

Organizational Values and Knowledge Sharing in Public Institution: economic-public sector in Guatemala

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Abstract

The intention of this research is to analyse the relationship between organizational values and knowledge sharing, particularly in the public sector in developing countries. The research tries to demonstrate if values like trust, recognition, and cooperation are indispensable components that foster knowledge sharing in a public institution where the knowledge management process is not consolidated. An analysis is made based on the qualitative information collected through a questionnaire distributed to 13 high-level executives and program executors of the public institution in Guatemala, Central America. The results emphasized that the values selected are important to foster knowledge sharing in developing countries.

Keywords: organizational culture, organizational values, knowledge sharing, public sector.

INTRODUCTION

The present pandemic has placed stress in the public sector around the world. The healthcare and economic systems are the most demanding sectors to overcome the global crisis. Knowledge Management (KM) process can improve public sector performance in time of crisis and propose innovate solutions.

Knowledge management processes are known and put in practice in developed countries in public sector (Du Plessis, 2006; Imam & Jagodič 2021). Researchers like Radevića, Dimovskib, Lojpura, & Colnarb, (2021) mention that knowledge management process help in the performance of public institutions. However, there is not enough research that can show the dynamics of knowledge management process in public sectors in developing countries.

Knowledge management process' main components can be identified as people, process, information, and IT. However, these elements are influenced by organizational values and most importantly,

organizational culture. It has been stressed that a specific ecosystem needs to be established to consolidate knowledge management process. The architecture of the social system defines the way people, technology, and knowledge resources are organized to form a knowledge management system (Serrat, 2017).

The main objective of this research is to analyse the relationship between organizational values and knowledge sharing. To satisfy this purpose, the following research questions were formulated: Are trust, recognition, and cooperation indispensable components that foster knowledge sharing in a public institution where knowledge management process is not consolidated? These questions were answered through a survey study focused on the evaluation of organizational values to promote knowledge sharing in public sector in a developing country. The qualitative information was collected through a questionnaire that was distributed to 13 high-level executives and program executors of the public institution in the Minister of Economy in Guatemala, Central America.

The content of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2, forms the theoretical framework of knowledge sharing and organizational values such as trust, recognition, and cooperation. Section 3 addresses the methodology and includes all the information found in the research process, and the procedure in which the study was conducted. Subsequently, Section 4, focuses on the findings in analysis of the questionnaires made to executives and program executors of the public organization. Lastly, the research is concluded and suggestions for further research are given in Section 5.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Knowledge is information that is organized, synthesized, or summarized, to enhance comprehension, awareness and understanding (Ipe, 2003; Leistner, 2010). Authors like McNerney (2002) mention that is “the awareness of what one knows through study, reasoning, experience or association or through various other types of learning”. Also, it is important to mention that knowledge is different from data and information but integrates both.

Davenport & Prusak (2000) identifies knowledge as “a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information”. It is important to stress that environment and values are essential to generate knowledge, as well as organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms. Knowledge is divided in tacit and explicit process, intangible and tangible forms. Where tacit knowledge is embraced in the minds of the experts, technicians or others, and there is not a documented process that can easily identify the ways of learning and teaching. The explicit knowledge is where the content has been captured in words, audio, video, or images. Sharing knowledge -implicit or explicit- improves the competitiveness of an organization.

The literature review made by Muller (2012) identify that culture and values are important for knowledge management process. Oliver & Kandadi (2006) embrace the term “Knowledge culture”, also Janz & Prasarnphanich (2003) mention the “knowledge-centered culture”, these authors emphasized the importance of organizational culture and values for successful knowledge management programs.

In knowledge management, culture it is an important enabler because it affects whether, how, and what kind of knowledge is managed (Muller, 2012). Organizational cultures are social constructs and

underlying patterns that shape cultural manifestations. The architecture of the social system or culture defines the way people, technology, and knowledge resources are organized to form a knowledge management system. That's how a specific environment needs to be created to foster knowledge management. In knowledge management, this is identified as the "organic paradigm" and De Long and Fahey (2000) describe four ways corporate culture influences knowledge processes:

1. Cultural assumptions influence what knowledge is and what kinds of knowledge are valuable enough to be managed.
2. Culture determines the relationship between individual and organizational knowledge, especially the property rights to certain types of knowledge.
3. Culture provides the context for knowledge and learning processes that is especially important for tacit knowledge.
4. Cultural assumptions directly affect knowledge generation, legitimization, and dissemination within the company.

Knowledge management is intended to understand the nature of the chaos, and to create methods, practices, and culture that utilize the ability of chaos to self-organize (Du Plessis, 2006). Holsapple & Joshi (2004) mention that knowledge management is "an entity's systematic and deliberate efforts to expand, cultivate and apply available knowledge in ways that add value to the entity, in the sense of positive results in accomplishing its objectives or fulfilling its purpose". Jaspahara (2004) identifies that knowledge management is an "effective learning processes associated with exploration, exploitation and sharing of human knowledge that use appropriate technology and cultural environments to enhance an organization's intellectual capital and performance". These authors emphasized in the values, environment, and performance of the organization. The knowledge management initiatives mostly include people, process, and technology for the acquisition, sharing and utilization of knowledge (Tiwana, 2000).

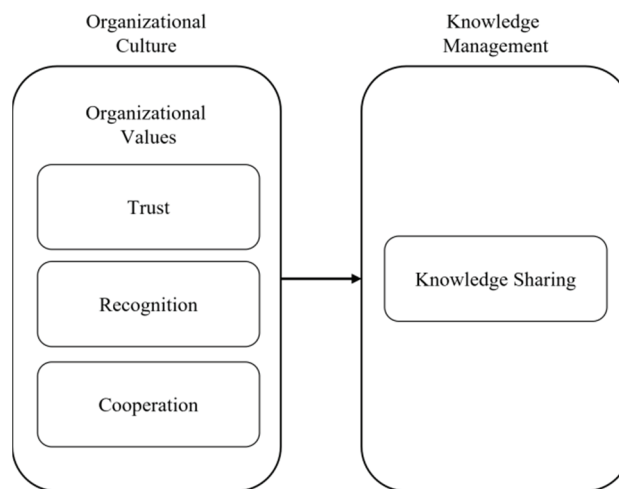
The private organization looks for mechanism to improve innovation and competitiveness, the public sector also considers improving public services. Knowledge sharing is an important component to improve organizations because it allows mutual exchange of ideas, experiences, skills, and information between team workers. Knowledge sharing is one of the most important elements of knowledge management process, that enables the consolidations of others mechanism of knowledge management. There are several tools that support knowledge sharing like internet, intranet, extranet, document management system, decision support system, database, practitioners' groups, virtual classrooms, e-learning systems, and others. Although, there are different barriers that prevents knowledge sharing, like resistance to change, lack of motivation, mistrust, staff rotation, fear of giving up power under the conduct of "information is power", difficulties in delegation, and resistance to questioning the status quo. In that sense, leadership is to promote knowledge sharing, and to foster an organizational environment proper to knowledge management process, such as building trust between the employees, accept mistakes and learn from them, ensure cooperation, give recognition, and give stability to the job's employees. A consistent positive attitude regarding the willingness to learn and share knowledge, and employees' lack of fear of losing their unique position if they are involved in knowledge sharing (Davenport et al. 1998).

Plessis (2006) indicates that there are cornerstone values for knowledge management, such as trust, respect, recognition, reward, and reciprocation. Mueller (2002) also identifies that there has been

important empirical evidence of knowledge culture and emphasized in the following values: trust, team orientation, autonomy, decentralization, willingness to take risks, tolerance of failure, friendship, fairness, long-term orientation, openness, process orientation, change orientation, and learning orientation. Although, it is important to analyse each one of them, to limit the research in a public sector context in a developing country where knowledge management process is not still consolidated, the following values will be endorsed. Additionally, these are the values that are mentioned the most in the literature review (Picture 1).

- a) Trust: is the chosen action of a person to act positively in a vulnerable situation for another one (Vanhala & Tzafrir, 2020).
- b) Recognition: means that people want to be valued for their role and their contributions in the knowledge management value chain (Stahle, 2006). Be valued by others for their role and their contributions in the knowledge management value chain, in a verbal or non-verbal action.
- c) Cooperation: is related when in an organization work together to achieve or deliver an outcome. To create a knowledge sharing culture the organization needs to encourage people to work together more effectively, to share – ultimately to make organizational knowledge more productive (Du Plessis, 2006, p. 6).

Picture 1: Relationship between organizational culture, values, and knowledge management



METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the relationship between values organization and knowledge sharing in a public organization where knowledge management process is not consolidating, the investigation used the framework developed in section 2, and in a qualitative method of a case-oriented research, it evaluates the following components: (a) trust, (b) recognition, (c) collaboration and (d) knowledge sharing (Table 1).

Table 1: Components to be evaluated

Components
Trust <ol style="list-style-type: none">Identify the dynamic of the peers when someone is in a vulnerable circumstance in his job.Analyze the action of the team leader when someone is in a vulnerable circumstance.Identify the action of the team leader when his organization is in vulnerable circumstance.
Recognition <ol style="list-style-type: none">Analyze the action of the leader in acknowledge someone of his team.Identify the verbal and non-verbal acknowledge between peers.Identify the verbal and non-verbal acknowledge of the organization.
Collaboration <ol style="list-style-type: none">Identify the regularity of teamwork.Identify the constant with other departments or organization.If there is a constant use of mechanism of sharing information.
Knowledge Sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify silo values or negative actions that prevents knowledge sharing.If the leader encourages his team to share knowledge to solve problem or improve their work.Identify if the leader gives important to share knowledge mechanism.

A questionnaire was elaborated and distributed to 13 high-level executives of the Minister of Economy of Guatemala in Central America. Their evaluation item was the Likert-scale: 1 = totally disagree, 2 = slightly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = strongly agree. Also, the questionnaire was developed with the consideration of the investigation of Du Plessis' (2006) identification of the three levels of knowledge management process. The individual level, team level, and organizational level.

In this sense, the Likert measure will allow a qualitative measure of high, medium, and low (Table 2), allowing to analyze the relationship between the chosen values of trust, recognition, and cooperation with knowledge sharing.

Table 2: Qualitative Measure

Qualitative Measure	Likert scale
High	4 = slightly agree, 5 = strongly agree
Medium	2 = slightly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree
Low	1 = totally disagree

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

To answer the research question of the investigation, 15 invitations were sent to senior advisers and

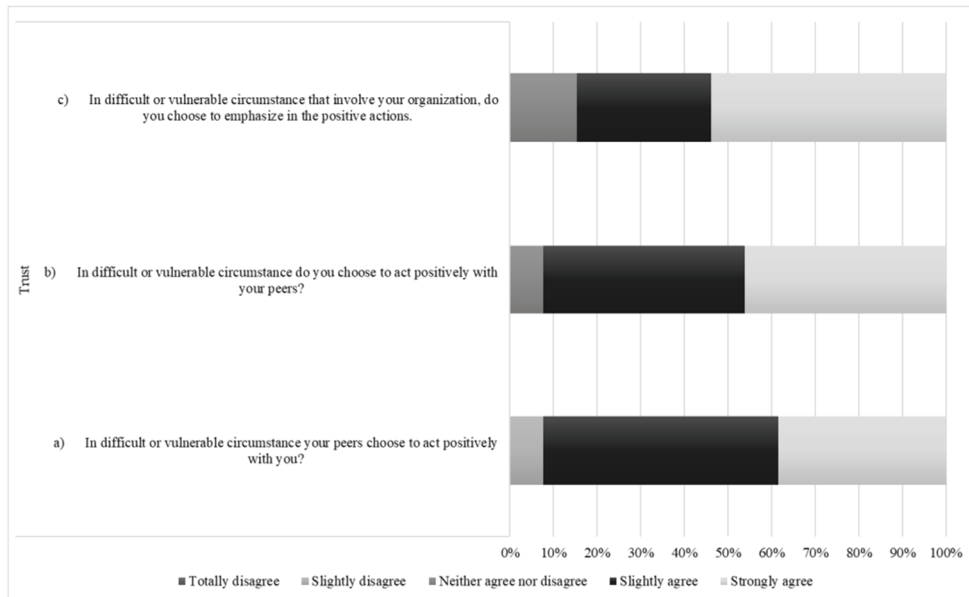
executives of the Minister of Economy. However, only 13 responded. The respondent profile of the questionnaire were 77% of women and 23% men. The ages were concentrated in the range of 28-36. 92% has a bachelor's and master's degree. It is important to mention in the profile of education, that one of the respondents has a high school diploma. The professions of people that answered the questionnaire were mostly lawyers and business degree holders. Most respondents were senior executives or advisers of the Ministry of Economy in Guatemala (Table 3).

Table 3: Respondent profile

Gender	
Women	23%
Man	77%
Age	
28 - 36	5
36 - 44	2
44 - 52	3
52 - 60	3
Education	
School degree	8%
Bachelor degree	46%
Master degree	46%
Profession	
Lawyer	5
Buissness	3
International Relations	2
Economist	1
Political Science	1
Administration	1
Job	
Senior Executive	2
Senior Adviser	4
Director	3
Others	4

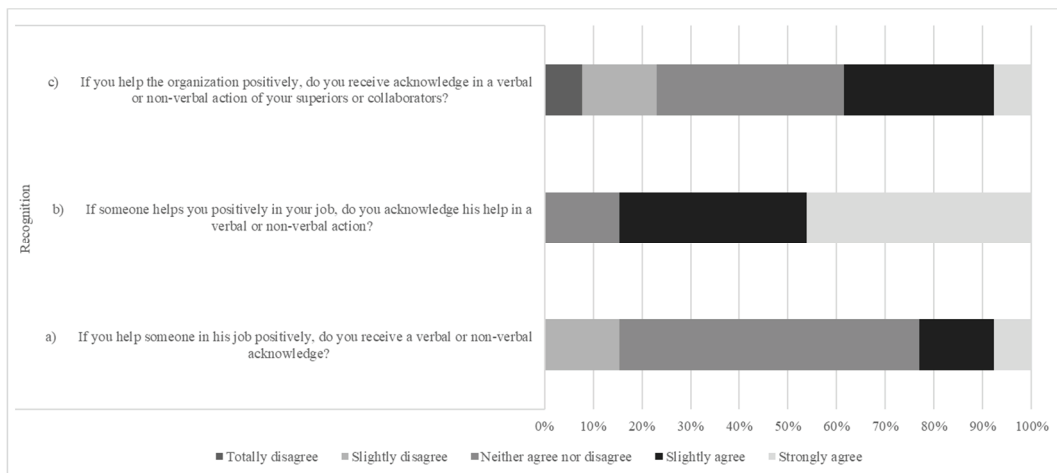
From the components identified in section 3, like trust, recognition, cooperation, and knowledge sharing, a series of questions were made. Pertaining to the trust value more than 90% of the answers are in high range. Also, it can be identified that trust can be more between peers than the organization where the answers to the question “c” are only 80% in the high range (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Trust Value



In Chart 2, it can be visualized the recognition value, and the results are mixed, having a high score regarding giving recognition to others, were more of the 80% of the respondent answer between sometimes, “slightly agree” and “strongly agree”; and a medium score in the question concerning of the organization recognition and from other peers. Being of the organization question with the only one of having “totally disagree” answer.

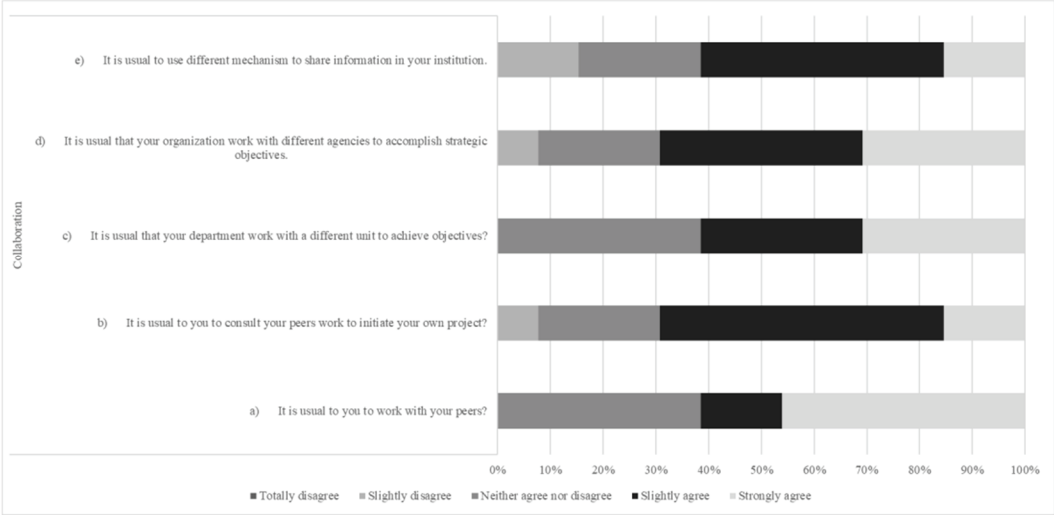
Chart 2: Recognition Value



In Chart 3, the collaboration value is analyzed, as in the recognition value the answers are mixed, between medium and high. For more of 50% of the respondents, it was very usual to work with their peers. More of the 80 % of the answers where in “slightly disagree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, and “slightly agree”. In the question “c” more of the 80% have “neither agree nor disagree”, “slightly agree” and “strongly agree” work with other department, in that sense is more usual to collaborate between other department than with peers. More of the 60% of the respondents identified that is “neither agree

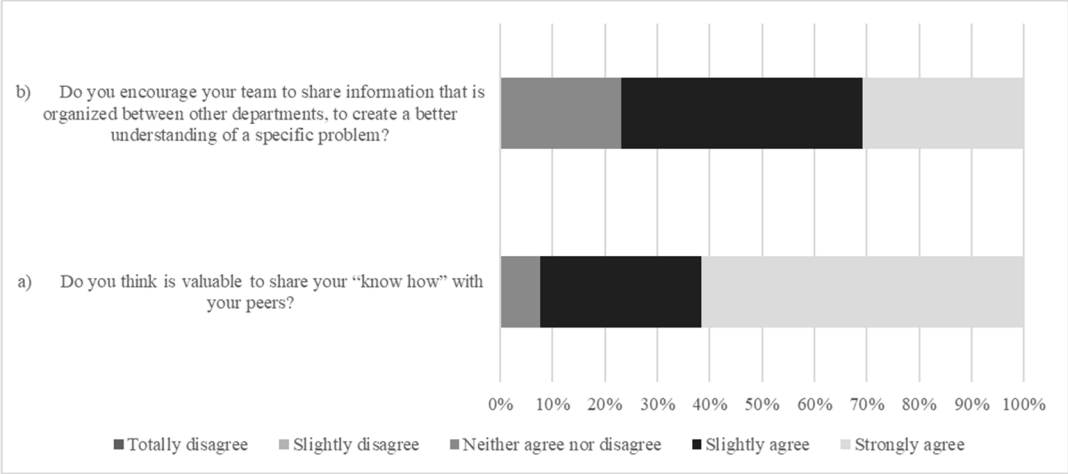
nor disagree”, “slightly agree” and “strongly agree” to the organization to work with external agencies. More of the 80% identify that it is usual to use different mechanisms to share information in their organization.

Chart 3: Collaboration Value



Finally, Charts 4 and 5, identify the awareness and practices of knowledge sharing in the public organization. More of the 90 % are of the respondents answered that they “slightly agree” and “strongly agree” think it is valuable to share their “know how”. More of the 75% identified that they encourage “neither agree nor disagree”, “slightly agree” and “strongly agree” the share information that is organized to other departments to create a better understanding of a specific problem.

Chart 4: Knowledge Sharing



Also, more of the 80% of the respondents are part of a group where they share structure information about work and to have a better understanding to improve their actions. More of the 90% of the respondents said it is important to give recognition and reward, that can improve others works. In that sense it can be qualified knowledge sharing as high.

Chart 5: Knowledge Sharing

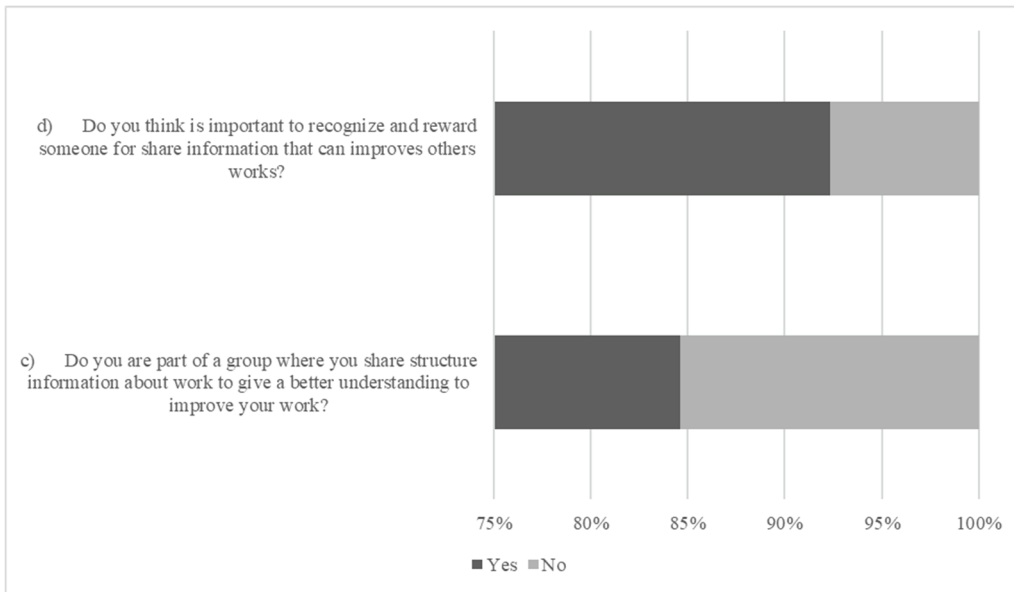


Table 4 summarizes the results of the qualitative research. It can be concluded that it is a high scale of trust in the organization, also that are mixed results of the recognition and collaboration values, lastly that there is a high awareness and practices of knowledge sharing in the Minister of Economy, that is one of the most emblematic organizations of the economic and public sector in Guatemala.

Table 4: Qualitative qualification between values and knowledge sharing

Component	Qualitative Scale
Trust	High
Recognition	Medium-High (mixed)
Collaboration	Medium-High (mixed)
Knowledge Sharing	High

CONCLUSION

Thorough qualitative methodology questions have been structured to evaluate the relationship of trust, recognition, and cooperation with knowledge sharing. The research identifies that in the Ministry of Economy in Guatemala, trust, recognition, and cooperation are important values that can foster knowledge sharing. This finding and further research can contribute to show that developing countries can implement knowledge management process that can improve public services and the well-being of their citizens. Also, the methodology used can be a tool to analyze knowledge management process in organizations -public or private-.

The result of the existing study assists public sector and knowledge management fields by evaluating knowledge management process in developing countries where knowledge management process is not

identified or consolidating. This study has its limitations regarding the number of respondents of the questionnaires and the consultant only to high senior advisors and directors. Further research can amplify the question to middle- leadership and operators. Additionally, it can evaluate more about the practices in public sector of tacit and implicit knowledge sharing and the tools that are used. This would lead to a better and more comprehensive overview on the relationship of organizational culture and values, with knowledge sharing in the public sector in developing countries.

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