

# Do Members Share Knowledge in Facebook Knowledge Groups?

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**Abstract.** People are getting used to interact with friends, search information, and even go shop on Facebook. It is reported that there are 1.4 billion users and 0.86 billion active users per day on Facebook. Many knowledge groups are created on Facebook for sharing knowledge and exchanging opinions and experiences. This study expects to figure out determinants influencing members' sharing behavior of contribute their own knowledge in Facebook Knowledge Groups based on the perspective of psychological ownership. Research model is developed based on the perspective of psychological ownership and the justice theory. An online survey was conducted for data collection. Three hundred and sixty-two usable data were analyzed. Results show that organization psychological ownership positively affects members' knowledge sharing behavior. Trust towards other members and relational embeddedness of knowledge groups positively affect organization psychological ownership. Relational embeddedness and perceived equity towards knowledge groups positively affect members' trust towards other members. The construct of equity is a secondary order constructs and consists of distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and information justice. All four sub-dimensions are significant. Results show that interpersonal equity is especially important and the importance of other three dimensions is almost the same. Implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** Knowledge sharing · Psychological ownership · Trust · Relational embeddedness · Justice

## 1 Introduction

People are getting used to interact with friends, search information, and even go shop on Facebook. It is reported that there are 1.4 billion users and 0.86 billion active users per day on Facebook. Many knowledge groups are created on Facebook for sharing knowledge and exchanging opinions and experiences. Facebook Knowledge Groups indicate an organization consisted of members who have a common interest, hobby or objective. Facebook Knowledge Groups are a specific space for members' interaction, discussion, and learning, who are interested in a dedicated domain. Members in a Facebook Knowledge Group could share information, links, pictures, videos, post

opinions and response to other members' posts. One or some administrators could manage a Facebook Knowledge Groups.

Pi et al. [26] indicated that members are more willing to share their know-how with other members in a Facebook Knowledge Group in which members perceived a good sharing and reciprocal atmosphere. O'Bannon et al. [22] showed that existence of groups of Facebook could facilitate members' sharing knowledge behavior and increase members' intention to join discussion in groups. Park et al. [25] demonstrated that members in a community are willing to contribute to this community because they would like to pursue self – achievement. Choi [8] showed that the more active members behave, the more effective members acquire knowledge in a knowledge group. However, similar to other communities, some members love to share something with others, but others do not. They dive in knowledge groups and only browse other members' posts and do not actively share their knowledge. This study expects to figure out determinants influencing members' sharing behavior of contribute their own knowledge in Facebook Knowledge Groups based on the perspective of psychological ownership.

This issue is getting attention in literatures because environments of social media are different from general organizational environments. The members in a general organizational environment are usually familiar with each other and are driven to share knowledge by external motives, such as economical rewards, promotion, job security, or expected benefits in the future. However, members in Facebook knowledge groups do not know other members well and do not receive any external benefits from sharing knowledge with other members although they have common interesting and objectives. A Facebook Knowledge group is an informal and loose organization. Members in Facebook Knowledge groups may be defensive and hesitate to share their own knowledge because they have no close relationship and do not trust other members. So, it is important that members in a virtual community perceive high organization psychological ownership and identify themselves with this community. Under this circumstance, members are more willing to share knowledge because they trust this community and they hope this community could be improved. Even there is no external reward, and promotion on jobs, members will not compete with other members for their own benefits. Hence, we would like to explore factors which prompt users in Facebook knowledge groups to share their know-how with other unknown members in the same groups.

In general, members in Facebook Knowledge Groups perceive fair payoff, well-defined and clear regulatory, open and transparent information, friendly and kind relationship among members, share understanding of dedicated knowledge, cooperative problem solving, they will be gradually devoted themselves into this community, be an integral part of this community, and look forward to promoting growth and development of this community. That is organization psychological ownership. Organization psychological ownership is usually applied in organization-level studies. Sieger et al. [28] demonstrated that the influence of psychological ownership, equity and satisfaction on employees' commitment and loyalty. However, we proposed that a Facebook Knowledge Group is an informal organization. A Facebook Knowledge Group shares some common features with a formal organization, such as initiators, administrators, rules and regulation, shared value, common objectives, and so on. It is appropriate that applying this concept in the context of virtual communities for figure out members' knowledge sharing behavior.

Members in a Facebook Knowledge group are unfamiliar with others, so it is difficult that members have high identity to this community. Trust will be the first step to enhance members' identification. Maintaining trust is dependent on intensive interaction, good relationship, impartial treatment, positive reciprocal, a harmonious circumstance, as well as mutual inclusiveness and esteem. According, this study focus on the influence of environmental and atmospheric factors on user' behavior of sharing knowledge in Facebook knowledge groups. We propose that the higher closeness among members, the higher probability members share their knowledge. We aim to figure out antecedents of closeness relationship and identification towards a community. Hence, we intend to answer the following research questions in this study.

1. Does organization psychological ownership toward a virtual community increase members' knowledge sharing behavior in a virtual community?
2. Do members' trust in a virtual community and their relational embeddedness of virtual community directly affect organization psychological ownership?
3. Is members' perceived equity in a virtual community critical their perceived trust in a virtual community?

## 2 Conceptual Background and Hypotheses

Research model is developed based on the perspective of psychological ownership and the equity theory. Organizational psychological ownership, relational embeddedness, trust and justice, which members perceive in a community, are major affection related to environmental atmospheric factors. Organizational psychological ownership is the most important determinant of members' knowledge sharing behavior. Relational embeddedness and trust increase members' organizational psychological ownership. Justice and relational embeddedness improves members' trust towards members in a Facebook knowledge group.

### 2.1 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing in an organization could increase organizational competence. Literatures investigated factors of knowledge sharing and show that interaction and identification in an organization are important. For example, Pi et al. [26] examine the influence of extrinsic motivation, social and psychological forces, and social networking sharing culture on intention to sharing knowledge sharing on Facebook groups. Results of Pi et al.'s [26] study shows that reputation and sense of self-worth positively affect attitude towards knowledge sharing. Social networking sharing culture, indicating atmospheric of circumstance and including fairness, identification and openness, is critical to intention to sharing knowledge sharing. Li et al. [21] indicated that employees' commitment increases their organization psychological ownership and in turn employees are more willing to share their own knowledge with others. Chiu et al. [6] demonstrated that trust, reciprocity, shared language and share vision influence members' willingness of knowledge sharing in a professional virtual community. They indicated that members in a professional virtual community have common

objectives and interests, mutual communication, as well as share knowledge and information. Zhang and Jiang [32] indicated that knowledge receivers' capability and attitude toward learning and relationship between members influence individual's knowledge sharing behavior. Hence, this study expects to explore the influence of closeness and trust among members on knowledge sharing behavior in Facebook Knowledge Group.

## 2.2 Organization Psychological Ownership

Psychological ownership indicated that an individual thinks one target, such as objects, ideas, processes, and even another person, is belonged to him [27]. Literatures show that psychological ownership is the determinant of employees' attitude and behavior in an organization. Chiang et al. [5] indicated that employees who have psychological ownership towards a company brand, they will take more effort to promote this brand, perform organizational citizen behavior towards this brand, and even do exclusion behavior towards competitive brands. Olckers and Du Plessis [23] indicated that employees with high psychological ownership are willing to do more for pursuing organizational performance and continuously work for the organization without equivalent return. van Dyne and Pierce's [30] study shows psychological ownership positively influence employees' attitude, increase their organizational citizen behavior, and raise their intention of knowledge sharing in an organization. Li et al. [21] further classified psychological ownership into organization and knowledge psychological ownership and explores influence of these two ownerships on knowledge sharing. Their study shows that members with high organization psychological ownership are more willing to share knowledge, but members with high knowledge psychological ownership hesitate to share knowledge [21]. Following the line of literatures, members in Facebook knowledge groups think they are a part of this community, they are belonged to this community, and identity to this community, they are more willing to contribute to this community for pursuing growth of this community. Hence, we propose hypothesis 1.

*H1: Organization psychological ownership is positively associated with knowledge sharing behavior.*

## 2.3 Relational Embeddedness

Uzzi [29] defined relational embeddedness as social attachments between two organizations or improvements of co-development of a belonging relationship. Relational embeddedness is usually measured by frequency of interaction, degree of closeness, level of reciprocity, or duration of a relationship. The degree of closeness of relationship and quality of interaction is important to members' behavior in social network sites [20]. Zhang et al. [31] indicated that frequent communication, long-term interaction, and continuous reciprocity increase closeness among members in a community, and in turn enhance organization psychological ownership. Feeley et al. [13] mentioned that relational embeddedness is a primary factor of members' contribution behavior. Following the line of literatures, relational embeddedness, that is good interaction and

close relationship among members, could benefit all members and are inclined to generate positive feedback to a community. Members with high relational embeddedness tend to be devoted to their belonged community and view their belonged community as theirs. Members in Facebook knowledge groups interact with other members by clicking the Like button, sharing information, writing a post, writing a comment, or helping others and then deeply connect to other members. Members are getting more intimacy, build a close relationship, and then view themselves as a part of this Facebook knowledge group. Hence, we propose hypothesis 2.

*H2: Relational embeddedness is positively associated with organization psychological ownership.*

Chen et al.'s [4] study demonstrated that relational embeddedness is positively affect trust. Panteli and Sockalingam's [24] study also demonstrated that building a good relationship by collaborative development; communication, interaction, and planning could push two organizations into high level of trust. Following this line, members in Facebook Knowledge groups maintain good friendship by continuous and intense interaction. They tend to believe that other members will be good to them based on past experience and then have confidence on other members. Hence, we propose hypothesis 3.

*H3: Relational embeddedness is positively associated with trust.*

## 2.4 Trust

Gefen [15] indicated that trust is the fundamental of interaction among people and it is gradually developed by continuous interaction. Doney and Cannon [11] proposed four dimensions of trust, including competency, benevolence, integrity, and predictability. Competency is for lowering uncertainty of knowledge, benevolence is an expectancy of fair trade, integrity is an impartial behavior, and predictability is an expectancy of sticking in commitment on a trade and principals of interaction. Divya and Srinivasan [10] indicated that interpersonal trust affects employees' attitude and behavior toward an organization, their morale at work, as well as their perceived possessiveness toward an organization. When a member with high interpersonal trust, they are more willing to work in a sincere manner, do positive things for the sake of an organization, and devoted themselves into this organization as their own business. Members in Facebook Knowledge groups will have high identification towards these groups and are willing to do a share of efforts for these groups, if they have confidence with other members and believe that other members do not take advantage on them. Hence, we propose hypothesis 4.

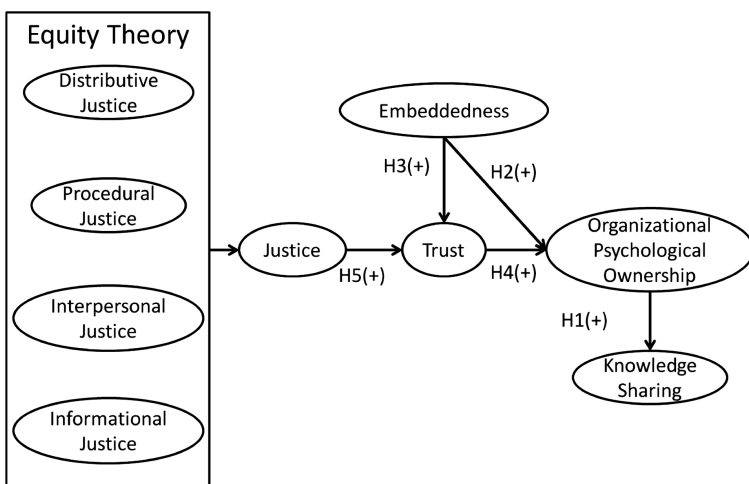
*H4: Trust is positively associated with organization psychological ownership.*

## 2.5 Equity Theory

Adams [1] proposed the equity theory and defined equity as an individual's perception of equilibrium on payoff between himself and others in an exchange relationship.

Chiu et al.'s [7] study shows positive relationship of trust and equity, as well as of trust and repurchase intention. Equity consists of distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and information justices [9].

Distributive justice is defined as an individual's perception of just payoff. For example, members in a virtual community evaluate the balance of efforts and return, such as acceptance of their opinion or numbers of responses, etc. If they think it is unfair, they perform negative emotions or behaviors towards other members in this community. If they think they get the corresponding return, they will believe other members. Distributive justice is positively influence trust [2, 17]. Procedural justice is defined as a sense of fairness to the process or policy. In a virtual community, if administrators could deal with policy and procedural conflicts or problems carefully, members' negative feelings or images could be reduced [19]. Fang et al. [12] indicated that members in an organization who perceive distributive and procedural justice tend to trust other members and then help other members actively derived from altruism. Knonvsky and Pugh [19] indicated that interpersonal justice encourage communication among members and maintain a stable exchange relationship. Members in a virtual community who perceived interpersonal justice tend to perform conscientious behavior and trust in other members [12]. Maintain good interaction and building a harmonious environment in a community could raise the trustworthiness among members. Informational justice indicates that information is not distort and is equally transmitted to every member in a community. Informational justice is positively influence trust [18]. Colquitt et al.'s [9] study shows that information justice decrease confusion and misunderstanding among members in a virtual social community. If members could receive the true meaning of information and then they do not make effort to conjecture or guess other members' meanings in Facebook Knowledge groups, they will tend to believes members in a community and this community.



**Fig. 1.** Research framework

If members in Facebook Knowledge groups get balanced payoff, clearly know the procedure of conflicts resolution, perceive friendly atmospherics, get mutual assistance, receive accurate and complete information, as well as perceived respects from others, they will have confidence on this environment and believe other members. Hence, we propose the hypothesis 5.

*H5: Distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and information justices are positively associated with trust.*

### 3 Research Methods

#### 3.1 Operationalization and Instrument Design

The instruments for constructs were adapted from literature and revised to fit our research context. All items were anchored on seven-point Likert scales, from strong disagreement to strong agreement. The operational definition is shown in Table 1. A short interview with several colleagues and experts and a pre-test were carried out to ensure face validity and content validity for the compliant questionnaires. The Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted for ensuring reliability data collected from the pre-test. Cronbach's Alpha of constructs was all above 0.7.

**Table 1.** Operationalization for constructs and numbers of measurement items

Construct	Definition	Number of items	Sources
Distributive justice	The extent that members in a community could get the relative return when they contribute to this community [12]	4	Fang and Chiu [12]
Procedural justice	The extent that regulation or policy in a community is equally applied to all members and administrators of a community could provide solutions for members when controversy or problems are happened [12]	4	Fang and Chiu [12]
Interpersonal justice	The extent that members in a community could be treated as a manner of equity, no cheating, and esteem [12]	5	Fang and Chiu [12]
Informational justice	The extent that members in a community could acquire sufficient, clear, definite and updated information happened in this community [12]	3	Fang and Chiu [12]
Trust	The extent that members in a community interact with other members as a manner of integrity and benevolence [15]	4	Gefen et al. [15]
Relational embeddedness	The extent to closeness members in a community interact with other members, such as maintaining intense connection and collaboration [31]	4	Zhang et al. [31]
Organization psychological ownership	The extent that members in a community have high degree of identity towards this community and think they are parts of this community [16]	3	Han et al. [16]
Knowledge sharing behavior	The extent that members in a community are willing to and make efforts to share their own knowledge and answer questions asked by other members [26]	4	Pi et al. [26]

### 3.2 Data Collection

This study employed an online questionnaire for data collection. Respondents should be members of knowledge groups on Facebook. The survey request to solicit participation was launched on the Internet and uploaded to the survey forum on “PTT (ptt.cc),” knowledge groups on Facebook. Participants were self-selected for this study via the posted messages. Respondents are asked for answering questions in accordance with one Facebook knowledge group which they most frequently visit. A sweepstakes was held to increase survey responses. In order to motivate potential respondents to fill out the questionnaire, volunteers will be given a possibility to win a prize after completion of the questionnaire. During two weeks, 362 records were identified for data analysis.

## 4 Data Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Measurement Model

The measurement model is assessed by confirmatory factor analysis using SmartPLS 3.0. The “justice” is a secondary order constructs and consists of distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and information justice. All constructs which are reflective constructs are included in confirmatory factor analysis, including distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and information justice, trust, relational embeddedness, organization psychological ownership, and knowledge sharing behavior. Factors loadings of indicators are all above the acceptable level of 0.6 and significant ( $p \leq 0.01$ ), ranging from 0.659 to 0.939. It reveals the acceptance of construct validity. The reliability and convergent validity are acceptable as compared the threshold suggested by Bagozzi and Yi [3]: 0.7 and 0.5 respectively, as shown in Table 2. The discriminant validity is acceptable based on the rule that the correlations between any two distinct construct are lower than the square root of the average variance extracted of these constructs [14], as shown in Table 3.

**Table 2.** Reliability and convergent validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Distributive justice	0.921	0.944	0.808
Procedural justice	0.791	0.864	0.615
Interpersonal justice	0.893	0.923	0.708
Informational justice	0.859	0.914	0.780
Trust	0.917	0.941	0.800
Relational embeddedness	0.864	0.908	0.711
Organization psychological ownership	0.837	0.902	0.754
Knowledge sharing behavior	0.921	0.944	0.809



**Table 3.** Discriminant validity

	DJ	PJ	IPJ	IFJ	Trust	RM	OPO	KS
DJ	<b>0.899</b>	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
PJ	0.357	<b>0.883</b>	–	–	–	–	–	–
IPJ	0.413	0.78	<b>0.841</b>	–	–	–	–	–
IFJ	0.447	0.400	0.414	<b>0.899</b>	–	–	–	–
Trust	0.331	0.337	0.310	0.624	<b>0.868</b>	–	–	–
RM	0.526	0.607	0.571	0.378	0.327	<b>0.784</b>	–	–
OPO	0.395	0.345	0.353	0.674	0.641	0.371	<b>0.894</b>	–
KS	0.439	0.501	0.593	0.643	0.536	0.505	0.568	<b>0.843</b>

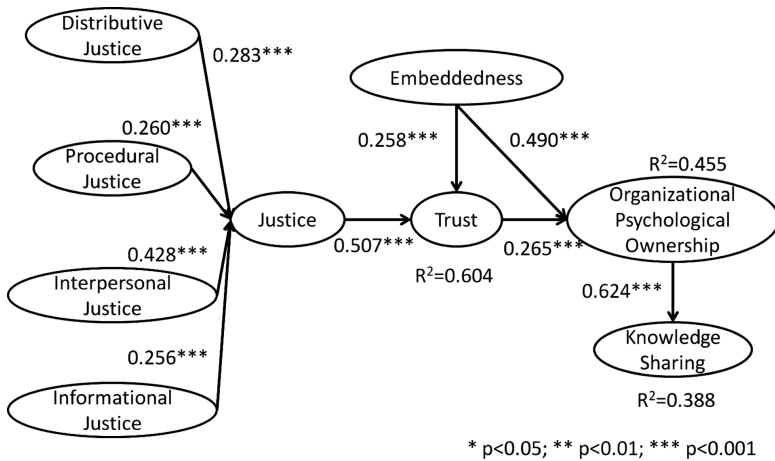
Note 1: DJ: Distributive Justice; PJ: Procedural Justice; IPJ: Interpersonal Justice; IFJ: Informational Justice; RM: Relational Embeddedness; OPO: Organization Psychological Ownership; KS: Knowledge Sharing Behavior

Note1: \*\*represents correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note2: Diagonal represents square root of AVE of each construct

**4.2 Hypotheses Testing**

The structure model is analyzed by Structural Equation Model (SEM) calculated by SmartPLS 3.0. The results of main effect are presented in Fig. 2 and all hypotheses are supported. Results show that interpersonal justice is most important among four dimensions. Organization psychological ownership positively affects members’ knowledge sharing behavior. Trust towards other members and relational embeddedness of knowledge groups positively affect organization psychological ownership. Relational embeddedness and perceived justice towards knowledge groups positively affect



**Fig. 2.** Structural model – main effects

members' trust towards other members. The explained variance of trust, organization psychological ownership and knowledge sharing behavior are 60.4%, 45.5% and 38.8%. The value of R square of three constructs show good explanatory power of antecedents. Especially, organization psychological ownership is critical to knowledge sharing.

## 5 Discussion and Implications

### 5.1 Conclusions

This study aims to investigate factors of members' knowledge sharing behavior in knowledge groups on Facebook based on the perspective of psychological ownership. We focus on members' perception towards the knowledge group on Facebook, which are cumulated by daily interaction in a community, including perceived equity, trust, relational embeddedness and organization psychological ownership. Four main findings are drawn from results. **First**, members perceived organization psychological ownership is critical to their knowledge sharing in a knowledge group on Facebook. Members' high identification towards a community lead them to be devoted themselves into helping other members. Members who perceived high organization psychological ownership will try to do more for advance overall knowledge level of members in their belonged community, so they are much willing to share their own knowledge, discuss with others members, as well as help other members for solving problems. **Second**, relational embeddedness and trust are important determinants of organization psychological ownership. Especially, the influence of relational embeddedness on organization psychological ownership is almost double to of trust. In addition, relational embeddedness is positively affect trust. It shows that high intensity of interaction and long-term and satisfied relationship among members leads them to have a sense of belonging and then think themselves as an integral part of their belonged community. Meanwhile, the good relationship and interaction also increase their trust towards members in this community, decrease their self-protection, and feel comfort when interact with others. And then, members' confidence in others deepens their belief that they are identical to this community. **Third**, equity is critical to trust. The influence of equity on trust is almost twice in comparison with relational embeddedness. It shows that members' perceived trust not only comes from a satisfied and long-term relationship, but also comes from their perceived equity during interacting with other members and participating activities in a community. When members perceived equity in a community, they will have a faith that they will not be cheated, taken advantages, or abused. They can feel easy and comfortably when they are surfing and posting in this community. Perceived equity consists of distributed, procedural, interpersonal and informational justice. It shows that members perceives good equity only when they think the payoff is fair, information is opened and transparent, the regulations is unequivocal, as well as members are mutual respect and have an equal state. Especially, interpersonal justice is the most important one. **Fourth**, the explanatory powers of determinants on trust and organization psychological ownership are good, 60.4%, 45.5% respectively. It shows that members will totally trust in the community and

members if they love to interact with other members, take much time on this community, as well as be treated equally in compare with other members' treatment. In addition, trust and relational embeddedness are important to organizational psychological ownership. It shows that a positive spiral up association of relational embeddedness and trust determines members' perceived organizational psychological ownership.

## 5.2 Academic Implications

According to these findings, there are three academic implications. **First**, organizational psychological ownership exert its influence on knowledge sharing in online social communities. Although members in a Facebook knowledge group are unfamiliar to each other and there is no external rewards or benefit for sharing knowledge, members who are devoted into this group are willing to sharing their know-how and help others. **Second**, results in this study are similar to Zhang et al.'s [31] study, which indicated that relational embeddedness in a brand community positively influences organization psychological ownership towards a brand community and in turn increase members' willingness to promoting this brand. Feeley et al. [13] indicated that relational embeddedness increase members' identification of a community. Our study demonstrates the importance of relational embeddedness, since relational embeddedness and trust determine the level of organization psychological ownership, in addition, relational embeddedness increase members' trust. **Third**, perceived equity improves members' trust in a community and members. Results in this study are similar to Chiu et al.'s [7] and Fang et al.'s [12] studies. According to their studies, distributed, procedural, interpersonal, and information justice are all important to trust in context of online auction websites and virtual communities. Our study especially treat perceived equity as a secondary construct and find out the relative importance of four dimensions on perceived equity on Facebook. It shows that interpersonal equity is especially important and the importance of other three dimensions is almost the same. The reason may be due to invisibility and unfamiliarity of members in a knowledge group on Facebook. So, the feeling of being treated equally is particularly sensitive and important when interacting with other members. Only when members feel comfortable and being respected, they will trust in other members in a knowledge group on Facebook.

## 5.3 Practical Implications

Our findings lead to suggestions for managers. **First**, maintaining a close relationship in a Facebook knowledge group is critical to promoting knowledge sharing behavior. Relational embeddedness and trust, which are members' affective responses towards members and group belongs, increase positive influence users' organizational psychological ownership. Administrators of a Facebook knowledge group could hold activities or games which could increase interaction, discussion or cooperation among members. Feelings of a sense of belonging and identification could increase members'

willingness to share knowledge. **Second**, building a justice environment, creating harmonious and open-minded circumstance in a Facebook knowledge group could raise members' belongings and closeness in a Facebook knowledge group. Interpersonal justice is especially important to maintain a justice environment. Hence, administrators should pay attention on maintain friendly interaction, and prevent any offensive interaction, as well as try the best to equally deal with any dispute.

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