

## **Organizational Culture Elements and Its Impact on Knowledge Sharing Behavior**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The research aimed at examining the impact of organizational cultural elements on knowledge sharing behavior in organization. Nature of the research is quantitative. A questionnaire which was developed from previous study was used for collection of data. For testing of research hypotheses Multiple Regression Analysis was used. Three out of four independent variables had significant impact on knowledge sharing behavior in organization while reward had no significant impact on knowledge sharing behavior. The sample size of data was 132 with 95% confidence interval and margin error of 5%. Convenience sampling technique was used for collection of data.*

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**Key words:** Knowledge Sharing, Organizational Culture, Elements

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge sharing is of utmost importance, considering contemporary world economy knowledge is deemed to be strategically one of the most important resource of an organization (Islam et al., 2014). Therefore, to effectively manage this resource is considered to be an important challenge faced by organizations (Al-Alawi et al., 2007). Knowledge shared between employees and departments helps in transferring of individual or group level expertise into organizational level expertise, which helps in the effective process of knowledge management (Cavaliere & Lombardi, 2015). According to some research conclusions, sharing of knowledge is critical to organizational success because it helps in deploying knowledge to those sections of organization which can greatly benefit from it (Habib et al., 2014). When relevant knowledge is shared by individual in organization, it benefits organization in increasing its resources and decreasing time wastage which serves as competitive advantage for organization (Kathiravelu et al., 2014). However, if knowledge is not shared and kept hoarded it will lead organization into demise (Oyemomi et al., 2019). Therefore, it is vital to know that which components complements sharing of knowledge behavior inside an organization, thus an important area of research (Suppiah & Singh Sandhu, 2011).

Organizational culture is essential to knowledge sharing behavior in organization, certain aspects of organizational culture greatly contribute to knowledge sharing behavior between individual, groups and different departments of organization (Oyemomi et al., 2019). Competitive advantage is essential in order to operate in the market for longer run, this competitive advantage is achieved through innovation and the ability to remain inimitable both of which cannot be achieved, if knowledge is kept hoarded and not shared amongst different functions of an organization (Wai Ling et al., 2009). Considering this, culture of an organization performs a crucial role in expediting sharing behavior of knowledge inside organization. Previous studies have confirmed the vital role of organizational cultural elements in successful knowledge sharing between members of an organization both in developed and countries those are in developing stage (Chow & Chan, 2008; Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Kathiravelu et al., 2014; Oyemomi et al., 2019; Suppiah & Singh Sandhu, 2011; Wai Ling et al., 2009). But there is lack of evidence as far as

organizations in Pakistan are concerned. Taking this into account, the goal of this research was to examine the impact of organizational cultural elements on the eagerness of sharing knowledge between and among individuals in Pakistani organization. The outcome of this research will give organizational management an insight as to which factors are more necessary and require more consideration in order to improve knowledge sharing behavior in organization.

The research aims at examining the effect of organizational cultural elements on sharing behavior of knowledge. To analyze the effect of all cultural elements was beyond the scope of research work because of the limited resources and time constraints. Therefore, the need to examine influence following research hypothesis deduced;

- H1. There is association between trust and knowledge sharing in organization.
- H2. There is association between communication between staff and knowledge sharing in organization.
- H3. There is association between reward and knowledge sharing in organization.
- H4. There is association between organizational structure and knowledge sharing in organization.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Defining knowledge and knowledge sharing**

Knowledge according to (Al-Alawi et al., 2007), is a “fluid mixture of experiences, contextual information, values and knowledgeable understanding that provide a framework for assessing and integrating new capabilities and information”. Other authors have defined knowledge, “state of knowing that leads to establish facts, principles, laws, insights, judgements, intuition, feelings and casual relationship” (Ahmed et al., 2014). Owing to the ongoing globalization, dynamic environment and technological challenges faced by contemporary organizations has led to an increase attention to develop and preserve internal skills and capabilities (Oyemomi et al., 2019), which simply means that for organizations to remain relevant and viable, they should not only focus on acquiring and sustaining knowledge but also share it with other individual and operating units of organization ( Ling et al., 2009). Knowledge sharing is defined as propagation of knowledge and information across the organization (Issa & Haddad, 2008). Higher tendencies towards sharing of knowledge aids organization in organizational processes and transferring of new ideas or solution (Zhang et al., 2019). When employees interact for the objective of generating an idea knowledge distribution is promoted (Ahmed et al., 2015.). In literature, sharing of knowledge takes place through two different ways. Some writers consider it as a portion of exploration (Swan et al., 1999) while other consider it as process of exploitation (McElroy, 2003). When existing knowledge is acquired, transferred and use in similarly seeming situation is called exploitation, while it is called knowledge exploring when knowledge is shared, organized and formation of new knowledge take place at the end (McElroy, 2003). (Ahmed et al., 2014) views that knowledge sharing as a part of exploitation (integration) and exploration as (production) are two different phenomena. Integration take place when knowledge is shared instantly among different individual through one individual, while knowledge as a production takes place through group discussion, solving a problem while working together enables them to dig out answers to the problem and solution to the problem together (Giri et al., 2014).

### **2.2 Organizational cultural elements and knowledge sharing**

Organization culture is the basic assumption and beliefs shared by members of organization, operated unconsciously and described in a taken for granted manner (Issa & Haddad, 2008). Organization culture as a concept started off seriously in 1980 (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). They argued that basic shared assumption and beliefs, taken for granted values and already existent expectations were mainly responsible for ignoring organizational culture as an important factor. Organizational culture that is supportive will induce knowledge sharing which in turn will lead to effective achievement of organizational goals (Kathiravelu et al., 2014).

Every organization has its own distinctive culture that is developed over time which mirrors culture in two dimension; that is observable and obscure (Al-Alawi et al., 2007). The observable aspect is expressed in terms of “embraced values, philosophy and mission while invisible is about unspoken values that guides actions and opinions in organization” (McDermott & O’Dell, 2001). (Ahmed et al., 2014), found out that elements such as trust, communication between staff, leadership are directly associated to knowledge sharing behavior in organization. (Issa & Haddad, 2008) also highlighted the critical nature of trust as a cultural element that induces knowledge sharing. (Chow & Chan, 2008; Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Oyemomi et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019), emphasized that elements such as trust, reward, communication and organizational structure have direct relationship with knowledge sharing behavior in firms. Employees are motivated to share knowledge willingly if the person or group in question is trustworthy (Rutten et al., 2016). Considering the abovementioned discussion, the literature points out towards that cultural elements do boost knowledge sharing behavior. Since the research is intended to evaluate how cultural elements; trust, information system, reward and organizational structure are associated to knowledge sharing, considering the earlier work done the next section focuses on how these cultural elements impact knowledge sharing behavior.

### **2.2.1 Trust**

Trust whether interpersonal or between co-employees plays a significant role in sharing of knowledge and is considered as an essential attribute in organizational culture (Rutten et al., 2016). There is presence of trust when exchange of information or knowledge takes place without hesitation and the trustor believes to have positive implication of shared knowledge for the trustee (Bakker et al., 2006). When it comes to trust, it is a very broad concept and literature is filled with it, in over 48 years of research (McEviley & Tortoriello, 2011) found somewhat 148 types of definitions. As the scope of this research is confined only to interpersonal trust and trust between co-employees, therefore, it rules out other type of trust used in literature such as trust between organization and customers and trust between organizations (Rutten et al., 2016). According to (McALLISTER, 1995) trust are of two types;

1. Cognitive based trust; a type trust which leads trustee and the trustor to build solid connections and remove any form of uncertainty from the relationship.
2. Affect based trust; when trust takes times to evolve and is emotional in nature.

(Rutten et al., 2016) state that, trust that is cognitive based will negatively affect knowledge sharing in a team, while trust that is affect based trust will positively effect knowledge sharing and the reasoning they provide for it is that in cognitive based trust the co-worker is believed to be competent enough in a certain area and any knowledge shared will be redundant because of the believe that the information will already be possessed by the colleagues, on the other hand affect based is positively related because there is higher degree of confidence of knowledge provider in knowledge seeker.

Previous studies have confirmed the role of trust in sharing of knowledge between or group of employees, if the element of trust is there between trustor and trustee, the tendency to share knowledge is more and vice versa (Chow & Chan, 2008; Giri et al., 2014; Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Issa & Haddad, 2008; Oyemomi et al., 2019). As trust plays an important role in sharing of knowledge therefore, organizations need to put

keen attention to trust as an organizational cultural element in order for knowledge to move freely in organization (Issa & Haddad, 2008). Therefore, it is hypothesized that;

- H1: There is positive association between trust and knowledge sharing behavior.

### **2.2.2 Reward system**

Having a reward system is crucial for employee's motivation towards sharing of knowledge among themselves and between several other sections of organization, lack of motivation may lead some employees to hoard on to knowledge rather than share it (Ahmed et al., 2014). Oliver and Kandadi (2006) states that organizational rewards serve as a stimulating force which motivates individuals of organization to share information and foster a knowledge culture. They proposed that reward such as appreciation and recognition greatly contributes to knowledge sharing. Similarly, economic rewards also plays its part in sharing of knowledge (Issa & Haddad, 2008). But many authors suggested that in long term, non-monetarily should be incentivized (Chow & Chan, 2008; Habib et al., 2014; Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Issa & Haddad, 2008). Ling et al., (2009) discloses that in order to encourage knowledge sharing it should be linked with performance appraisal and rewards. They also revealed that top management support is also crucial in this regard. Contrary to Ling et al., (2009), other authors are of the view that monetary rewards are more effective in inducing knowledge sharing (Giri et al., 2014; Habib et al., 2014; Issa & Haddad, 2008; Kathiravelu et al., 2014; McALLISTER, 2020). (Al-Alawi et al., 2007), revealed that leaders or managers should take into account the significance of cooperation and sharing of best methods when it comes to designing reward system. Hence hypothesized;

- H2: There is positive association between reward and knowledge sharing behavior.

### **2.2.3 Communication between staff**

According to (Wai Ling et al., 2009b), communication refers to the oral conversation and use of body language between human interactions to communicate an idea. Former studies reveals that communication adds to sharing of knowledge as it is linked to trust in several interorganizational relations (Ahmed et al., 2014; Chow & Chan, 2008; Habib et al., 2014; Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Kathiravelu et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2019). Smith and Rupp (2002) also divulged that in order to encourage knowledge sharing between co-workers interaction between them is fundamental. Similarly (Ahmed et al., 2014) study also concluded that communication between staff is directly associated with sharing of knowledge in organizations. Overtly supportive organization culture support sharing and integration of knowledge into organization (Yang & Chen, 2007). In order to encourage participation among employees practices such as involving individuals to collect data from different sources, altering data into information through rationale and through interaction using that information to generate new knowledge (Safa & Von Solms, 2016). Therefore, organizations that fosters unrestricted movement of information among individuals can make knowledge sharing effective which will help in creating new knowledge and prove useful in reducing time waste and resource waste (Habib et al., 2014). Therefore, the third hypotheses is;

H3: There is positive association between communication between staff and knowledge sharing behavior.

### **2.2.4 Organization structure**

According to (Kathiravelu et al., 2014), organization structure is crucial when it comes to sharing of knowledge efficiently, structures that supports sharing of knowledge freely and with fewer boundaries between divisions is need of the hour when it comes contemporary organization operating in intense competitive environment. Structures that are bureaucratic in nature hinder the flow of information

because great amount of time is spent filtering knowledge through every level in organization (Al-Alawi et al., 2007). Earlier findings confirms that structure of organization is directly associated to sharing of knowledge behavior in organizations ( Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Oyemomi et al., 2019; Wai Ling et al., 2009a). Therefore, hypothesized as;

- H4: Organizational structure is association associated to knowledge sharing behavior.

### 3 RESEARCH MODEL

In the aforementioned literature it is evidently clear that there is absence of research in knowledge sharing behavior in organization in Peshawar, Pakistan. Literature pointed out to the significance of knowledge sharing behavior in organizations and how cultural elements positively effects knowledge sharing behavior. The purpose here is to link the gap in literature and see how organizational cultural elements impact knowledge sharing behavior. Theoretical framework of the research work is given below in figure 1.

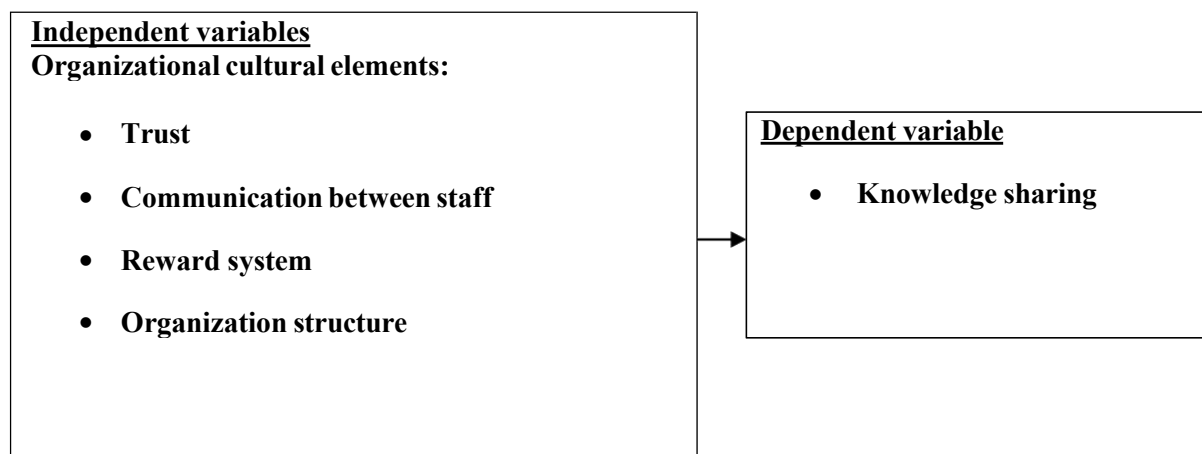


Figure 1- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical framework of this study is adopted from work of (Ahmed et al., 2014).

#### 3.1 Methodology

The research is quantitative in nature. The strategy adopted to carry out this research work was deductive in nature. First of all, related literature was reviewed and hypotheses were than derived. A structure questionnaire which was adopted from the work of (Al-Alawi et al., 2007) was used for the purpose of data collection. A structured survey questionnaire was distributed among top-to-bottom level managers for the purpose of acquiring data. A 5-point Likert scale was used to design the survey questionnaire. Adopted scale was as such;

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

Questionnaires were distributed in two service organizations namely Khyber Teaching Hospital and Lady Reading Hospital, where the population size was 200 and a sample size of 132 was calculated where the margin of error was 5% and confidence interval was 95%. Out of 200 population size 132 questionnaire

were used for data collection and result analysis. This process was carried out using convenience sampling technique as this sampling technique is supported by many researchers (Chow & Chan, 2008) and also considering the ongoing pandemic of covid-19 convenience sampling technique helped in collection of data given the time constraint. However, Cronbach's alpha was applied in order to assess the degree of internal consistency and reliability of all items in questionnaire. All items in the variables were separately tested. As far as testing the relationship between dependent and independent variables are concerned multiple regression analysis were used because of the nature of data and moreover similar nature of study was also conducted by (Ahmed et al., 2014) where he suggested using multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses.

### 3.2 Cronbach's alpha Reliability Test

Table No. 1 provides Cronbach's alpha results showed that internal reliability of all variables in questionnaire were beyond the accepted value of 0.5. The internal reliability of all items in questionnaire were between 0.620 and 0.819 which is above the recommended value 0.5. According to (Al-Alawi et al., 2007), no uniform explanation of alpha values exist but values normally exceeding 0.50 are considered acceptable while values below 0.50 are unacceptable.

**Summary of reliability analysis**

Variables	No of items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Trust	06	.620
Communication between staff	03	.719
Reward	03	.819
Organizational structure	03	.629
Knowledge sharing	04	.625

• **Table 1. Cronbach's alpha Reliability Test**

(Adapted from "Organizational culture and knowledge sharing: critical success factors" by Al-Alawi et al., 2007)

## 4 RESULTS (Demographic)

Table No. 2 provides described Gender Respondents, were asked in demographic section to provide information about their gender, age, education and work experience. 75% were male while 25% were female. In the category of age 25% were under 25, 45% belonged to 36-45 and 30% were above 45 years of age. Education wise, respondents ranged from intermediate level to post graduate level while position in organization wise, 10% of respondents were top level managers, 30% were middle level managers and 35% and 25% were lower-level managers and other respectively.

Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	99	75	75	100
Female	33	25	25	
Total	132	100	100	

• **Table 2. Demographic (Gender Respondents)**



## 5 HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypotheses were tried by means of multiple regression analysis. Statistical Package of social science (SPSS) was used to generate analysis. Table.3 exhibits the results. The hypotheses were examined to see the influence of organizational cultural elements on knowledge sharing behavior. Trust, reward, communication between staff and organizational structure taken as independent variables and knowledge sharing as a dependent variable. Analysis summary shows  $R^2$  value which is 0.714, as we know that value of  $R^2$  indicates strength of regression model, the nearer the value to 1 or 100% the stronger is the regression model. As the value here is 0.714 it means that 71.4% variation in dependent variable is explained by the independent variables. Independent variables in this case are; Trust, reward, communication between staff and organizational structure while the dependent variable is knowledge sharing behavior. The tolerance, VIF and conditional indexes were found to be in within the standard range which means that there is no problem of multicollinearity.

Likewise, Durbin Watson value 2.678 points out to the fact that no autocorrelation problem exists in the model. Out put summary shows the significance values of each independent variable against each variable respectively given as; trust (sig. =.034), organizational structure (sig. =.000) and communication (sig. =.004) were significant at 95% confidence interval level while reward (sig. =.745) had no significant influence on knowledge sharing behavior in organization.

Variable	Beta	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Trust	.164	.034	0.758	1.319
Reward	.017	.745	0.782	1.279
Communication between staff	.232	.004	0.671	1.490
Organizational structure	.378	.000	0.797	1.254
Knowledge sharing behavior				

**Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Summary**

**$R^2 = 0.714$ ; F value = 18.457\* $p < 0.05$ , Durbin Watson = 2.678.**

To sum up regression analysis output, it is concluded that the hypotheses deduced related to organizational cultural elements H1, H3, and H4 were accepted. Therefore, the following hypotheses are accepted;

- H1: There is positive association between trust and knowledge sharing behavior.
- H3: There is positive association between communication between staff and knowledge sharing behavior.

H4: Organizational structure is positively associated to knowledge sharing behavior.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The paper aimed at examining the impact of organizational cultural elements on knowledge sharing behavior in organization. Research results indicated that trust, organizational structure and communication are having direct and significant relationship with knowledge sharing whereas reward system has insignificant impact on knowledge sharing behavior.

### **6.1 Trust and Knowledge Sharing**

The outcome has proved that trust has positive and significant impact on knowledge sharing behavior. Research findings supports the outcomes of (Ahmed et al., 2014; Al-Alawi et al., 2007) research work. Other researchers have also found out in their studies that the extent of knowledge shared without obstruction between employees is directly linked with level of trust that exist between them (Rutten et al., 2016). Therefore, it is needed to have appropriate organizational culture to expand the level of trust among members of organization.

Considering today's competitive environment the competition not only exist among organizations but also among internal member of organization. Therefore, having an organizational culture where members of organization suspect their co-workers will lead them to keep knowledge to themselves because by sharing them with others might prove harmful for them as they will lose their power of uniqueness; therefore, this will lead members of organization not to openly disseminate knowledge with other co-workers in organization (Chow & Chan, 2008). Hence, a proper organizational culture that motivates employees to trust other members will improve the process of sharing of knowledge (Oyemomi et al., 2019).

### **6.2 Communication between Staff and Knowledge Sharing**

Outcome of the results demonstrated that there is direct association between communication and knowledge sharing behavior in organization. Other researchers also found positive relationship between the two (Giri et al., 2014). Organizations that endorses communication networks functioning freely will enhance knowledge sharing and formation of new knowledge in organization (Rowland, 2004).

### **6.3 Reward and knowledge sharing**

Though research showed an insignificant impact on knowledge sharing behavior because of lack of proper reward system in place, previous studies conducted in developed states revealed that reward system is directly related to behavior of sharing knowledge and is important for knowledge sharing behavior in organization (Kathiravelu et al., 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to have a properly designed and an operational reward system in place to persuade employees towards sharing of knowledge.

### **6.4 Organizational structure and knowledge sharing behavior**

Organizational structure and sharing of knowledge behavior were positively related when tested. And is also supported from other research works such as (Al-Alawi et al., 2007), according to their research supportive structure of organization is crucial for the seeming flow of interaction and knowledge sharing between and among employees as it speeds up the rate of information sharing.

## **7 KEY FINDINGS**

1. Research indicates that there is positive association between organizational cultural elements (trust, communication between staff, organizational structure) and knowledge sharing behavior. It shows the significance of knowledge sharing behavior for organizations and how cultural elements can enhance this process of sharing knowledge, therefore organizations need to focus on critical organizational cultural elements in order to induce knowledge sharing behavior.



2. From application points of view, it would give an insight to managers of organizations to identify what organizational cultural elements needs more focused and improving in order to cultivate an environment where knowledge is shared by members in organization.

3. This research has its limitations too because this study is limited to only two organizations. Therefore, the findings of this work cannot be generalized across all organization; moreover, the population and sample size of this research can also be improved by incorporating more organization into the scope of research by future researchers.

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