

## The role of organizational culture in knowledge management (study in 6 state-owned companies)

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**Abstract:** Attention to knowledge will have an increasing role in the growth of organizations and communities. Managers have to examine the fundamental knowledge of their business and how to use it. The aim of this study is to provide an experimental resource for understanding the impact of organizational culture on knowledge management. Statistical population of this study consist of all managers in the companies of West Regional Electricity, water and sanitation of Kermanshah, Gas of Kermanshah, Regional Electricity of Isfahan, water and sewer and Gas in Isfahan province are working. Research method is descriptive and its purpose is survey. Tools of the data collection is two questionnaires, which one includes organizational culture that examines culture of the organizations from the perspective of Hofstede and other proposed questions about knowledge management and key factors influencing on knowledge management. According to the results of statistical analysis and Pearson correlation coefficients between "culture" and "knowledge management" there is strong and meaningful, positive relationship, as well as between human factors, information technology, reward and training programs, educational and learning with management knowledge was observed meaningful and positive correlation.

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### 1. Introduction

Knowledge is a critical investment for companies in arena of global competition. The scientific organization to achieve capabilities that are able to builds great power from low power, (8). Today, success in the labor market, with a knowledge that the organization can generate, speed of the knowledge and rate of accumulation of produced knowledge is directly related (9). Many factors influence the knowledge management in organizations that organizational culture is one of their most important and also have been investigated in the present study.

When people are doing in different parts of the organization, knowledge embedded in their minds. The value of this knowledge is reduced with time. Knowledge, skills and abilities can be developed by individuals and is used in other times and by other people. As a result, it is important, providing facilities for its maintenance during the performance of work in the organization and then availability to it for use in next time and by others. The leading organizations gather hidden knowledge of personnel and the working groups, that is said the "knowledge capital". In the texts of knowledge management, have been emphasized on improving the organizational culture to knowledge sharing. Knowledge management is a tool that allows administrators to apply knowledge,

and create good relations between the available knowledge and the current situation, maintain it and use it. (10) Because knowledge is based heavily on the individual and cultural characteristics of different species of individual plays a key role in the success of knowledge management (11), for this reason, cultures can plays a vital role in sharing and transferring knowledge within organization (12).

Organizational culture through the influence in the values of members of the organization and participation in personal behaviors against group behaviors influences the knowledge management. Organizational culture influences the transfer of knowledge, when the individual are involved in the process of knowledge management, they begin to reflect of values of their organization and with time, management can be part of the organizational culture (13).

### Goals and hypotheses:

The main objective of this study is examining culture of organizations from the perspective of Hofstede and then examining the effect of cultural factors on knowledge management in the companies of West Regional Electricity of West, water and sewage of Kermanshah, gas of Kermanshah, Regional Electricity of Isfahan Province, water and sewage of Isfahan province, gas of Isfahan.

The main hypothesis of the study: organizational culture on knowledge management has a positive effect.

**Sub assumptions:**

1. Between pluralism and knowledge management there is a meaningful and positive relationship.
2. Between documenting and knowledge management and existence of laws and regulations there is a meaningful and positive relationship.
3. Between avoiding from phenomenon of uncertainty and knowledge management there is a positive and meaningful relationship.
4. Between tend to woman and knowledge management there is meaningful and positive relationship.
5. Between human factors and knowledge management there is a meaningful and positive relationship.
6. Between knowledge management and information technology is meaningful and positive relationship.
7. Between knowledge management and reward there is a meaningful and positive relationship.
8. Between creating training programs, Educational and learning and knowledge management there is a meaningful and positive relationship.

**Study of research literature:**

**A: knowledge management:**

Complexity of knowledge concept and existence of various approaches about the knowledge management has caused to do not form a unique approach about the knowledge management. Soknan (8), says some definitions of knowledge management, is in such a way that have reduced it even to the level of data management. Malhotra says: "knowledge management is a process by which organizations in the field of learning (knowledge Internalizing), coding knowledge (external form of knowledge) and distribution and transmission of knowledge acquire skills " (14). Whig points out that knowledge management is systematic management of activities and implementing programs and policies related to the knowledge in an activity (15). Knowledge management is the art of creating value for organizations by intangible assets (16). Karl Whigs has the belief that knowledge management is creation of processes needed to identifying and attracting data, information and knowledge needed for the organization from internal and external environment and transfer them to the decisions and actions of organization and individuals (17).

Knowledge management has been developed

widely by Davenport and Perak (18). They define knowledge management as application and development of knowledge assets of an organization with an attitude to long-term goals of organization. Activities of knowledge management can help organization in the acquisition, storage and application of knowledge for processes such as problem solving, organizational learning, and strategic planning and decision (19), moreover knowledge management can support intellectual capitals (20). Knowledge management is integrated systematic process that applies suitable combination of information technology and human interact, to identify, manage, and share information capitals of organization (21). Depending on this which knowledge physically where place, can divide it into two types of explicit Knowledge and implicit (22). Explicit Knowledge is same formal Knowledge or hard that data, organizational procedures, soft wares, videos, reports, organizational mission statement and organizational chart are its obvious examples. (23). In contrast, implicit knowledge is personal and it is very difficult to formulating. This kind of knowledge obtains through the sharing of experiences by observing and imitating. Implicit knowledge and explicit are complementary together and this means that both are essential to build knowledge, so what we call knowledge create through interaction between explicit knowledge and implicit, not each one single (22).

Mason and Pauline done a study about understanding deduction of New Zealand managers from knowledge management and found: The most main objectives of applying knowledge management is including of: the threat of competitors, awareness from the importance of science and efficiency of knowledge management technology and biggest obstacles to successful implementation of knowledge management are: the organizational culture (lack of trust, communication and knowledge sharing) and also lack of awareness and understanding and insight about knowledge management and the most important factor of success of knowledge management is organizational culture (including the individual, trust, sharing) (23).

**B: organizational culture**

Several definitions of culture have been provided that are more than 160 definitions (24). One of the first definitions relatively comprehensive of culture in 1871 is presented by Taylor. He believed that culture is a complex set of science, knowledge, arts, thoughts, beliefs, laws and regulations, customs, traditions and in short, all of knowledge and habits that a human receive as a member of society (25 ). Results of research of Ms. Lehman (2003) show that

policies, plans of organization, financial position or share value None does not convert organization to suitable environment for working, rather what makes the organization an ideal work environment is employees' feelings than work environment (management, job and colleagues) and its culture. In a category, culture have categorized to strong culture and weak culture. So whatever more members of the organization accept core values and become more commitment than them, the aforementioned organization has a stronger culture (26). In fact, perception of employees is a mental and emotional perceptions that form from human relationships, human relations that employees have with managers and with their colleagues (21). In terms of very general, culture refers to the life way of a group of the individual (27). Culture divides into different levels (28). These levels consist of national culture, regional culture, organizational culture and professional culture (29), each of this multiple dimensions creates a sense of belonging in relationships with others, a sense of success, security and respect in the society (30). The Organizations to guide individual knowledge to organizational goals should create an environment for sharing, transfer, and confrontation of knowledge among members to (28).

GOLD and others conclude that supportive organizational culture has a positive effect on knowledge management activities. A study by Alavi (2005), emphasize on this subject that knowledge management activities is poor in most of organizations because they emphasize too much on the use of technology and ignore human, culture and subjects of organizational development that are essential for knowledge management, (10).

Hofstede studies different cultures and compare them together. He used questionnaires and surveys, in fifty-three country of the world done surveys and in this research identified four aspect of culture. These four aspects were as follows: power distance, ambiguity escaping or caution, individualism / pluralism and tend to man/ tend to woman (28).

Also in the discussion of organizational culture this point can be mentioned that in dynamic environments, organizations face with a range of unwanted issues and unforeseen situation which their control is difficult by a person in the organization. (31).

### **C: The impact of organizational culture on knowledge management**

There are two broad approaches in knowledge management, one emphasizes on the hard aspects of knowledge management while the other approach refers to aspects of its software. Hard aspects of

knowledge management are implementation and use of information technology that enables knowledge management activities that are done within the organization (32).

Information management is a critical factor in knowledge management and can handle knowledge (33). The purpose of the application of hard aspect of knowledge management is increase of access to knowledge through the use of new information technologies such as networks, group of tools, data warehouses and etc. (34). Soft aspect also examines sharing and transfer of knowledge in the organization. This approach considers knowledge as a process that forms of a complex set from dynamic skills. Soft approach requires a holistic view to the organization and knowledge, that it is essential that employees what that know shares in the organization (35).

Appropriate culture in an organization should be created to encourage employees to create and share knowledge. Creating and maintaining appropriate culture of knowledge sharing, is not an easy task and requires the cooperation of all parts of the organization. Without a benefit culture that rewards, encourages and organizes knowledge management activities, the function of knowledge management does not occur. Suitable Culture for organization can be defined as follows:

Creativity and innovation, was considered value.

Beliefs and assumptions of members of the organization were shared.

Learning and Individual and organizational development is important, individuals share their knowledge, creativity is adverted, people have together communicate and interact, and seek learning, there is incentive systems; access to knowledge of the others is 36.

### **Research method**

In this research type of research method is descriptive method. This study was based on the nature and objectives of the survey. We used a questionnaire to collect information that reliability and validity of questionnaire of knowledge management previously have been proven in research that had been done at the University of Finland (28). This questionnaire included questions about the importance of knowledge management in studied organizations, the role of human factors, information technology, reward and training programs, educational and learning in knowledge management. To examine the organizational culture, we use Hofstede questions (for investigating four aspects of individualism / pluralism, tend to man / tend to woman, power distance, avoidance of uncertainty) (6).

The statistical population consisted of all managers working in six state-owned companies (Regional Electricity of West, water and sanitation of Kermanshah, Gas Co of Kermanshah Province, regional Electricity of Isfahan, water and wastewater and Gas Company in Isfahan province). In this study whole of statistical population was used and sampling has not been done. To describe the demographic data from descriptive statistics and to analyze the questionnaire data were used of SPSS software and inferential statistics. It is worth mentioning in this study of 200 questionnaires were used.

**Describing data**

About questions of the questionnaire, obtained averages are compared together and the following results obtained (It is worth mentioning that about the proposed questions, the obtained average was a number between one to five, and its median is the number three).

Obtained average from questions that show the role of organizational culture in the development of the organization related to director came in Table 1 (Whatever the obtained number is larger indicates that organizational culture is an important factor in the development of the organization):

Table 1					
Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
4.31	4.28	4.25	4.37	3.85	4.25

Obtained Average from questions that shows power distance in discussion of organizational culture, have come in Table 2.

Table 2					
Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
1.81	2.07	2.33	3.14	2.92	1.75

Obtained average from questions that show ambiguity escaping in discussion of organizational culture has come in Chart of Table 3. (Whatever

obtained number is larger indicates that the tendency to escaping ambiguity and using from documenting of rules and regulations are more by managers).

Table 3					
Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
4.31	4.44	2.33	4.12	4.66	4.75

Obtained average from questions that show individualism / pluralism in discussion of organizational culture has come in the chart of Table 4 (Whatever obtained number is larger indicates that

for this reason that tendency to pluralism, by managers was more, numbers less than three show individualism):

Table 4					
Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
3.00	3.24	3.96	4.12	3.35	3.45

Obtained average from questions that show tend to man/ tend to woman in discussion of organizational culture has come in Table 5 (Whatever

obtained number is larger indicates which tend to man was more by managers, the numbers less than three show tend to woman):

Table 5					
Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
2.08	1.68	2.40	3.26	3.22	2.83

Obtained average from questions and that show the importance and the amount of attention to knowledge management in the development of the organization has come in Table 6 (whatever the

obtained number is larger indicates that the organization have given more important to knowledge management):

Table 6					
Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
2.69	3.13	2.40	2.80	3.28	3.25

Obtained Average from questions that indicate the role of human factors in knowledge management has come in Table 7 (whatever the obtained number

is larger, indicates that human factors have more full color and more important in the development of knowledge management):

Table 7					
Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
4.43	4.41	4.18	4.37	3.92	4.66

Obtained Average from questions that indicate the role of information technology in knowledge management has come in Table 8 (whatever the

obtained number is larger indicates that information technology has an important role in the development of knowledge management of organization):

Table 8					
Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
4.50	4.51	4.25	4.21	4.35	4.85

Obtained average from questions that show the role of training programs, educational and learning in the knowledge management has come in Table 9 (whatever the obtained number is larger, indicates

that these factors have an important role in the development of knowledge management of organization):

Table 9					
Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
4.46	4.45	4.12	4.66	3.50	4.84

Obtained average from questions that show the roles of reward and stimulator in knowledge management have come in Table 10 (whatever

obtained number is larger indicates that rewards play an important role in the development of knowledge management of the organization):

Regional electric of Isfahan	regional electricity of West	water and wastewater of Isfahan	Water and wastewater of Kermanshah	Gas of Isfahan	Gas of Kermanshah
3.47	3.97	3.85	4.40	3.64	4.41

### Data analysis

All of company consider your organizational culture from effective factors in the development of their organizations. In this field Water companies of Kermanshah largest score and gas in Isfahan the lowest score (average) gain.

Felt power distance by managers of Water and Wastewater Company of Kermanshah was more than average, but other companies have felt little power distance and in this field Gas Company of Kermanshah had the lowest average.

All surveyed companies have tend to ambiguity escaping (using written and documentary rules and regulations) and Gas Company in Kermanshah the largest and gas company of Isfahan had the lowest average.

Of the obtained averages from aspect of individualism / pluralism result that all companies are tend to pluralism and Water and Wastewater Company of Kermanshah Province is more pluralism than the rest. Except for water and Wastewater Company of Kermanshah province, which was tend to tend to man, the rest of companies was tend to woman and the Regional Electric of West Company was more tend to woman than companies rest.

Importance and attention to knowledge management in water and wastewater company in province the highest and the lowest number was in Regional Electric Company of Isfahan. Unfortunately, in any six surveyed companies were not given great importance to knowledge management.

Gas Company managers of Kermanshah Province than other companies have shown most attention to human factors as one of the key factors in knowledge management And Gas Company of Isfahan Province had the lowest average in this field.

About the role of information technology in knowledge management, too, Gas Company in Kermanshah province most importance and water and wastewater of Isfahan the least importance was given.

The role of training programs, educational and learning and knowledge management are considered important by all companies and in this field respectively gas companies in Kermanshah and gas of Isfahan Province had the highest and the lowest average.

Regional Electricity of Isfahan lowest and Water and Wastewater of Kermanshah Province the

highest attention to the role of rewards and stimulator in knowledge management had, and in all of examined companies have know effective, the role of reward in improve and advance of knowledge management programs.

According to the Pearson correlation coefficient 0.76 between the questions related to "the impact of organizational culture in advance of organization " and "knowledge management" can be said that there is a strong and meaningful, positive relationship between organizational culture and knowledge management. Organizational culture consists of assumptions, values and norms of organization, and knowledge as an organizational asset is considered that from the gained experience, values, conceptual information and expert insight has been formed. Organizational culture can be effective on knowledge management through impact on the values of the company and knowledge management with time begins to impact on the values of the company and become part of it.

According to Pearson correlation coefficient 0.455, between "power distance" and "knowledge management" there is a meaningful and positive relationship and this proves that if managers consult with subordinates in decisions and asked opinions of subordinates, a kind of identity giving come off, and increases their satisfaction and fulfillment. In studied statistical population, distribution of power was fair and difference of power distribution was low.

According to Pearson correlation coefficient 0.601, between "ambiguity escaping" and "knowledge management" there is positive and strong relationship. Conversion of implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge is one of the key objectives of knowledge management that cause risk reduction of losing knowledge even after leaving the company's cooperation of employees and the risk reduction of memory losing during adjustment of human resources. Therefore, laws and regulations on programs of knowledge management have a significant impact.

According to Pearson correlation coefficient 0.498, between "pluralism / individualism" and "knowledge management" there is a meaningful and positive correlation. Culture of individualism impedes the sharing knowledge, while in pluralism cultural, the identity of any individual determine based on his relationship with others, membership in

the group and attempt to socialize and collaboration with others. Because creation and transfer of knowledge requires people who for the exchange of ideas and sharing knowledge work together, hence the tendency of individuals to pluralism, have positive impact on the production of knowledge And create favorable conditions for the transfer of knowledge between individuals and groups.

In examining the impact of cultural factors on knowledge management in the studied statistical population, according to the results of statistical analysis, we conclude that between the human factors (Pearson correlation coefficient 0.59), Information Technology (Pearson correlation coefficient 0.52), reward and training programs, educational and learning (Pearson correlation coefficient. 0.49), with knowledge management there is positive, relationship. Since employees are the most important asset, in today's competitive world, are considered an essential component of the success and failure of organization and if this capital wants to move in line with the goals of the organization must be motivated with incentives. Rewards and incentives encourage programs of knowledge management and have a positive impact on activities of knowledge management. Continuous education also plays an important role in the implementation of ideas and staff participation in solving problems of business. Use of information technology makes that increase speed and accuracy of services and customers enjoy from a higher satisfaction. In one organization, existence of a culture that supports of learning, increases organization's ability to create new knowledge. Organizations with emphasis on learning help their employees to play a more active role in knowledge creation.

#### **Conclusion:**

Knowledge is considered as an asset of the organization, and provides a framework for evaluation, and the formation of new experiences in the organization. A Framework that was used in this article was examining the relationships between organizational culture and knowledge management that experimental evidences shows that there is a positive and meaningful correlation between these two variables.

Essentially it should be noted that the management of intangible and subjective thing like knowledge, is not possible. What that manages, is knowledge resources, technologies related to them, processes and techniques, and most importantly, the human element that is the source of all knowledge. The fundamental point behind the curtain of knowledge management this is that improvement of all the factors for the success of an organization, such

as organizational innovation, quality of products and services depends on the efficient use of knowledge.

Factors affecting for the success of knowledge management should be considered as a system, This means that values, beliefs, norms, collaboration among members of the organization, reward, learning and information technology together impact knowledge management and on finally, it is noteworthy if the determinant factor of organizational culture do not support values of knowledge management, organizations must consider cultural change and transformation or totally forget the idea of knowledge.

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