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The impact of knowledge management on organizational performance

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Abstract:

In current dynamic business environment, competition is intensifying, and the need for sustainability is becoming increasingly prominent. Focusing on organizational performance has been crucial in implementing measures for both competitiveness and sustainability. Organizations in all business aspects, recognize knowledge as their most valuable and strategic asset. The adoption of knowledge management is crucial in guaranteeing the prosperity of organizations and the sustained operation of their businesses. Proficiency in its implementation is imperative for ensuring continuity and sustained growth.

Knowledge management helps organizations to find, select, organise, distribute, and transfer vital information, and it ensures that relevant information is readily available and accessible when needed, timely access to relevant data and insights allows for better choices and lead to improve decision-making. Organisations that use knowledge management have the capacity to analyse the current data and transform it into real-time knowledge, thus gaining competitive advantage.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview and extensive exploration of knowledge management, emphasizing its importance in organizational. The focus is on exploring how knowledge management can impact organizational performance by examining the relationship between knowledge management infrastructure capabilities (technology, culture, and structure) and knowledge management process capabilities (creation, storage, sharing, and application), and how these process capabilities impact organizational performance.

The research methodology employed to elucidate these critical connections entails an exhaustive curation and analysis of data extracted from a rich array of scholarly resources, including peer-reviewed journals, conference papers, and books. This meticulous approach aims to unravel the nuanced relationships between knowledge management frameworks and the consequential impact on the performance of organizations.

Keywords: Knowledge management, tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, organizational performance, knowledge capability.
JEL Classification: D80, P17.
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1. Introduction

Although interest in understanding the source, nature, and quality of knowledge dates back to the times of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Nowadays, knowledge is seen as a valuable asset for any type of company, and its prosperity depends significantly on its ability to manage knowledge. Without effective knowledge management, it becomes challenging to adapt to the continuously changing market needs. There are two primary forms of knowledge: explicit and tacit. Explicit knowledge can be expressed using formal language and shared among individuals, while tacit knowledge is more elusive, encompassing intangible aspects and representing personal insights derived from individual experiences. Effective knowledge management offers organizations a chance to distinguish themselves from their competitors. To maintain competitiveness over time, businesses must adopt knowledge-intensive practices Knowledge management has gained recognition among both managers and academics from diverse fields as a legitimate business concern. According to Hull (2000) the development of knowledge management is not a fleeting trend but is evolving to establish itself as a novel facet of management and organization, accompanied by a new form of expertise. Knowledge management processes are increasingly recognized by academics and practitioners as essential prerequisites for organizational success. To obtain a competitive advantage, a company needs to generate new knowledge, store it, make it easier for employees to share it within the company, and use it. Knowledge management processes aid in problem-solving, fostering dynamic learning, facilitating strategic planning, and enhancing decision-making. Effective knowledge management requires a robust framework of supporting elements; technology, culture, and structure serve as key enablers for knowledge management. Together, these processes and enablers provide a valuable theoretical foundation for understanding key aspects of knowledge effectiveness within an organization.

Building upon the premise that knowledge constitutes a pivotal organizational resource, scholars have contended that knowledge management contributes to positive organizational performance. Nevertheless, this impact has not been rigorously substantiated (Chakravarthy, et al., 2003; Foss & Mahnke, 2003). Many organizations have undertaken knowledge management initiatives in their quest to enhance performance, yet their endeavors have met with only partial success (Leidner, 2000; Nidumolu, et al., 2001).

This paper aims to establish a robust theoretical framework for comprehending knowledge management and its influence on organizational performance. By synthesizing existing literature on knowledge management and extending prior research, we aim to introduce distinct constructs and elucidate the connections between them. We anticipate that our efforts will make a valuable contribution to the advancement of the knowledge management field. More specifically, this study endeavors to explore the following research questions:

- What impacts do knowledge management infrastructure capability have on knowledge management process capability?
- Does knowledge management process capability directly impact the organizational performance?

To align with its objectives, this paper is outlined as follows: initially, a literature review is provided. Following that, hypotheses are delineated. Finally, we conclude with recommendations.

2. Literature review

- **Knowledge**

Knowledge is a difficult concept to define. Scholars in the field of organizational studies continue to debate its complex nature, recognizing that knowledge exhibits various facets and

nuanced interpretations based on distinct contexts and individuals. Nonaka & Takeushi (1995) proposed that knowledge can be understood as beliefs that are not only true but also justified. Al-hawari (2004), on the other hand, it offers a perspective where organizational knowledge is regarded as an object that requires codification, dissemination, comprehension, and practical application to attain specific objectives. Various definitions of knowledge exist within literature. Collins' English Dictionary[1], defines knowledge as the collection of facts, experiences, or feelings held by an individual or a collective group.

As outlined by Baker et al. (1997)[2], knowledge emerges through the application of information, the foundational element, within specific contexts, and it can be related to products, culture, customers, experiences, processes, skills and know-how. They articulate knowledge succinctly through a formula: knowledge equals information plus a fusion of skills, personal capability, and experience. Contemporary research in the field of knowledge management has emphasize the present century as a period significantly centered on information and knowledge, recognizing knowledge as a crucial asset within organizations. (Obeidat et al., 2016). Shahzad et al. (2016), assert that knowledge includes insights, skills, information, experience, ideas, and expertise. Nevertheless, they contend that the mere presence of knowledge in an organization is insufficient to ensure sustained organizational success and competitive advantage. Effective knowledge management through a well-structured system is essential for realizing these objectives.

According to Nonaka et al. (2000), knowledge is a product of the interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge. Sánchez et al. (2013) concurred with Nonaka, asserting that tacit knowledge lacks significance in the absence of explicit knowledge. Consequently, both forms of knowledge are interdependent, complementary, and integral for the process of knowledge creation.

- **Tacit and explicit knowledge**

The term "tacit" knowledge was initially introduced by Polanyi (1966), who expressed the idea that our knowledge often exceeds what we're able to tell. He defined tacit knowledge as difficult to convey, acquired primarily through practice and experience rather than through verbal language. According to him, tacit knowledge is closely linked to individual skills and remains embedded within a specific context. He also emphasized that tacit knowledge is inherently intertwined with explicit knowledge. According to (Ambrosini,2001), Various terms such as skills, procedural knowledge, intuition, implicit knowledge, unarticulated knowledge, know-how, and practical or experiential knowledge have been employed to characterize tacit knowledge.

Explicit knowledge pertains to objective information that can be clearly expressed, codified, and conveyed using formal and systematic language, as evident in documents, reports, and models (Nonaka et al., 2000). This type of knowledge is typically more prevalent in organizations (Joia & Lemos, 2010; Huang et al., 2011).

- **knowledge management**

Knowledge management has been conceptually defined in various ways in scientific literature; Palacios et al. (2009) described knowledge management as a management tool characterized by a set of guiding principles and a range of associated practices and techniques. This framework aims to facilitate the creation, transformation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge within an organization. Furthermore, knowledge management serves as a structured approach for capturing and formalizing knowledge, expertise, and experiences. This process

[1] *Collins English Dictionary, 1984.*

[2] *Baker, M., Barker, M., Thorne, J., & Dutnell, M. (1997). Leveraging human capital. Journal of Knowledge management, 1(1), 63-74.*

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contributes to the development of new competencies, which, in turn, enhance organizational performance through innovation and increased the satisfaction of customer (Gloet & Terziovski, 2004; Gold et al., 2001). Devi Ramachandran et al. (2013) defined knowledge management as the purposeful and organized implementation of knowledge-related practices, underpinned by strategic enablers. Gupta et al. (2000) described knowledge management as a process that supports organizations in discovering, choosing, structuring, distributing, and transferring vital information and expertise required for their operational activities. Filemon & Uriarte (2008) outlined knowledge management as the comprehensive process encompassing the discovery, organization, transmission, and application of information and expertise within an organizational context.

The American Productivity and Quality Center provides a definition of knowledge management that emphasizes the strategies and processes involved in identifying, capturing, and leveraging knowledge (Atefeh et al., 1999). According to Darroch (2003), knowledge management can be defined as the process focused on generating, sharing, and distributing knowledge within an organization.

Knowledge management can be divided into two fundamental types: knowledge management process capability and knowledge management infrastructure capability (Gold et al.,2001).

- **Knowledge management process capability**

Researchers have accorded significant importance to the systematic activities of knowledge management processes in enhancing organizational capabilities (Alaarj et al., 2016; Chang & Chuang, 2011; Darroch, 2005). According to Chang & Chuang (2011), knowledge management process capability is defined as the organization's capacity to create or acquire, share, and effectively utilize knowledge. Alavi & Leidner (2001) analyzed various attributes of these models and introduced four key processes: creation, storage/retrieval, transfer, and application. Similarly, Shin et al. (2001) consolidated terminology from various authors to describe knowledge management processes and categorized them as creation, storage, sharing, and application.

- **Knowledge creation process**

Knowledge creation can be defined as an institution's capacity to generate knowledge, disseminate it within the organization, and apply it to enhance its products, services, and systems (Nonaka & Takeushi, 1995). According to (Choo, 2003; Holsapple & Singh, 2001), this concept encompasses the processes and activities involved in generating and cultivating new ideas, knowledge, and skills to augment the existing reservoir of organizational knowledge. In reference to Chiu & Chen (2016), knowledge creation emerges from the active involvement and interaction of people, resources, and technology.

- **Knowledge storage process**

Alavi (2000) asserted that generating new knowledge is not enough; it is essential to establish mechanisms for both storing acquired knowledge and to retrieve it when needed. This led to the emergence of the organizational memory concept, which essentially denotes the presence of knowledge in diverse component forms. These forms include structured information in digital databases, documented procedures within organizations, written documentation, organized human knowledge in expert systems, and the tacit knowledge acquired by individuals and groups (Tan et al., 1998).

- **Knowledge sharing process**

Knowledge sharing is recognized as a crucial component of knowledge management, as highlighted by Gupta et al. (2000). According to Ryu et al. (2003), knowledge sharing involves the act of individuals disseminating their acquired knowledge and information to colleagues

within an organization. Cummings (2003) described knowledge sharing as a mechanism through which an organization gains access to its own knowledge as well as that of other organizations.
Knowledge sharing, when incorporated as a fundamental element of an organization's belief, practices, culture, or network, it involves the dynamic exchange and dissemination of learning, expertise, skills, and experience across the various individuals or departments within the organization (Gharakhani & Mousakhani, 2012).

- **Knowledge application process**

This process entails applying knowledge to make decisions, address problems, enhance efficiency, and reducing costs (Markus et al., 2002; Orlikowski, 2002). The central focus of knowledge management is to ensure that the existing knowledge within an organization is effectively applied for the organization's benefit (Probst et al., 2000).

- **Knowledge management infrastructure capability**

In the literature, the term "knowledge management infrastructure capability" has been used to refer to knowledge assets or knowledge enablers (Hassanien & Dale, 2013). Having a strong knowledge management infrastructure is crucial because effectively implementing knowledge management relies on having the adequate infrastructure in the organization (Masa'deh et al., 2019). Knowledge management infrastructure capability establishes a collaborative environment, promoting interaction among the components of knowledge management. It serves as a facilitator bridging the gap between knowledge management applications and problem-solving processes (Sun, 2010).
Knowledge management infrastructure capability includes technology, culture, and structure, that enables organizations to effectively execute actions related to knowledge management (Gold et al., 2001; Imran, 2014; Masa'deh, et al., 2017).

- **Technology**

Technology plays a crucial role in eliminating communication barriers within organizations. The importance of information technology stems from its ability to ease communication, foster collaboration, facilitate knowledge acquisition, and promote collaborative learning, as highlighted by Ngok in 2005.

- **Culture**

Organizational culture encompasses a collection of shared beliefs, meanings, values, norms, and procedures among members of the organization (Roobin, 2004). It is influenced by how individuals within the organization behave, the moral principles they follow, the employment rights granted to employees, and the organizational structure employed for operations.

- **Structure**

An organization's structure can be described as the official relationships and the allocation of activities and resources among individuals. Many studies have examined the two fundamental structural features of centralization and formalization from a traditional viewpoint (Tata & Prasad, 2004). Centralization pertains to the organizational level possessing decision-making authority. Formalization concerns the written documentation, rules, and procedures influencing knowledge communication within the organization (Schminke et al., 2000), it also pertains to the extent to which decisions and working relationships are guided by established rules, standard policies, and procedures (Lee & Choi, 2003). Centralization tends to restrict section interactions, impeding the sharing and application of knowledge. It centers on consolidating decision-making authority and control within the organization. In contrast, decentralization is a structural aspect that facilitates information exchange by empowering personnel with the

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appropriate authority (Hurley & Green, 2005). However, decentralization may result in disorganization and increased workload. The alignment of the knowledge domain and distribution with organizational structure and personnel policies is crucial. The flexibility of the organizational structure correlates with the significance of distribution, but excessive flexibility can restrict innovative thinking. Organizational structures are often not inherently designed to meet the requirements of knowledge management. Geographical or functional barriers may pose challenges to knowledge distribution, and at times, it may even seem insurmountable. To overcome these challenges, companies should adopt structures centered around specific subjects or interests, such as capability centers or learning scenes, alongside their geographical or functional structures (Probast et al., 2000).

- **Organizational performance**

In the field of management, there's been extensive exploration of organizational performance as a pivotal variable assessing organizational success. Knowledge-based institutions, in particular, are placing growing importance on enhancing their operations. The pursuit of heightened organizational performance is a goal for all organizations. As highlighted by Koohang et al. (2017), organizational performance serves as a metric for gauging an organization's advancement and growth.

Ngah & Ibrahim (2010) provided a definition of organizational performance as the process of comparing expected results to actual outcomes, examining deviations from set plans, assessing individual performance, and evaluating progress toward accomplishing objectives. According to authors such as Akhavan et al. (2014), it is crucial to consider an organization's objectives when measuring its performance. The measurement of organizational performance in the past was revolved around financial metrics such as revenue, profit, net operating income, Return on Equity, Return on Assets, Return on Sales, and various indicators mainly associated with revenue and profit.

While traditional financial measures are indeed practical and beneficial, they may not offer a advantage for organizations in an intense competitive environment (Wu & Liu, 2010). New organizational concepts require new measurement insights, enabling managers to make informed decisions and shareholders to evaluate company performance accurately. The significance of new financial and non-financial metrics in performance evaluation has risen, offering enhanced value to stakeholders. By integrating non-financial information into performance criteria, we can capture aspects like intellectual capital, social responsibility, and the promotion of organizational knowledge level (Wu & Liu, 2010).

In the business sphere, innovative measurement concepts and organizational performance models have emerged. These encompass Economic Value Added, Market Value Added, and integral measurement concepts like the Balanced Scorecard that integrates diverse perspectives, including internal processes perspective, financial perspective, customer's perspective, and learning and growth perspectives. Additionally, there are other models addressing dimensions such as human resources, strategy and process alignment, stakeholder satisfaction, value creation, operational performance, organizational growth, corporate vision, and competitive advantage, among others.

3. Hypotheses development

This study primarily draws upon the theoretical foundations of Gold et al.'s (2001) knowledge management capability model and Grant's (1996) Knowledge-Based View which are extensively referenced in the field of knowledge management. Gold et al. (2001) identified two essential aspects of knowledge management capability: the supportive environmental factors like structure, culture, and technology (knowledge infrastructure capability), and the

operational aspects like knowledge generation, storage, sharing, and application (knowledge process capability). Moreover, this framework, as previously validated by a large number of research (e.g. Cho & Korte, 2014; Chang & Chuang, 2011; Ho, 2009), suggests that knowledge infrastructure capability provides an enabling environment that facilitates or supports knowledge management processes, which in turn improve organizational performance. On the other hand, according to knowledge-based view, which is based on a resource-based view of the company, an organization is composed of knowledge resources that are valuable, unique, and rare in nature (Grant, 1996). In alignment with the knowledge-based view, knowledge is a crucial strategic asset and a main source of value and sustainable competitive advantage for firms (Seleim & Khalil, 2007; Bontis, 1999; Grant, 1996).

Based on these significant theoretical perspectives, this study provides an integrated model for examining the relationship between knowledge management infrastructure, knowledge management process, and organizational performance.

Knowledge management infrastructure capability includes culture, structure and technology (Gold et al., 2001; Imran, 2014; Masa'deh, et al., 2017).

Fostering a knowledge-based culture within an organization enables the promotion of values knowledge values and creates a collaborative and interactive setting that eases the creation, sharing, and application of knowledge among its members, ultimately contributing to the organizational goals and outcomes (Mills & Smith, 2011; Gold et al., 2001). Organizational culture also stands as a critical factor that can either hinder or promote the knowledge management process and its subsequent successful results. (Chang et al., 2017; Chang & Chuang, 2011). A suitable culture within a company can motivate individuals to generate and exchange knowledge. (Holsapple & Joshi, 2001; Leonard-Barton, 1995).

knowledge-based structure reflects how an organization's setup influences its inclination towards promoting activities related to knowledge. It should facilitate crucial interactions and empower the firm to navigate a constantly evolving environment (Sanchez & Mahoney, 1996). The internal structure of a firm may encourage or inhibit knowledge creation, sharing, and application (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Knowledge-based technology refers to the technical systems operating within a company, influencing the flow and accessibility of knowledge across the enterprise. This encompasses information technology and its capabilities (Scott, 1998). Organizations should establish suitable information technology infrastructure to generate knowledge. Information technology plays a vital role in effective knowledge management, facilitating quick collection, storage, and exchange of knowledge (Sher & Lee, 2004). Thus, we propose the hypothesis:

H1: knowledge management infrastructure capability has significant positive and direct effect on knowledge management process capability.

In the dynamic business world, organizations consistently face rapid changes. In this context, knowledge is perceived as a crucial strategic asset, playing a pivotal role in preserving organizational performance and competitive advantage (Masa'deh et al., 2016; Shahzad et al., 2016). Several recent studies have found a strong, positive, and direct relationship between the knowledge management process and organizational performance (Chiu & Chen, 2016; Ngah et al., 2016; Shahzad et al., 2016).

Acquiring knowledge significantly influences organizational performance (Gold et al., 2001; Chen & Fong, 2012), as well as business process outsourcing (Liu & Deng, 2015). As outlined by Alegre et al. (2013), knowledge storage enables organizations to cultivate an "organizational memory" by accumulating internal knowledge over time. Therefore, knowledge storage within firms facilitates the reuse of information when needed, suggesting potential cost and time savings that can contribute to enhanced performance. Previous research conducted by Chang & Chung (2011) highlighted the considerable influence of knowledge sharing on business strategy. Chen & Fong (2012) revealed a significant impact of knowledge sharing on

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IJAFAME
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organizational performance. The empirical results from prior research, as illustrated by Chen & Fong (2012;2015) revealed a robust impact of knowledge application on the performance of businesses.
Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed, H2: knowledge management process capability has a positive and significant impact on organizational performance.

4. Conclusion

This paper aimed to provide insights into the influence of knowledge management infrastructure on the knowledge management process and its impact on organizational performance. We also propose hypotheses for empirical testing. Our research serves as a foundation for further empirical investigations into knowledge management.
Organizations are facing a high competition in the development of knowledge management and operations through its attempt to generate new knowledge and application in a way to support the sustainability of their business competitiveness and to improve and develop its performance that leads to superior performance. Organizations and managers should recognize the importance of knowledge management infrastructure capability (technology, culture and structure) through which firms achieve the effective execution of actions related to knowledge management, and to build their capacity to generate, store, share and apply knowledge.
In terms of knowledge generation, organization can encourage their employees to acquire knowledge or generate new knowledge regularly through activities such as resources allocation, including time, budget, and personnel, to support knowledge creation efforts; also create and maintain a centralized knowledge repository. Furthermore, the organization can invest in ongoing training and development programs to help employees acquire new skills and knowledge; it can also foster a culture where reasonable risk-taking is encouraged, as innovation often involves trying new approaches and ideas; in addition, it can develop mentorship and coaching programs to transfer knowledge from experienced employees to newer ones. Moreover, the organisation can establish a culture of feedback and continuous improvement, and encourage employees to provide feedback and share lessons learned from both successes and failures; it can also conduct post-project or post-event reviews to extract valuable insights and document them for future reference.
Storing knowledge created within a company in an organized and accessible manner is essential for leveraging that knowledge in the future. To store knowledge effectively, the organization can encourage employees to document their work, processes, and the best practices, this documentation can take the form of manuals, guidelines, reports, and even simple notes; it can also establish a centralized digital repository, such as an intranet, shared drive, or knowledge management system, where all company knowledge can be stored. Ensure that it is well-organized and easy to search. Furthermore, the organization can encourage contributors to include tags, detailed descriptions and metadata for documents such as creation date, relevance, and context, to make it easier to understand the content's significance and to enhance document organization and searchability; it can also implement version control for documents and files to keep track of changes and updates. This prevents the loss of important historical information and allows for easy reference to previous versions; Moreover, the organization can implement a robust backup system to protect against data loss due to technical issues, disasters, or accidental deletion; it can also implement access control and permission settings to protect sensitive or confidential information. Not all knowledge should be accessible to everyone, so ensure that only authorized personnel can access specific data.
Sharing knowledge within a company is an essential step in knowledge management process capability. To contribute to an effective knowledge sharing, it is necessary to promote a culture that values and encourages knowledge sharing among employees and try to make clear that

sharing knowledge is a part of the company's values; it can also host regular knowledge sharing meetings, workshops, or seminars where employees can present their insights, experiences, and innovations to their colleagues. Furthermore, the organization can offer incentives, recognition, or awards to employees who consistently provide valuable knowledge or participate in knowledge-sharing activities; it can also provide training and workshops on knowledge sharing techniques and best practices, helping employees develop effective communication and presentation skills.

To effectively apply knowledge created, the organization can provide training and skill development programs to equip employees with the skills and competencies needed to apply the knowledge effectively; it can also establish mentoring and coaching programs that pair experienced employees with less experienced ones, this promotes knowledge transfer and practical application. Moreover, the organization can recognize and reward employees who consistently apply their knowledge effectively, contribute to the company's success, and share their experiences with others.

By implementing these methods, the organization can create an environment where knowledge is effectively created, stored, shared applied, leading to enhance the knowledge management process capability, in order to improve organizational performance.

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