge depends heavily on their perceived value within the organization. Studies show that knowledge transfer decreases significantly after age 45 when workers feel undervalued or unsupported (Messe & Greenan, 2023). Younger workers' receptiveness is equally important; they may undervalue traditional expertise or prefer digital forms of knowledge capture that older workers are less comfortable with.

Technologically, the widening digital divide between generational cohorts remains a primary obstacle to integrated knowledge management. While younger "digital natives" increasingly rely on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Building Information Modelling (BIM), and automated Internet of Things (IoT) platforms for project monitoring, older practitioners frequently maintain a preference for face-to-face communication and manual, experience-based documentation (Chen et al., 2025; Obasi & Benson, 2025). This discrepancy is not merely a matter of preference but reflects a structural "usability gap" in digital systems that often fail to incorporate the context-heavy, tacit workflows of senior workers (Kim et al., 2026). Without

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the implementation of "digital-humanistic" frameworks that bridge these technological disparities, the construction sector faces a "greying out" of organizational competencies, where critical expertise becomes fragmented and disconnected from the digital record (Mylona et al., 2026).

Integrating TPB, these factors correspond strongly to subjective norms where the workers are more likely to share when supervisors, peers, and the organization expect or encourage it and perceived behavioural control; when the older workers' confidence in using digital tools or articulating tacit knowledge affects whether they engage in sharing activities.

Barriers to Knowledge Sharing between Aging and Younger Workers

Despite an underlying willingness to collaborate, several critical barriers continue to limit effective intergenerational knowledge exchange. Personal barriers are increasingly linked to "knowledge withholding" behaviour, driven by a perceived loss of professional status and a fear of technological displacement—where senior workers feel that sharing their tacit expertise may render them obsolete in an AI-integrated environment (Chen et al., 2025; Obasi & Benson, 2025). Furthermore, relational barriers, such as entrenched generational stereotypes and a lack of "social contagion" within project clusters, hinder the development of the mutual trust necessary for deep knowledge transfer (Mylona et al., 2026; Seriki et al., 2025). These issues are often compounded by differing professional values, where younger cohorts prioritize digital speed while older workers value experiential deliberation, creating a communicative disconnect that diminishes overall project resilience (Mylona et al., 2026).

Organizational barriers—such as heavy workloads, inadequate time for mentoring, poor documentation practices, and lack of structured knowledge-sharing programs—result in knowledge being lost when senior workers retire (Santhose & Lawrence, 2023). Additionally, the construction industry's culturally diverse workforce creates communication challenges due to language differences, varying educational backgrounds, and misaligned expectations (Zackarias et al., 2022).

Technological barriers further complicate the process. Older workers' discomfort with digital systems can reduce their perceived control and willingness to share knowledge via modern platforms, while younger workers may disregard traditional methods that older colleagues prefer (Egwunatum & Oboreh, 2022).

As from the TPB lens it can be related to negative attitudes (e.g., viewing knowledge sharing as burdensome or risky), weak subjective norms (e.g., absence of encouragement from supervisors or peers) and low perceived behavioural control (e.g., limited digital literacy or communication barriers) and these can significantly reduce knowledge-sharing intentions among aging workers.

Strategies for Enhancing Organizational Productivity Through Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

Scholars consistently highlight the importance of structured organizational strategies to support intergenerational knowledge transfer. Effective approaches include formal mentoring programs, reverse mentoring, job rotation, communities of practice, and cross-age project teams (Lužar et al., 2023; Mylona et al., 2026). These initiatives foster trust, strengthen communication, and create opportunities for sustained interaction.

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Structured systems for capturing tacit knowledge—specifically storytelling-based knowledge management systems (SToKMS), reflective practice workshops, and after-action reviews—are essential for transforming experiential insights into digital assets before senior workers retire (Taylor et al., 2026). Furthermore, the implementation of intergenerational innovation labs and joint problem-solving platforms has proven effective in fostering reciprocal learning, where junior "digital natives" and senior "subject matter experts" co-create solutions, thereby reducing generational stereotypes and enhancing project-based innovation (Mylona et al., 2026; Taylor et al., 2026). Recent research suggests that beyond traditional mentoring, these collaborative environments create a "custodian-successor" dynamic that is vital for long-term knowledge sustainability in construction (Tomiczak, 2025).

Management plays a crucial role in shaping subjective norms by signalling that knowledge sharing is valued and recognized. At the same time, targeted digital literacy training increases perceived behavioural control, enabling older employees to participate confidently in modern knowledge-management systems.

Together, these strategies not only prevent knowledge loss but also enhance productivity by enabling faster problem solving, improved safety compliance, and more efficient project execution.

Theoretical Underpinning

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides the core theoretical foundation for this conceptual paper because it offers a robust and empirically supported explanation of how individual intentions shape actual behaviour. TPB posits that human behaviour is guided by three psychological determinants—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control—which collectively influence a person's intention to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Empirical reviews consistently affirm that intentions are predicted "with high accuracy" by these three determinants, and that intentions combined with perceived behavioural control account for substantial variance in actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Nguyen et al., 2019). In the context of the present study, knowledge sharing among aging workers is conceptualized as a deliberate, voluntary behaviour rather than an automatic process. Therefore, TPB is suitable because it explains why some aging workers willingly share their expertise, while others may hesitate or refrain.

In relation to aging workers, attitude reflects whether they believe knowledge sharing is valuable or burdensome—for example, whether they feel it enhances teamwork, improves project performance, or diminishes their own job security. A positive attitude increases their intention to share knowledge, whereas a negative attitude diminishes it (Ajzen, 1991). Subjective norms represent the perceived expectations of peers, supervisors, and organizational culture. In workplaces where supervisors encourage mentoring and colleagues respect senior expertise; aging workers feel greater social pressure to engage in sharing behaviours. Conversely, weak norms or environments that undervalue senior workers reduce sharing intentions. Perceived behavioural control is particularly influential in aging workforces because it relates to workers' confidence in their ability to communicate and articulate knowledge effectively, and their comfort with digital tools used for documentation or collaboration. When aging workers feel confident and supported, their perceived control increases, leading to stronger intentions to engage in sharing; however, low digital literacy, embarrassment, or fear of appearing outdated can decrease perceived behavioural control, thereby reducing knowledge-sharing behaviour (Nguyen et al., 2019).

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Conceptual Framework

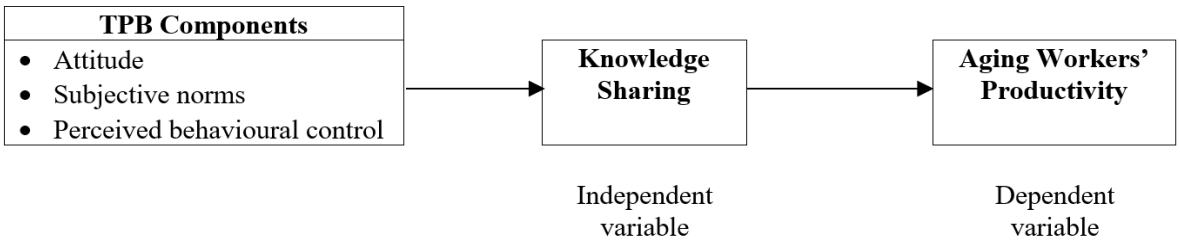

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the conceptual framework of this study positions Knowledge Sharing as the primary independent variable influencing Aging Workers' Productivity, the dependent variable. TPB asserts that human behaviour is driven by behavioural intentions, which stem from three key determinants—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). These determinants shape whether aging workers intend to share their knowledge and, subsequently, whether they engage in this behaviour. When aging workers hold positive attitudes toward sharing—believing it helps younger colleagues or contributes to organizational success—they are more inclined to participate in knowledge exchange activities. Likewise, when they perceive strong normative support from supervisors, peers, and the broader organizational culture, they feel a social obligation to share their expertise. Equally important, perceived behavioural control, which reflects their confidence in articulating tacit knowledge or using digital tools for communication, significantly strengthens their willingness to share. Empirical evidence consistently shows that these TPB determinants predict knowledge-sharing intentions with high accuracy, and that intentions strongly translate into actual knowledge-sharing behaviours (Ajzen, 1991; Nguyen et al., 2019).

In the context of an aging workforce, such intentional and voluntary sharing behaviours have direct implications for productivity. Effective knowledge sharing enables faster problem-solving, minimizes rework, enhances adherence to safety standards, and supports efficient task execution—key elements of productivity in construction and other labour-intensive sectors. As older workers share their accumulated human capital—experiential knowledge, situational judgment, and procedural expertise—performance outcomes naturally improve, both at the individual and organizational levels. Therefore, TPB provides a strong theoretical justification for the direct path between knowledge sharing and productivity by explaining how psychological and social drivers transform into concrete work behaviours that yield measurable performance gains. The model developed in this study reflects this logic: positive attitudes, supportive norms, and strong perceived behavioural control foster higher levels of knowledge sharing, which in turn leads to improved productivity among aging workers, aligning the TPB behavioural pathway with the practical realities of multigenerational workforce dynamics (Ajzen, 1991; Nguyen et al., 2019).

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a conceptual research design, which is appropriate for developing theoretical insights, synthesizing existing knowledge, and proposing a new conceptual framework. As the objective of this paper is to explain how knowledge sharing influences aging workers'

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productivity through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the conceptual design enables a rigorous theoretical analysis without the need for primary data collection. Conceptual studies focus on integrating theories, identifying gaps, and constructing explanatory models, making this approach suitable for examining Behavioural mechanisms underlying knowledge sharing among aging workers.

The study employs an integrative literature review approach, which allows the researcher to gather, analyse, and synthesize information from a diverse range of scholarly sources. This includes peer-reviewed journal articles, theoretical papers, books, and empirical studies related to knowledge sharing, aging workers, workplace productivity, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The integrative approach was chosen because it accommodates both theoretical and empirical literature, enabling a holistic understanding of the constructs and their interrelationships.

The review process for this conceptual study was conducted through a structured sequence of analytical stages. First, the theoretical foundations were identified, with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) selected as the central theoretical anchor due to its strong explanatory power for intentional behaviours within organizational contexts. In this stage, key TPB constructs—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived Behavioural control—were examined to determine their relevance to knowledge-sharing behaviour among aging workers. Second, a literature mapping exercise was undertaken to organize and evaluate the core concepts underpinning the study, namely knowledge sharing, the aging workforce, behavioural determinants, and workplace productivity. This mapping process enabled the identification of existing patterns, inconsistencies, and research gaps, with particular emphasis on studies exploring knowledge-sharing intentions in multigenerational and aging work environments. Finally, a synthesis and integration phase was carried out, during which the selected literature was systematically analysed to understand how psychological and social factors influence knowledge sharing and how this behaviour contributes to productivity outcomes. Insights derived from this synthesis informed the development of the conceptual framework, which positions knowledge sharing as a key predictor of aging workers' productivity within a TPB-driven explanatory model.

Development of Conceptual Framework

Using the findings from the literature synthesis, the study developed a conceptual framework that positions Knowledge Sharing as the independent variable and Aging Workers' Productivity as the dependent variable. The framework is theoretically justified by TPB, which explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape knowledge-sharing behaviour. These determinants are not included as empirical variables in the model but serve as underlying behavioural mechanisms supporting the proposed relationship. The conceptual framework thus captures a direct pathway from knowledge sharing to productivity, emphasizing that voluntary, intentional knowledge-sharing behaviours contribute to improved work performance among aging workers.

Scope of the Study

This conceptual paper is limited to analysing theoretical and empirical literature without collecting primary quantitative or qualitative data. The focus is on synthesizing behavioural theory and workplace knowledge-sharing research to develop a logically grounded conceptual model. The study does not measure variables, test hypotheses, or employ inferential statistics, as it aims to contribute theoretically rather than empirically.

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Expected Contribution

Methodologically, this study contributes by offering a TPB-driven conceptual model that clarifies how knowledge sharing influences productivity among aging workers—a domain where behavioural explanations are often underdeveloped. The integrative methodology ensures that the model is grounded in established theory while addressing an important gap in the literature. The resulting framework provides a foundation for future empirical studies, which may adopt quantitative or mixed-methods designs to test the proposed relationships.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper highlights the critical role of aging workers in sustaining productivity and knowledge continuity within the construction industry. As global demographic shifts increase the proportion of older employees in the workforce, organizations must confront the escalating risk of tacit knowledge loss arising from retirement, generational gaps, and inadequate knowledge-sharing mechanisms. Through an integrative review of existing literature, this paper establishes that aging workers possess unique experiential and intuitive knowledge that is foundational to operational efficiency, safety, and problem-solving in construction settings. However, without structured and supportive systems to facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer, much of this valuable expertise remains underutilized.

Guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the paper provides a theoretically grounded explanation of why knowledge-sharing behaviour varies among aging workers. TPB offers a comprehensive lens for understanding how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape workers' intentions to share knowledge. This theoretical approach underscores that knowledge sharing is not merely a technical or procedural activity, but a deliberate behavioural choice influenced by personal beliefs, social expectations, and perceived capability. Integrating TPB with knowledge-sharing literature strengthens the explanatory power of the proposed framework and emphasizes the psychological and social conditions necessary to promote consistent knowledge-exchange behaviour.

The conceptual framework developed in this study positions knowledge sharing as a key determinant of aging workers' productivity. By articulating the pathways through which behavioural intentions translate into productivity outcomes, the framework offers meaningful insights for theory development and practical application. It emphasizes that productivity among aging employees can be significantly enhanced when organizations cultivate positive attitudes toward knowledge sharing, reinforce supportive social norms, and improve workers' sense of control through training and accessible tools. These elements create an enabling environment where intergenerational knowledge transfer becomes a natural and valued aspect of work culture.

From a practical perspective, this study calls for organizations—particularly in construction—to design and implement structured strategies such as mentoring programs, digital literacy initiatives, communities of practice, and knowledge-capture systems. Such mechanisms not only preserve institutional knowledge but also foster collaboration, innovation, and workforce resilience. The model presented provides a foundation for future empirical research to examine and validate these relationships, potentially guiding evidence-based policies and interventions that support both aging workers and organizational performance.

In sum, this paper contributes to the growing discourse on aging workforce management by offering a theoretically informed model that explains how knowledge sharing can enhance

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productivity among older employees. By bridging TPB and knowledge-sharing constructs, the study provides a conceptual basis for understanding and improving intergenerational knowledge dynamics in construction and other labour-intensive sectors. Future research is encouraged to empirically test the proposed framework, explore moderating variables such as organizational culture or digital competence, and expand the model to diverse industrial contexts. Ultimately, strengthening knowledge-sharing practices will not only support aging workers but also help organizations build sustainable, adaptable, and high-performing workforces.

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