



# The impact of organizational culture on knowledge management: the case of an international multilateral organization

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## Abstract

Knowledge is a strategic asset and organizations that have operational knowledge management (KM) systems, possess competitive advantage over their rivals. However, harnessing tacit knowledge and converting it to a form that is accessible and usable by all, is a great challenge. Tacit knowledge sharing is dependent on the will of the employee to share knowledge and the purpose of this research is to investigate the role played by culture in either hindering or enabling knowledge sharing. Using a single case study of an international multilateral organization, this research study investigated the effect that organizational culture has on KM. Data was collected through a questionnaire that had a combination of guided and open-ended questions. More than two-thirds of the employees of the case study organization participated in the research study. Data analysis was done in two ways. First, numerical data were analyzed using tallies and percentages for easier interpretation. Secondly, narrative analysis was used to analyze data from open-ended questions. It was established that some traits of organizational culture such as bureaucracy, being process oriented and being risk-averse hindered knowledge sharing in KM. Descriptors such as welcoming, transparent and teamwork were aspects that positively impacted KM. By understanding the impact of culture on knowledge sharing in KM, organizations may address potential barriers to KM and optimize the value of their KM effort.

## 1 Introduction

Knowledge has, in recent years, become one of the most critical strategic assets for many organizations (Jasimuddin & Zhang, 2014). As stated by Al Saifi (2015), organizations that have structures and systems in place to manage their knowledge have been found to have long term competitive advantage, sustain high levels of performance and are more innovative. This is also supported by Jasimuddin and Zhang (2014) who indicated that in the current emerging knowledge

economy, knowledge is a critical source of competitive advantage. Organizations that do not manage their knowledge face a high risk of going out of business, therefore executive management must be deliberate about their knowledge management efforts (Jasimuddin & Zhang, 2014).

Knowledge management was characterized by Mojibi, Hosseinzadeh, and Khojasteh (2015) as a value creation process of intangible assets, whose output is knowledge. These intangible asset processes involve various activities and should be well coordinated. It is also an ongoing process and therefore should not be deemed as a once-off. Using the knowledge-based view of organizations, an organization refers to an institution that acquires, creates, develops, shares, applies, transfers and protects knowledge (Donate & Guadamillas, 2010). Every organization must therefore go through these steps of knowledge management. The success or failure of knowledge management efforts can be influenced by many organizational factors, one of them being organizational culture (Alavi, Kayworth, & Leidner, 2005).

While Alavi, Kayworth, and Leidner (2005) and Rai (2011) both contend that organizational culture is the most significant input to the knowledge management efforts in an organization, Mojibi, Hosseinzadeh, and Khojasteh (2015) identified organizational culture as the main obstacle to the success of knowledge management processes in organizations.

Therefore, the focus of this paper is to investigate: *“What is the effect of organizational culture on knowledge management in a multilateral organization?”* We reflect on this research question by considering the case of an international multilateral organization with a regional office in South Africa. By reporting on the impact of culture on KM in the case study organization, the organization may address potential challenges to KM and optimize the value of the KM effort in the case study organization.

In this paper, we firstly provide an overview of literature in Section 2. The research approach is discussed in Section 3, followed by the data and analysis of findings in Section 4. Section 5 details the contribution of the study and Section 6 concludes the paper.

## 2 Background

To survive the ever-changing environmental threats and opportunities, organizations need to develop capabilities that will assist them to easily adapt (Domingo, Víctor Raúl LÓ, Leonardo, & George Ciprian, 2010). These capabilities take a lot of time and significant management effort to achieve a level where the organization can comfortably rely on them (Domingo et al., 2010). Knowledge management has already been identified as one of these capabilities. The other capability according to Costanza, Blacksmith, Coats, Severt, and DeCostanza (2016) is organizational culture.

Organizational culture was defined by Costanza et al. (2016: 362) as “the shared values, beliefs, and implicit assumptions that guide member actions as well as rituals and pattern of behaviours within the organization”. Ke and Wei (2008) described organizational culture as “the social glue” that holds the organization together, a complex system of norms and values built over a long time. Organizational culture also has many facets and traits. There are four common organizational cultural traits namely involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission (Yilmaz & Ergun, 2008, p. 5). According to Ciganek, Mao, and Srite (2008), the organizational culture dimensions each has different effects on knowledge management.

The two capabilities, knowledge management and organizational culture, are both critical for the long term survival and competitiveness of the organization (Domingo et al., 2010). Knowledge management has its own processes while culture has dimensions. Organizational culture has been identified both as an enabler as well as a constraint to knowledge management (Fabio Lotti, 2014).

In the next sections we discuss key aspects of knowledge management and organizational culture.

## 2.1 Knowledge management

There are two generally accepted broad types of knowledge namely tacit and explicit (Jasimuddin & Zhang, 2014). Tacit knowledge was defined by Hey (2004) as the knowledge that is personal and context-specific, and difficult to formalise. In businesses, this type of knowledge is the most valuable. Management must take deliberate steps and make effort to ensure that this type of knowledge is harnessed and stored in a format that can be shared by others across the organisation. Explicit knowledge is the more formalised type of knowledge that can be presented in a structured way (Jasimuddin & Zhang, 2014). Smith (2001:312) defined explicit knowledge as one that “*technical or academic data or information that is described in formal language, like manuals, mathematical expressions, copyright and patents*”. Creating, accessing, storing, and sharing explicit knowledge is more straightforward as compared to tacit knowledge.

Oliver and Brittain (2001: 17) defined knowledge management as “*the collection of processes that govern the creation, dissemination and utilization of knowledge to fulfil organizational objectives.*” Knowledge management is now being used to drive business success and is strategic (Alavi, Kayworth, & Leidner, 2005). One of the recent definitions was given by Barão, de Vasconcelos, Rocha, and Pereira (2017: 371) who defined knowledge management as “identifying and leveraging the collective knowledge in an organization.” The term leverage in this context could mean using knowledge to the maximum advantage of the organization. As a modern definition, one made during the knowledge economy, knowledge management processes deliver leverage to organizations, a strategic resource needed for organizational survival (Alavi, Kayworth, & Leidner, 2005)

The power of knowledge management in organizations is not only in the ability to positively influence strategy formulation, but also in the ability to exploit knowledge (Kruger & Snyman, 2005). Successful organizations according to Ogbonna and Harris (2002) have their strategies deeply rooted in knowledge, they are knowledge-driven. According to Kruger and Snyman (2005), innovation depends on knowledge by building new knowledge on existing knowledge. Other authors like Ogbonna and Harris (2002) and Donate and Guadamillas (2010) also state that knowledge is the only source of innovation and sustainable competitive advantage for organizations. Knowledge management processes have a direct influence on the innovativeness of an organization (Ogbonna & Harris, 2002).

Knowledge creation and -sharing are the first key steps to the process of knowledge management (Frølund & Ziethen, 2014). The knowledge management strategy of organizations must therefore put more emphasis and be more elaborate on knowledge creation and knowledge sharing (Lam & Chua, 2005). Both these factors need to be managed for the success of knowledge management in organizations. As employees innovate and create new products, they create new knowledge in the process, which through knowledge sharing must be disseminated across the entire organization through motivation and human resources policies (Zieba & Zieba, 2014). The sharing of new knowledge can be hindered by many factors, one of which is organizational culture, therefore management must pay special attention to these aspects (Zieba & Zieba, 2014).

## 2.2 Organizational culture

Organizational culture can generally be defined as “the way we do things around here” (Hofstede, 1993 :83) or as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration” (Schein, 1985). This implies a general understanding of both acceptable and unacceptable ways of thinking and behaving (Schein, 1985). Selznick (1948) stated that once these ways of thinking and behaving become institutionalized, they end up as the culture of the organization. Organizational culture is deeply rooted in organizational systems and influences organizational processes, employees job satisfaction and overall achievement of organizational objectives (Rieger, Sempane, & Roodt, 2002). Organizational culture must be controlled and carefully

managed by executive management to ensure that it does not become a barrier to the achievement of organizational goals, result in cultural subgroups or competing cultures (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003). Many successful and innovative organizations have shown that their management engages actively in managing and influencing their organizational culture in a direction that positively enhances the direction that their organization wants to take (Ogbonna & Harris, 2002). Hofstede (2020) outlined the 6 major dimensions of organizational culture. These are organizational effectiveness (means-oriented or goal-oriented), customer orientation (internally driven or externally driven), level of control (easy-going work discipline or strict working conditions), focus (local or professional), approachability (open system or a closed system), and management philosophy (employee-oriented or work-oriented).

Many scholars agree that organizational culture and knowledge management are both strategic pillars for organizational effectiveness and competitiveness and these include (Domingo et al., 2010), (Costanza et al., 2016) and (Ciganek, Mao, & Srite, 2008). However, there is divided opinion on how these two relate to each other and how organizational culture affects knowledge management processes. De Long and Fahey (2000) found that organizational culture is increasingly being recognized as a major barrier to leveraging intellectual assets. This sentiment is also shared by Jasimuddin and Zhang (2014) as well as Alavi, Kayworth, and Leidner (2005) who both agreed that organizational culture is one of the most difficult challenges to knowledge management. The difficulty emanates from the fact that organizational culture is pervasive throughout organizations. It influences the determination of which knowledge is appropriate to share, with whom, and when. Culture, at various levels, is believed to influence the knowledge-related behaviours of individuals, teams, organizational units, and overall organizations (Mojibi, Hosseinzadeh, & Khojasteh, 2015).

Even though Park, Ribiere, and Schulte (2004) are in agreement that organizational culture is a barrier to knowledge management, they also mention that a supportive organizational culture creates positive results for knowledge management initiatives. Depending on the dimension of culture and how it is managed, Ciganek, Mao, and Srite (2008) say that a well-managed organizational culture can work in favour of supporting knowledge management.

### 3 Research approach

In order to achieve the aim of this study, the research was carried out as a single case study in one organization. A case study is defined by Yin (2009:18) as “*an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*”. The organization chosen for the case study is a multilateral international organization. It is funded by many sovereign countries and reports to the executive board constituted of representatives from the funding countries. The organization has a clear mandate that it needs to follow in the humanitarian space. It is a global organization with offices in over 150 countries. The governance structure consists of a head office, a few regional offices and then country offices. The purpose of a regional office is to provide advisory and technical support to country offices within its control. The office used for this study was a regional office for the east and southern Africa region with a staff complement of forty-seven. There are seventeen nationalities among the staff members.

The main instrument of data collection was the questionnaire. Questions were a combination of guided questions and open-ended questions. Directed questions were meant to keep the respondent within the context of the subject being investigated. Where the respondent opinion or experience was sought, the questions were open-ended. The intention was to gather as accurate and relevant information as possible. The questions were divided into sections, with each section having a set of questions directed at the subject under discussion. This was also done to provide the respondents with structure

so that they could follow the logic and the line of questioning. The questionnaire was anonymous and did not contain any information that could lead back to identifying any respondent. The questionnaire was designed on an online platform. The URL was distributed to all staff through the global mailing lists at the regional office and the entire regional office staff formed part of the sample. Twenty-nine participated in the study, four declined to answer questions and fourteen ignored the request entirely. The response rate represented just over 62%. The responses collected from the online questionnaire were automatically stored in a spreadsheet.

There were two sets of data, numerical data and narrative data. Numerical data was a representation of the 5-point Likert scales that were used in the questionnaire. Data was analyzed using tallies and percentages to show how the participants had responded. Narrative data was analyzed using codes and keywords. These codes and keywords were used to form themes which then gave meaning to what the participants were saying (Kawulich, 2004).

The profile of participants are summarized in Tables 1 to 3.

Period	Number
20-30 yrs	2 (7%)
31-40 yrs	6 (21%)
41-50 yrs	14 (50%)
51-60 yrs	6 (21%)

**Table 1:** Respondent age

Role	Number
Advisor	5 (18%)
Analyst	4 (14%)
Assistant	4 (14%)
Associate	6 (21%)
Specialist	9 (32%)

**Table 2:** Respondent job roles

Period	Number
0-5 yrs	11 (39%)
6-10 yrs	10 (36%)
11-15 yrs	3 (11%)
Over 15 yrs	4 (14%)

**Table 3:** Respondent KM experience

The case study organization was a regional office for the east and southern Africa region. As a result, most of the staff at such an office are specialists and associates, and this is the reason why these two categories represented the majority of the responses. The advisors' group had 5 responses followed by the analysts and assistants' groups that had 4 responses each, representing 5% and 4% respectively. Three of the 4 respondents that had over 15 years' experience were advisors, 2 of which were between 51 and 60 years old with over 15 years of work experience within the case study organization.

## 4 Data analysis and findings

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of organizational culture on knowledge management in a multilateral organization. In this section we present the results in 3 sections focusing on KM, culture and then the interrelationship and impact between the two.

### 4.1 KM in the case study organization

One of the best-known conceptual frameworks for understanding the knowledge-generating processes that many organizations go through was created by Nonaka (1994) i.e. the SECI model. Nonaka (1994) considered knowledge creation as a dynamic process where continuous dialogue between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge generates and amplifies new knowledge. Through the SECI model, the theory of knowledge creation was formalized based on the two types of knowledge tacit and explicit (Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000). The SECI model is a depiction of the four knowledge conversion modes that are realized by switching from one type of knowledge to another. The KM findings for the case study organization is shown in Table 4. Following Table 4, we define the mode of knowledge conversion where after we report the findings for each of the knowledge conversion modes.

Dimension	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Socialization	0 (0%)	11 (44%)	9 (36%)	2 (8%)	3 (12%)
Externalization	0 (0%)	3 (12%)	4 (16%)	12 (48%)	6 (24%)
Combination	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	4 (16%)	13 (52%)	6 (24%)
Internalization	1 (4%)	13 (52%)	3 (12%)	5 (20%)	3 (12%)

**Table 4:** KM findings for case study organization

- Socialization - Farnese, Barbieri, Chirumbolo, and Patriotta (2019) described this process as one where tacit knowledge is exchanged between individuals through shared experiences and social interactions. Forty-four percent of the respondents said that this method was not used while 36% were not sure. Twenty percent of the respondents agreed that this was one of the methods used for data creation. Further analysis revealed that the few respondents that said this method was in use were senior employees, most with about 15 years of experience in knowledge management. On the other hand, junior staff comprise most of the respondents that disagreed that this method of knowledge creation was being used. Seven of these had only worked for the organization for a period ranging between 0 and 5 years. They also had 0 to 5 years of experience in knowledge management.
- Externalization – this process occurs when tacit knowledge is converted to new explicit knowledge. This process according to Farnese et al. (2019) the process involves converting tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge in the form of written documents, images and concepts. Seventy-two percent of the respondents agree that one of the ways knowledge is created is through externalization. This is achieved through the use of specialists in the subject area writing down guidance and process documents which are then distributed across the organization. Six of the respondents could neither confirm nor deny if this was being done in the organization. Three of the 4 respondents that were not sure were still new in the organization. They also had less than 5 years of experience in knowledge management. Twelve percent confirmed that the method had been used a few times in the past.
- Combination – occurs when explicit knowledge is converted to explicit knowledge. When organizational explicit knowledge is pooled together, some of it may be updated, some edited or merged to form more up to date information (Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000). Seventy-six percent of the respondents confirmed that this method is often used for creating the organization's knowledge. Sixteen percent of the respondents were neutral, they could neither confirm nor deny if this was one of the methods that they used for knowledge creation. Only 2 responses, representing 8% of the respondents denied having this method as the main one. They said that it was just used a few times in the past and never again. Further analysis revealed that of the 8% that were not aware one was in a senior position but still new in the organization while the other one was a junior employee with little experience in knowledge management.
- Internalization – when explicit knowledge is converted to tacit knowledge this process is internalization. This equips people to start applying the new knowledge in real-life practical situations in their day-to-day work (Nonaka, 1994). Fifty-six percent of the respondents said this method was not a dominant method of knowledge creation. Thirty-two percent however agreed that internalization was one of the methods used to create knowledge. Twelve percent of the respondents could not say and were neutral.

A source of knowledge is a place where one goes when they need information relevant to their current task or profession. In other organizations, some would go to the library, or consult others, even use an online system. Statistics presented here are based on the frequency count as represented in the collected 28 responses. In the case study organization, 56% of the respondents said the intranet was their source of knowledge. The intranet is available to all employees and is accessible from any device

with an internet connection. Employees gain access after logging in using their credentials as provided by the organization. On the portal, all the organization's information is made available, including the policies and procedures. All the respondents mentioned this as their source of knowledge. The second biggest source of knowledge was the policies and procedures manuals as identified by 32% percent of the respondents. Even though these manuals are available on the intranet, only 4% of the respondents use hard copies as their source of knowledge. These copies were stored in a library, where users could walk in and borrow. Further analysis of the demographics of respondents that used hard copy manuals showed that the older employees, over 50 years are the ones that used this source. The organization through its human resources department has created several training courses, most of them are online, that are mandatory for every staff member. The mandatory courses are linked to the employee's performance management system. These courses are about the organization and its mandate which should be known by all its employees. These courses were identified by 24% of the respondents as a source of their knowledge. The demographic information of these respondents revealed that these were by all staff members from newcomers to the old guard, as well as juniors and advisors. Other respondents cited the use of other organizational publications, meetings, seminars and training workshops as their sources of their knowledge. Meetings and seminars and training workshops are held regularly throughout the year. The main purpose of these meetings will be to discuss a specific subject. They are focused discussions on their subject area. Only 4% of respondents cited these as their source of knowledge.

## 4.2 Culture of case study organization

Respondent views regarding organizational culture is shown in Table 5 and is reported according to Hofstede's (2011) six organizational culture dimensions.

Dimension	Dimension	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
Organizational effectiveness	Results orientation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (12%)	16 (64%)	6 (24%)
	Process orientation	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	18 (72%)	5 (20%)
Customer orientation	Internal focus	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	6 (24%)	18 (72%)
	Ethics external focus	21 (84%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
Level of control	Level of control	7 (28%)	16 (60%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)
	Strict culture	1 (4%)	2 (8%)	3 (12%)	17 (68%)	2 (8%)
Focus	Professional organization	3 (12%)	1 (4%)	17 (68%)	3 (12%)	1 (4%)
	Local organization	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	19 (76%)	1 (4%)	3 (12%)
Approachability	Open system	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	5 (20%)	15 (60%)	4 (16%)
	Closed system	12 (48%)	10 (40%)	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
Management philosophy	Employee orientation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (28%)	15 (60%)	3 (12%)
	Work orientation	10 (40%)	12 (48%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

**Table 5:** Respondent feedback on culture in the case study organization

The findings show that over 80% of the respondents agreed that their organization focused more on how their work was done. Only 3 respondents chose to remain neutral, 2 of these were very senior staff with over 15 years of experience in knowledge management. It is more important for the employees to follow their processes in the way they do their work. According to Zeqiri and Alija (2016), a process-oriented is bureaucratic and is risk-averse. Ninety-two percent of the respondents agreed that their organization was focused on what work was done. One person was undecided and the other one disagreed. Ninety-six percent of respondents agreed that ethics and integrity mattered most in their day-to-day work, with 72% percent of them in total agreement. These findings show that this organization

is internally focused. This means that although the organization endeavours to meet their customers' needs, they will not do so at the expense of their ethical and integrity standards. Ethics and integrity of the organization's employees matter most as compared to meeting customer needs. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents said that they will not meet customers' needs if it means going against their ethical and integrity standards. Eighty-four percent strongly disagreed with the assertion, while another 4% disagreed. Eight percent remained neutral while only 4% agreed that ethics was not uppermost in the work they did. Eighty-eight percent disagree that there is little control and predictability in their organization. However, 8% agree that the organization has little control, while 3% decided to remain neutral. There seems to be no direct relationship between the 2 respondents that agreed with this notion as one is a very senior member, while the other is junior. The senior member has more than 15 years with the organization while the junior member has less than 5 years. Sixty-six percent of the respondents agree that their organization has a strict culture where people are serious and punctual. They are also very cost-conscious. Twelve percent of the respondents, however, do not agree with the assertion, while the other 12% decided to stay neutral. The majority, however, 68% percent are neutral, they neither agree nor disagree that they tend to work in silos in their organization. Sixteen percent of respondents are split on either side where some say they disagree, and an equal number says they disagree.

Seventy six percent of respondents agreed that in their organization new employees and outsiders were made to feel welcome. There are another 20% of respondents decided to remain neutral while 4% disagreed. Further analysis showed that the respondent who did not agree was a senior member of staff with over 15 years with the organization. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents disagree with the assertion that newcomers are made to feel out of place, while 8% decided to remain neutral. There are 4% of respondents that agreed with this assertion. Further investigation revealed that this was the same senior member of staff that disagreed with the previous comment as well. Over 76% of the respondents felt that their management was caring and that their personal issues were taken into account. However, 28% decided to stay neutral while no respondents were disagreeing. The majority of employees felt that their issues were considered by management.

### 4.3 Organizational culture and KM in the case study organization

This section presents how the respondents felt about the way in which their organizational culture was affecting knowledge management. These were free views of the respondents based on their personal experiences within the organization and findings were based on the frequency count.

Over 60% of the respondents noted that the organization was rigid, set in its ways based on policies and procedures, resistant to new ideas and had frustrating levels of approvals and red tape. The rigid nature of the organization was making it difficult to introduce new ways of doing things. The rigidity produced resistance to new ideas and new ways of doing things thereby hampering innovation. This became a constraint as creating new knowledge became a futile exercise as no new knowledge would be accepted. The standard of doing work according to others was the same, based on old policies and procedures, with no room for new and creative ideas according to seven percent of the respondents. No innovative idea or process could be implemented without approval. Even if new knowledge was created, because of bureaucracy and red tape, getting that knowledge to be approved for use was a lengthy and frustrating process. The process went through many levels of approval, and at each level, questions were asked. Many of the processes were abandoned midway because people ended up losing interest. The approvals were said to be frustrating.

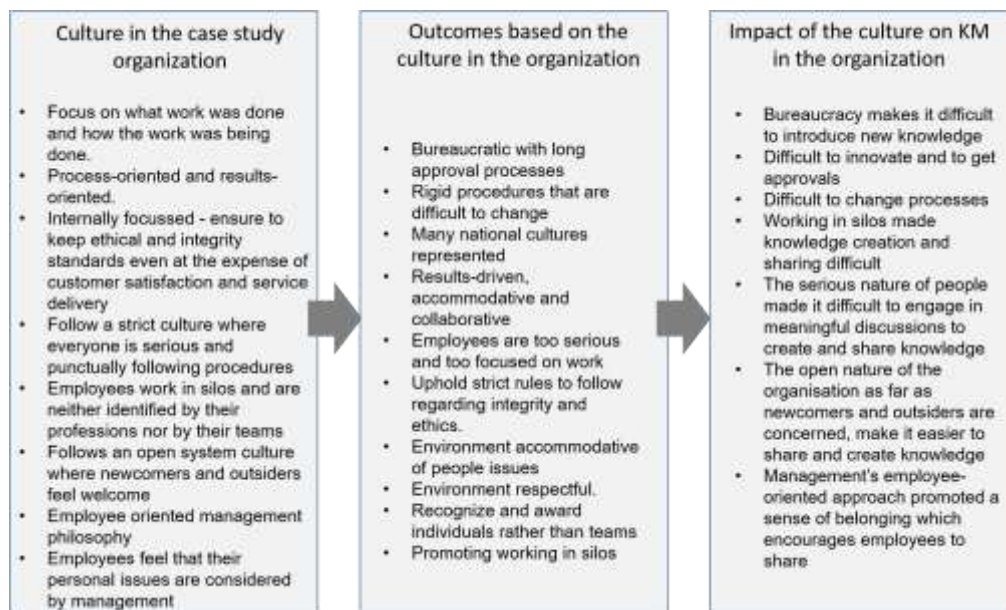
Seven percent of the respondents said that the culture of working in silos made it difficult for people to be open about knowledge creation and affected their willingness to share knowledge. Other 4% said that the organization promoted working in silos by recognizing and rewarding individuals as opposed to rewarding and recognizing teams. This created the idea of working in silos and as individuals. There are 7% of respondents that felt that the people in the organization were too serious and were difficult to



engage, making knowledge sharing and creation difficult. There were 11% of the respondents that felt that organizational culture did not affect the knowledge management processes in their organization.

## 5 The effect of organizational culture on KM in a multilateral organization

The objectives of this research paper is to consider the effect of organizational culture on KM in a multilateral organization. Based on the data collection and analysis, the effect of organizational culture in the case study organization is summarized in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Impact of culture on KM in the case study organization (summary of research data)

Organizational culture and knowledge management are some of the most pervasive in any organization. These two were also identified as organizational capabilities in the case study organization, which are tools that management can use to achieve organizational objectives. The management of these two pillars needs to be done in a way that minimizes the negative effects of organizational culture on knowledge management.

One of the barriers that are created by organizational culture is when an organization becomes very process-driven. A process-driven organization is one where everything is done according to a predefined process, and such organizations tend to be bureaucratic (Verbeeten & Speklé, 2015). In a process-driven organization, the amendment and updating of processes is a very difficult process that takes very long to accomplish. Such organizations are therefore very rigid in nature. Learning of new things is also very important in such organizations because they cannot just implement the new things, they learn without amending their processes, which has already been said to be a difficult process. These characteristics are shown in Figure 1 as findings of the case study organization. The knowledge management processes of knowledge creation and knowledge sharing are greatly hindered by organizational cultures that are bureaucratic, rigid and unwilling to learn and implement new things.

These conditions were experienced in the case study organization as shown in Figure 1, and therefore created a barrier to knowledge management.

Organizations that adopt the closed approach, where there is no free expression of oneself, where employees feel oppressed and suppressed, also create a barrier to knowledge management. In such organizations, there is no free flow of information between individuals, between different units and within the entire organization. Such an environment is detrimental to knowledge creation and sharing. For knowledge creation and sharing to be successful, the environment should also be conducive, allowing free expression and free flow of information. When these conditions do not exist in an organization, then a barrier to knowledge management is created. In the case study organization, Figure 1 illustrates that there were elements of dictatorship that was identified, as well as having employees working in silos. These have a negative effect on knowledge management.

Organizations whose culture promotes competition among employees creates a highly individualistic culture, where individuals care only about themselves and not the greater good of the team. In such organizations, teamwork is destroyed, and people work in silos, detached from the rest of the organization. Rewards and recognitions are given to individuals and not to teams as shown in Figure 1. Such an environment destroys the organization's ability to create new knowledge and effectively disseminate it across the organization. In a highly individualistic organization, the competition between employees may end up affecting the achievement of organizational objectives. These conditions create a barrier to knowledge creation and knowledge sharing as these processes are community-driven and should involve many people to realize success. In the case study organization, employees were working in silos and rewards were given to individuals thereby creating an environment that is a barrier to knowledge creation and sharing.

## 6 Conclusion

The objective of this research study was to investigate the effect of culture on knowledge sharing in a multilateral organization as the case study organization.

Management involved in knowledge management should be aware that organizational culture is both an enabler and a constraint to knowledge management. Understanding when organizational culture is a hindrance and when it is an enabler becomes critical for knowledge managers. In instances where organizational culture is a hindrance, managers need to find a way to minimize the effects and impact on knowledge management processes. Equally important, when organizational culture is an enabler, knowledge managers should capitalize and maximize on the effects to get the best possible result on the impact on knowledge management. Knowledge managers must be aware and appreciate the fact that organizational culture is pervasive and will always be part of the organization. Organizational culture should be viewed by managers as one of the tools that they can use to realize their knowledge management goals, by knowing when and how to use it, and when and how not to use it. The areas of organizational culture and knowledge management are two very broad subjects. There are so many areas that can be explored about how these two fields influence each other. Given the time and resources limitations of this study, it ended up looking at a very narrow part of these broad subjects. There is room to explore more broadly how these two areas influence each other, especially how organizational culture influences knowledge management processes.

By understanding the impact of culture on KM, organizations may address potential barriers to KM and optimize the value of their KM effort. The approach of the study focused only on the knowledge creation and –sharing processes of KM. KM has many processes e.g. knowledge acquisition, knowledge capture, knowledge storage, knowledge retrieval, etc. which were not part of the study. There is a need to further explore if the rest of the knowledge management processes are affected by the organizational culture in the same way as knowledge creation.

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