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Knowledge Management and the Nigerian Culture – A round peg in a square hole?

Research Paper

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge Management (KM) is a key strategy which many organizations have been leveraging upon because of its potential in achieving competitive advantage. However, factors such as the national culture can impact the efficacy of this strategy. Hence, the aim of this paper is to provide insight into how Nigerian culture influences organizational culture, which in turn influences KM practices in Nigerian organizations. Based on a post-positivist stance, this research employs a descriptive survey approach for the data collection and analysis while also incorporating Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The findings suggest that the hierarchical nature of the society in Nigeria supports centralized decision making; thus influencing the KM practices in Nigerian organizations. Secondly, our findings indicate that a masculine-based culture, which is characterized by the propensity to achieve, may align to the problem of employees exiting organizations. Thirdly, the findings suggest that the short term orientation of Nigerian organizations hinders commitment to relationships and values associated with motivating employees. This paper then concludes by highlighting that lack of trust prevails in Nigerian organizations, but there was no evidence substantiating that the religious and tribal diversities in Nigeria was responsible for it. This research has highlighted the characteristics of culture in a developing country that does not support organizations adopting knowledge management. It has identified the issues that need to be addressed before KM can be adopted, implemented and practiced successfully in organizations within developing countries with similar type cultures.

Keywords

Knowledge Management, Culture, National Culture, Organizational or Corporate Culture.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management, as a strategy, has been leveraged upon in different organizations because it plays a major role in enhancing organizational performance (Rasula, Vuksic, & Stemberger, 2012). Knowledge Management (KM) is largely concerned with developing, depositing, extracting, and sharing knowledge, for subsequent retrieval, which is needed to make smart decisions for organizational growth and development. A large body of KM research exists, exploring the different KM driving forces such as leadership, *culture*, assessment, and technology (APQC1996) as well as content, *culture*, procedure, and infrastructure (Chait, 1999) in the 1990s to technology, framework, and *culture* (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001); leadership, *corporate culture*, information technology, and performance assessment (Chen, 2004); strategy and leadership, *corporate culture*, people, and information technology (Ying-Jung, Sun-Quae, & Chin-Tsang, 2006) as well as top management, executive management, *culture*, organizational infrastructure, Human Resource Management (HRM), Continuous Improvement (CI), KM process, and technical infrastructure (Kazemi & Maral Zafar, 2010) in the 2000s. Evidence from the existing body of research suggests that culture possesses a key influence on the organizational use of KM.

Culture is the set of commonly held beliefs and assumptions of a group of people (Groseschl & Doherty, 2000). It is one of the elements that leads to the effectiveness of knowledge management (Bamgboje & Ahmad, 2012). According to Leidner and Kayworth (2008), the types of culture that exist are national culture, organizational culture, sub-culture, and individual culture. Based on the works of Doney, Cannon, and Mullen (1998); Helmreich and Merritt (2001); S. C. Schneider and De Meyer (1991), it is common knowledge that national culture has an influence on organizational culture. This paper is largely focused on how the national culture influences the organizational culture, which in turn affects the use of KM within Nigerian organizations. Organizational culture is a set of implicit assumptions held by members of a group, which determines the way that group behaves and responds to its environment (E. H. Schein, 1985) while national culture refers to the profile of a society with respect to norms, values, and institutions (Hofstede, 2001).

In this paper, we address the question: How does the national culture influence organizational culture, which in turn affects the use of KM in Nigerian organizations? We achieve this by presenting the results of a study which provides an insight into how the national culture indeed influences the use of KM in Nigerian organizations. We then conclude by highlighting the findings and pin-pointing another fascinating area of research which is indeed unique to the circumstances in Nigeria.

THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

Nigeria is a West African country with the largest population of 168.8 million people in Africa. Nigeria is presently categorized as a developing country. Generally, development in Nigeria has been characterized by low income rates where over 62.6% of the population live below the poverty line of \$1 per day, regardless of the fact that Nigeria is Africa's leading oil producer (UNICEF, 2014; World_Bank, 2013). Nigeria is attractive to investors because of the availability of cheap labor and the abundant natural resources such as crude oil (Akinbami, 2001). In companies owned by these investors, there are many local employees from different tribes, religions, and backgrounds, who have diverse norms and values, hence different behaviours.

Economic Perspective

Nigeria has an abundance of natural resources, but its economy does not yet have the capacity to provide the basic needs of its people (UNICEF, 2014). The difference between the growth of the GDP and the increasing poverty reflects the abnormal distribution of wealth; thus making the country to remain a developing one. Although Nigeria is classified under the developing category, there are several brilliant Nigerians in developed countries that can play a vital role in the nation's development and move the status of the country from the state of being under-developed to developed. However, *brain drain* (the exodus of trained personnel from Nigeria to developed countries) is a phenomenon that has severely affected the nation's development. Several factors are responsible for this phenomenon in Nigeria.

In 1988, the presidential committee on brain drain was created and it later discovered that 10,694 professionals from tertiary institutions alone left Nigeria between 1986 and 1990. In 2002, the chairman of the brain drain committee explained that the country had lost the ability to competitively pay the top-specialists because of the *economic problem*, particularly the devaluation of the Nigerian currency (Naira) and inflation (Anekwe, 2003). This problem is tantamount to tacit knowledge exit which has occurred in Nigeria (Sodiya, Onashoga, Dansu, & Adeleye, 2006).

Cultural Perspective

Nigeria is a hierarchical society. Age and position earns, even demands, respect. Age is believed to confer wisdom, so older people are granted respect. The oldest person in a group is revered and honored and is therefore greeted and served first in social settings. In return, the most senior person has the responsibility to *make decisions* that are presumed to be in the best interest of the group. Also, Nigeria predominantly consists of 3 religions: Christians, Muslims, and Traditional worshippers. About 40% of the population consists of Christians, while about 55% of the population consists of Muslims. The official language of Nigeria, English, was chosen to facilitate the cultural and linguistic unity of the country's post-colonization era by the British. The major native languages spoken in Nigeria represent the three major families of African languages. The majority are Niger-Congo languages, such as Yoruba, Ibo, and Hausa. Though most ethnic groups prefer to communicate in their own languages, English, being the official language, is widely used for education, business transactions, and official purposes (Kwintessential, 2012).

Scholars and practitioners, intent on forming a set of best practices for knowledge management in organizations, have developed several knowledge management frameworks that incorporate the practices in developed countries (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Covin & Stivers, 1997; Graham & Pizzo, 1996; McCampbell, Clare, & Gitters, 1999; Retna & Bryson, 2005) and cross-cultural studies in the Western and Asian countries (Chow, Deng, & Ho, 2000; Glisby & Holden, 2005; Griffith, Myers, & Harvey, 2006; Holden & Von Korfzleisch, 2004; Vance & Paik, 2005; Zakaria, Amelinckx, & Wilemon, 2004). For developing countries, a number of studies have been conducted and one major point of convergence in these studies is that KM is still in its infancy stage in most developing countries (Bolarinwa, Salaudeen, & Akande, 2012; Eftekhazadeh, 2008; Mpofu, 2011; Wagner, Cheung, Lee, & Ip, 2003). Hasan and Ditsa (1999), who did a cross cultural study between Australia, the Middle East, and West Africa with a focus on Ghana only studied IT adoption and not knowledge management. Also, Ekeke's (2011) study of Knowledge Management in the Nigerian Public Service focuses on only one state of Nigeria (Bayelsa), which is a subset of one of the tribes in Nigeria and does not quite capture the nuances of the cultural differences within the three major tribes in Nigeria since the state civil service typically employs the qualified indigenes of the state. Also, Abiagam's (2012) pioneering work on the

knowledge management adoption and culture in Nigeria is most related to this study. However, his study dwelt upon the adoption, not the use of knowledge management in the hospitality industry, which does not quite capture other important industries in Nigeria. Hence, there exists insufficient literature regarding the uniqueness of the Nigerian culture and how it has influenced the knowledge management practices (use) in Nigerian organizations.

NATIONAL CULTURE

National culture can be defined as the profile of a society with respect to norms, values, and institutions (Hofstede, 2001). A country is positioned along cultural dimensions in order to provide an overall summary of a country's cultural type. While several researchers such as Bottger, Hallein, and Yetton (1985); Hall and Hall (1990); G. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (1991); Tan, Watson, and Wei (1995) have written extensively on cultural dimensions, the dimensions and the ratings of Hofstede seem most relevant to this work because of the interrelatedness of its dimensions and the actual prevailing culture in Nigeria. Hence, Hofstede's 5-D model (G. Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990) was largely drawn upon as a conceptual lens for analyzing the data in this study. His pioneering work was an attempt to compare national cultures in terms of broad value differences (Hofstede, 1983). He identified the following five dimensions: power distance index, uncertainty avoidance index, individualism / collectivism, masculinity / femininity, and long / short term orientation.

The *power distance* index is the degree of inequality which is considered a norm within a group of people. Equality refers to a small power distance while inequality refers to a large power distance (G. Hofstede, 1994). This directly favors authoritarian management and centralized decision making. *Individualism* is the degree to which a people in a country prefer to act individually rather than as members of groups. The opposite of this is collectivism. For a *collectivist*, in-group ties are strong and loyalty is expected in return. This suggests that hiring and promotion could be based on a network of relationships. *Masculinity* is the degree to which values such as assertiveness, performance, success, and competition prevail over values such as quality of life, sustaining warm personal relationships, service, care for the weak, and solidarity. The opposite of masculinity is femininity. *Uncertainty avoidance* is the degree to which people prefer structured situations with clear behavioral rules over unstructured ones. People with strong uncertainty avoidance index tend to be rigid and less risk tolerant. *Long term orientation* is the degree to which values are oriented towards the future, such as the need for saving or the need for persistence. Short term orientation, on the other hand, is the degree to which values are oriented towards the past and present, such as respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations. The following table shows the scores attributed to Nigeria by Hofstede (2001) using his 5-D model and the scores are ranked against the highest score of 120. In particular, these national culture dimensions are used as the lens with which the responses of the respondents were analyzed.

Hofstede's Cultural Classification	Schemes	Nigeria's Rating
Power Distance Index	PDI	80
Uncertainty Avoidance Index	UAI	55
Individualism	I	30
Masculinity	M	60
Long Term Orientation	LTO	16

Table 1: Nigeria's rating in Hofstede's scheme

The influence of national culture on organizations emanates through societal structures, values, and behaviours of organizational participants (Adler, Doktor, & Redding, 1986). Hence, the influences of the Nigerian culture are investigated by critically considering the values, norms, and practices (which are embedded in the societal structures - organizations) and the behaviours of the members of the organization – in this case, KM behaviours.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizations do not operate in a social vacuum but are influenced by the socio-cultural context (Hofstede, 2003). Hence, the organizational culture has also been considered as a form of organizational capital (Camerer & Vepsalainen, 1988). Organizational culture, as a concept, is considered to be the key element in managing organizational change and renewal, a sort of glue that bonds the social structure of an organization together (Saeed, Tayyab, Anis-Ul-Haque, Ahmad, & Chaudhry, 2010). It consists of behaviours, actions, and values that people in an organization are expected to share and follow. This definition is supported by E. H. Schein (1985), who regards culture as a set that consists of basic assumptions, values, and artifacts. Alavi, Kayworth, and Leidner (2006) also support E. H. Schein (1985) by portraying organizational culture as an ongoing, dynamic interaction among basic assumptions, values, and artifacts. In addition, D. Leidner, Alavi, and Kayworth (2012) further illustrate the conceptual linkage between culture and KM behaviours as shown in Figure 1.

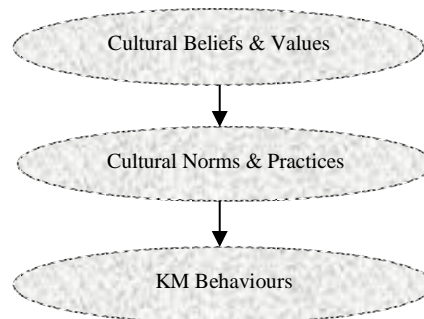


Figure 1: Organizational Culture's Influence on KM Behaviours (D. Leidner et al., 2012)

Here, we have applied Leidner's illustration in order to show how national culture, which influences organizational culture, emanates through values, norms and practices, and KM behaviours; thus influencing the use of knowledge management in organizations.

Cultural Beliefs and Values

In this study, based on Alavi et al. (2006), organizational culture will be conceptualized in terms of values. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, values are more easily studied than assumptions that are invisible, whereas artifacts are hard to decipher (E. H. Schein, 1985). Secondly, the majority of prior theoretical work aimed at exploring the linkage between culture and social groups' behaviours and actions has done so in terms of value-based theories of culture. Two principal examples of this are Competing Values Framework (Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1983) and Organizational Culture Inventory (Cooke and Szumal 1993). Therefore, values can be seen as a set of social norms that define the rules or context for social interaction through which people act and communicate. It is worthy of note here that Long and Fahey (2000) related values to the organization and confirmed that the values which inspire

individuals to regard customers as partners are more likely to motivate behaviours that create useful knowledge about customers. As shown in Figure 2, the values defined for the purpose of this study are commitment to relationships, a well-defined structure, and motivation.

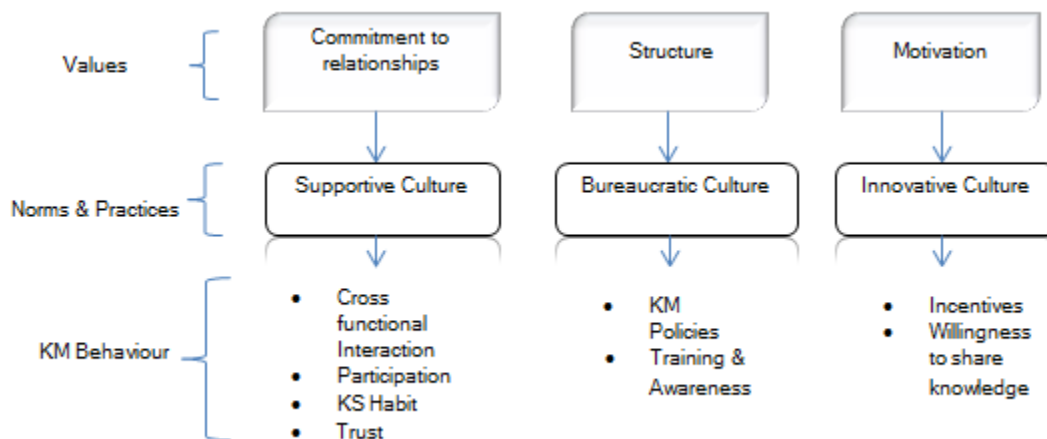


Figure 2: Practical Application of Organizational Culture's Influence on KM Behaviours

- Commitment to relationships:** An organization upholds this value if the environment is friendly, open, and warm. The employees in this organization *trust* their employers and they also feel trusted. Within this environment, there is a strong bond amongst the workers, which produces a family-like tie over time because it has become a *habit* for them. Hence, it is easy for these people to *participate* in different activities that bring them together. This type of environment fosters *cross functional interactions*.
- Well-defined structure:** An organization upholds this value if it believes in the proper definition and support of structures and processes that ascertain continuous improvement and maintenance of competitive advantage. This ensures KM and other necessary *policies* are provided and adhered to, while allowing *continuous training and awareness* on concepts, strategies, and initiatives that are paramount to the organization. As expected, when KM as a strategy is about to be introduced, there will be a change of daily routine, behaviors, and most especially organizational structures and processes (Fehér, 2004). Hence one of the initiatives that should be paramount to the organization is change management.
- Motivation:** An organization upholds this value if it believes in giving employees *rewards or incentives* in order to drive their zeal for productivity. This value could also be applied in order to foster knowledge sharing by giving knowledge sharers rewards for their kind gesture, thereby increasing the *willingness* to share knowledge amongst employees.

Cultural Norms and Practices

A number of scholars and practitioners have attempted to conceptualize culture at the organizational level since organizations are good examples of societal structures. Wallach's (1983) classification of organizational culture is in three distinct forms: bureaucratic; innovative, and supportive culture. Each of these distinct forms is regarded as norms and practices in organizations. *Bureaucratic cultures* are *structured*, hierarchical, and regulated while portraying clear lines of authority. Organizations based on

this type of culture are power-oriented. *Innovative cultures* are exciting but challenging. They give *incentives* in order to encourage competition. However, due to the constant pressure to achieve, the work and family life is not easy to balance. Organizations based on this type of culture are result-oriented. *Supportive cultures* however, are warm and sociable places to work where people are friendly and open-minded. When an environment is friendly and open-minded, people become endeared towards one another, thus embracing their colleagues regardless of religious and tribal diversity. Organizations based on this type of culture are *relationship-oriented*.

From Wallach's (1983) point of view, every organization consists of the three types of culture in different proportions. In order to study the relationship between information technology strategy and organizational culture, Kanungo, Sadavarti, and Srinivas (2001) applied Wallach's classification of organizational culture. In the same vein, D. Leidner et al. (2012) also incorporated Wallach's classification, in order to determine how organizational culture influences knowledge management initiatives using two global firms as a case study. Since Wallach's classification is highly instinctive, in that executives in organizations can easily relate to the meaning of these three types of organizations, we will also incorporate Wallach's mode of describing organizational cultures as shown in Figure 2 above. However, unlike D. Leidner et al. (2012), this study focuses on several companies and firms within major industries, which portray the highest influence on the gross domestic product in Nigeria.

Before progressing, it is imperative to discuss the significance of this research. This work is significant to Nigeria as a whole, since the nation's goal is to become a knowledge based economy by the year 2020 (Kefela, 2010). It is relevant to practitioners in industries currently in Nigeria. It is also relevant to those planning to invest in Nigeria as it provides insight into the cultural influences on KM in order to help them guard against the loss of knowledge. Finally, this work contributes to the body of knowledge because it generates interesting insights into the influence of national culture on organizational culture, which in turn affects the use of KM from the perspective of a developing country – which is rare in the existing literature.

Knowledge Management Behaviours

Knowledge management behaviours emanate once knowledge activities occur in order to achieve the purpose of knowledge management (Joshi, 2001). This means that enablers and barriers of KM and knowledge resources also play a role in shaping KM behaviours. Hence, culture – values and norms – shapes KM behaviours. The KM behaviours considered in this study are cross functional interaction, knowledge sharing habit, participation, training and awareness, willingness to share knowledge, recognition and rewards, trust, and KM policies. Figure 2 helps to conceptualize the linkage between culture and KM behaviour using Leidner's illustration as the baseline while incorporating Wallach's classification of culture.

METHODOLOGY

Drawing upon a post-positivist stance, this research employs a descriptive survey approach for the data collection and analysis while incorporating the national culture dimensions, discussed above, as the lens with which the data has been analyzed. As defined earlier, the main aim of this research is to examine the current usage of KM with reference to how it has been influenced by the national culture and the organizational culture. With reference to the research aim, the descriptive survey approach was deemed most appropriate as it describes the distribution of the phenomenon under study, in order to ascertain the

facts (Grover, 1997). While it may seem unconventional to incorporate a post-positivist stance for this descriptive approach, the researchers have decided on this philosophical assumption because of the richness of the contextual insight, social interactions, and the environmental contextual variables which play an indispensable role in the understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Hence, Hofstede's 5-D of the Nigerian culture is the lens with which the descriptive data was viewed, which led to manual analysis.

Sampling

Based on the context defined for this research, Nigerian organizations are the target group. One of the contributions of this work is the provision of an insight into helping Nigeria to achieve the goal of becoming a knowledge based economy by the year 2020 (Kefela, 2010). Hence, the Nigerian economy becomes important, and that is the rationale for employing a purposive sampling technique in this research, thus selecting the industries based on their contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP). To this effect, our audience entirely consisted of these three industries: banking, manufacturing, and tertiary institutions. The banking industry was chosen because it is one of the major services in Nigeria and contributes 35.2% to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Erejuwa, 2011). Secondly, the manufacturing industry was chosen because it is referred to as one of the major sectors and contribute 32.9% to the nation's GDP (Erejuwa, 2011). Lastly, the tertiary institution was chosen because it serves as the source of knowledge, which aids research and development in the country. It is important to state here that the data generated from these industries were not meant for the purpose of industry comparisons, but to provide broad information on the prevailing practices concerning the use of KM and the organizational culture, influenced by the Nigerian culture. In these industries, the study participants were employees who are working in ICT related departments within their organizations, and were thus expected to have sufficient knowledge regarding KM practices and its use in their firms.

Research Instrument

The research instrument, a questionnaire, designed and tested by Ryan, Windsor, Ibragimova, and Prybutok (2010) was modified to fit the context of this research. Hyman, Lamb, and Bulmer (2006) have stated that using pre-existing questions provides accurate measures, as they are pre-tested before first usage, such that the degree of validity and the quality of the data are likely to be high. Hence, out of the various approaches to content validation discussed by Grover (1997) and Wynd, Schmidt, and Schaefer (2003), the content validity of the instrument in this study was addressed by using pre-existing questions and the literature from previous similar studies, which were modified to suit the current study. The following details the steps taken in order to modify the pre-existing questions.

Semi-structured interviews, via phone conversations with about 10 respondents in the field within the aforementioned industries, were conducted. These were recruited through existing professional relationships within the targeted audience. Care was taken in order to ensure existing relationships did not bias the data. Notes were taken during each conversation. These conversations are important because it helped to understand the depth of the subjects' understanding regarding the concept of knowledge management. Secondly, it helped to identify the most relevant cultural problems which are common to the organizations within Nigeria, most especially those related to knowledge management. The information retrieved through this medium provided insight concerning the current picture of the Nigerian situation, as at that moment, with respect to knowledge management and culture. The

conversations helped to create a relevant and robust questionnaire to which the respondents could naturally relate.

Moving forward, it is worthy of note here that, since organizations do not exist in a social vacuum (Hofstede, 2003) and the context being considered is knowledge management, the respondents and their organizations were assessed concerning the knowledge management concept as a whole while incorporating questions regarding the values, norms and practices, and the KM behaviours. This is based on the argument by Adler et al. (1986), that the influence of national culture on organizations emanates through societal structures, values, and behaviours of organizational participants. Hence, there is an expectation that the Nigerian culture will filter through organizations, thus reflecting in their behaviours, norms and practices, as well as their values. The questions were thus categorized into the following sub-sections respectively: demographics and personal perception assessment, basic knowledge of KM, the use of KM tools, knowledge creation practices, KM policies and practices, organizational structure, and organizational culture.

Inspired by the pioneering study of the importance of pilot studies by van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001), the product of the modified questionnaire had to undergo a pilot study. This was required to test the adequacy of the research instrument. The outcome of the pilot study led to the final refinement of the questionnaire. On the completion of the refinement, the questionnaire was administered to the respondents in the field via the Internet using the Survey Monkey website. Out of about 120 online requests for the completion of the online questionnaire, 100 respondents attempted to fill out the questionnaire, while 83 respondents actually completed the questionnaire. After the data collection, the data was exported to Microsoft Excel 2007 for initial formatting and then imported into SPSS version 19.0 for better descriptive analysis. Thereafter, the data was viewed and manually analyzed, based on Hofstede's 5 dimensions of the Nigerian culture.

RESULTS

This section presents the results and its interpretation. As stated in the methodology, these are categorized into the following sub-sections respectively: demographics and personal perception assessment, basic knowledge of KM, the use of KM tools, knowledge creation practices, KM policies and practices, organizational structure, and organizational culture.

Demographics and Personal Perception Assessment

The results show that 48% of the respondents are from the manufacturing industry, 24% are from banking, and 28% are from tertiary institutions. All the respondents are Nigerians. The age range of the respondents is between 24 and 50 years. The respondents have served their organizations between 3 months and 20 years. Based on the information retrieved, 73.5% would like to teach others what they do not know, but this depends on some *motivations*. 51.8% just do their job. 30.1% are actually not enjoying their job and 60% have a negative perception towards knowledge management.

According to the result above, it follows that the set of people who can share their knowledge in return for some form of *incentive* could otherwise become *unwilling* to share the knowledge they have in the absence of incentives. Those who just do their job prefer to just go to the office and perform what is necessary to get their bills paid by the end of the month. They may not be contented with their job. They

seem to be somewhat satisfied with the status-quo. For those who are not enjoying their job, it is likely that they have been seeking employment in other organizations. The job-dissatisfaction could be caused by myriads of reasons such as lack of trust within employees, incompetence of the employee, poor leadership within the organization, prolonged stress, or domestic unrest. Hence, they may not be motivated to share their knowledge.

This sub-section has provided an insight to the psychological reasoning of the respondents in this context, which corresponds with the theory of reasoned action (a description of how attitudes and beliefs influence a person's behaviours) (Fishbein, 1979). More importantly, the assessment here can be explained by the social exchange theory which suggests that individuals consider the ratio of costs to benefits and act based on their knowledge of what they stand to gain such as reputation, tangible incentives, and respect (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976). Therefore, organizations in Nigeria have to incorporate *motivation-as-a-value* as shown in Figure 2 above.

Basic Knowledge of KM

The results indicate that 90.4% of the respondents believe they know what knowledge management is about, but 57.8% of these are actually poorly informed. 19.3% of the respondents admit that knowledge management does not exist at all in their organizations, while 24% believe that knowledge management strategies and initiatives are a management fad.

Based on this result, the majority of the respondents do not have an average level of basic knowledge regarding knowledge management as a concept. Hence, it becomes obvious that knowledge management *awareness and training* have not been made widely available in the majority of the respondents' organizations. Another important point is the fact that 50.8% said that their organizations do not regard knowledge as an asset. In another question, 56.6% of the respondents indicated they do not have an understanding of change management while only 36.1% know Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) professionals in their organizations.

According to the above result, this suggests that the respondents believe that their organizations fail to attach value to knowledge. Such value could be in the form of rewards or incentives for knowledge shared or gained. These respondents feel they are not valuable to the organizations. Such feelings could emanate if the respondents acquired more knowledge via personal training and the organization failed to recognize such effort. Another plausible reason is that the respondents might have shared their knowledge one way or the other but they received no form of *recognition or incentive* in return. Furthermore, for those who do not understand change management, it is likely that many of these organizations may not have undergone a proper change management process since the knowledge workers that should have implemented this are not fully equipped to do so.

Hence, this sub-section has revealed that there is a poor level of awareness concerning KM in Nigerian organizations and that little value is attached to employees' knowledge; thus implying that these organizations lack a *well-defined structure* and *motivation as values* whose components are described in Figure 2 above.

The Use of KM Tools

The results indicate that all the respondents believe that emails, presentation tools, video conferences, and chats are the most frequently used tools for knowledge sharing. However, these tools are not

sufficient for effective knowledge sharing. Furthermore, virtually all the respondents said that whiteboards, bulletin boards, file sharing tools, application sharing tools, and text tools are not used at all in their organizations. Also, the respondents believe that “lack of training; system too complicated; lack of identification of the proper IT tool; lack of time to learn; lack of user uptake due to insufficient communication; everyday use did not integrate into normal working practice; unsuccessful use of the technology due to technical problems” are all problems that do not allow the successful use of information technology for knowledge management. However, the most important of these problems are “*lack of time to learn (91.8%)*” and “*not a normal working habit (90.7%)*”.

The importance of information and communication technology (ICT) tools in knowledge management practices has been identified in the literature. It has been argued that interaction and communication through the use of ICT tools lead to the development of new skills, new products, better ideas and efficient processes (Probst, Raub, & Romhardt, 2001). Therefore, when organizations acknowledge their needs and values, prioritize such knowledge, and eventually develop systems for leveraging and sharing that knowledge, they have the potentials to gain a strong competitive advantage (Huseman & Goodman, 2000).

However, Nigerian organizations do not seem to have experienced such benefits; there are barriers to the use of information technology for knowledge management. The above results indicate that lack of time to learn is a problem in which the majority of the respondents admit that it is affecting the successful use of information technology for knowledge management. This correlates with the study conducted by Ting Jer and Majid (2007). This is one of the problems of collaborating amidst knowledge workers, hence a problem inhibiting the proper management of knowledge as highlighted by Ryan et al. (2010) and could be attributed to the organizational culture in place. The other problem, not a normal working habit, owes to the fact that KM has not been integrated into the organizational culture (Alavi et al., 2006). Hence, in this sub-section, the organizational culture has an influence on the use of KM tools in Nigerian organizations. More specifically, the organizational culture has to incorporate *commitment to relationships-as-a-value* so that knowledge sharing can become a habit for the employees (*see figure 2*).

Knowledge Creation Practices

Based on the data retrieved, 79% of the respondents believe that they have organizational practices that favor new knowledge creation. However, 95.2% said it takes hours, days, or even weeks to get offline knowledge, though it may be required for immediate use. 22.9% believe that stored knowledge is trivial and of no use while 50.6% believe that stored knowledge is important and relevant but not updated regularly.

Hence, the problem here is that *knowledge is not regularly updated*. It is therefore likely that the majority of these organizations use outdated knowledge and such an act could jeopardize the competitive effectiveness of such organizations within their industries. As Jain (2009) rightly pointed out, irregular knowledge update hinders informed decision making and thus should be avoided. Furthermore, several reasons could be responsible for this such as a lackadaisical attitude of the management to the update of knowledge, high cost of maintaining the knowledge update tools, lack of awareness of the benefits of constantly evolving knowledge, and others. Hence, the problems identified here relate to Nigeria’s economic situation and the poor level of awareness; thus referring to the lack of a *well-defined structure-as-a-value* component in Figure 2.

Knowledge Management Policies and Practices

Fifty four of 83 respondents (65%) said that knowledge growth is a personal responsibility within their organizations. The respondents believe that improving competitive advantage (54.2%), improving quality (51.8%), and improving delivery (50.6%) are the most important benefits of knowledge management being experienced presently. 83.1% of the respondents said that making profit is the most important goal to their organizations. 75.9% said knowledge is valued in their organizations. However, there is a large discrepancy between the responses provided for questions which serve as a check towards each other. Hence, it is clear that the answers provided for those questions cannot be relied upon as the validity of the responses is doubtful. 86.7% said that incentives or recognition does not accompany knowledge sharing and 50.6% said new skills through personal development do not accompany any incentive. In another question, 72.3% said *there is no well-defined procedure for knowledge acquisition and sharing*.

Based on the above results, the aforementioned problems are related to the well-defined structure-as-a-value component as highlighted in Figure 2 above. According to Hovland (2009), the availability of policies, procedures, and processes for knowledge sharing and management as a whole cannot be over-emphasized. When *policies* exist, it is then easier to implement them. However, in this case, there is little or nothing to implement since there seem to be no *well-defined procedure* for knowledge management for the majority of the organizations.

Organizational Structure

16.9% of the top management of the respondents' organizations regards knowledge sharing as wasteful; 22.9% sees it as important but hardly supports it; and 31.3% were supportive in the beginning but have now lost interest. 83.1% said that the *information flow is top-down*. Many (51.8%) do not know if suggested ideas are allowed to flow to the top management. 44.6% said that they are sometimes allowed to use their initiatives to make time critical decisions but it has to be with the boss approval. 67.5% have not attempted to communicate their ideas to the management. 59% have not even tried to achieve results in a non-conventional manner, probably because 66.3% believe the outcome of the management's response will be negative for them. 69.9% believe that their organizational policies are well-defined. However, 75.9% believe that "loss of crucial knowledge due to a key employee leaving the organization" is the biggest problem being faced.

The result above suggests that centralized decision making is more natural to the employees with 83.1% affirming that information flow is top-down. Therefore, a reflection of the national culture, which is hierarchical in nature, is found in the organizational structure. As KM is still a relatively new concept in Nigeria, characterized by lack of awareness, there is need for a well-defined organizational structure which supports the use of KM (*see figure 2*).

In addition, not communicating ideas to the top management could be due to the fear of the responses employees might receive from the management. Hence, they prefer to keep this to themselves. This correlates with the ranking of Nigeria by Hofstede (2003) with the *uncertainty avoidance index* value (Table 1). It therefore follows that these knowledge workers have 'fear of the unknown' and they are quite uncertain about the outcome of communicating emanating ideas to the management. However, a good percentage of those who actually communicated their ideas had them accepted.

Moving forward, loss of crucial knowledge due to a key employee leaving the organization is the biggest of the problems identified by these respondents as shown in the results above. This problem can

be attributed to several reasons. Firstly, as shown by the sub-section on personal perception assessment, the respondents need organizations that incorporate motivation-as-a-value. Secondly, having been classified as a *masculine* society (see Figure 1), it is expected that they are driven by achievement and success. Hence, if they do not feel valued in organization A, it is quite easy for them to move to organization B (within or outside Nigeria) where they feel more valued.

Organizational Culture

The findings indicate that 79.9% of the respondents claim that their organizational culture supports knowledge management. However, evidence showed that the responses provided to the issue of organizational culture cannot be relied upon. Hence, the validity of the respondents' claim for this question is quite shaky. Furthermore, all the respondents believe that "functional silos; knowledge sharing not a part of daily work; lack of participation; lack of training; not willing to share knowledge; lack of incentives for knowledge sharing; lack of trust; there is no structure in place for knowledge management" are all the problems that serve as cultural barriers to the proper practice of knowledge management. However, 54.2% believe that "*lack of incentives*" is the greatest of these problems while "*lack of trust*" is next in line. Many (53%) of the respondents said that knowledge sharing is not a normal working habit for them in their organizations.

The problems associated with lack of trust are two-fold. Firstly, this could be lack of trust among the employees within the organization, which could be caused by religious and tribal diversities. Secondly, it could also be a lack of trust between the employees and the employers of the organizations. This could be caused by the authoritative management style as identified by Hofstede (2003).

The results also show that the provision of incentives is not part of their organizational culture. As stated by Long and Fahey (2000) and Gorelick and Tantawy-Monsou (2005), the culture of an organization affects the people, process, and technology in any organization, which in turn directly affects the proper implementation of knowledge management. Again, the existence of this problem shows that motivation is not yet seen as a value in these organizations (see figure 2).

DISCUSSION

This study has been able to provide valuable insight into the role which the Nigerian culture plays in the use of KM in organizations. In consonance with Figure 2 above and in relation to Hofstede's 5 dimensions of Nigerian culture, we summarize the key findings which help us to answer the following question, as defined from the inception of this study: How does the national culture influence organizational culture, which in turn affects the use of KM in Nigerian organizations? We put forward these three responses to the question.

1. **The hierarchical nature of the society in Nigeria supports centralized decision making, thus influencing the KM practices in Nigerian organizations.**

Evidence in this research suggests that Nigeria is a hierarchical society, which is a reflection of the National culture (See Results – Organizational Structure). This is supported by Hofstede's cultural dimensions for the power distance where Nigeria was given a score as high as 80. As this is the prevailing culture, it has been realized that this culture has filtered into organizations,

thus affecting KM practices. Since information flow is basically top-down (83.1%), as evidenced (*See Results – Organizational Structure*) in the findings of this research, centralized decision making becomes the norm. This finding is consistent with similar studies conducted in Peru, which found that organizations do not consider employees' suggestions and ideas that could help the organization to improve their processes (Daniel Sébastien, 2008). Hence, ideas generated by the employees cannot be put to use because they cannot communicate with the senior management.

Putting this into perspective, there is a natural feeling that orders, ideas, and 'what must be done' has to come from the boss since the position of the senior management has given them the power to rule the organization as they deem fit. The attitude portrayed here feels natural to organizational members in Nigeria because this is the Nigerian culture, which has been inculcated in these individuals all through their lives. Hence, this has become a norm.

2. Nigeria being a masculine society gives an explanation for the reason why skilled employees continually search for greener pastures; thus leading to frequent tacit knowledge loss.

Based on the findings in this research, one of the greatest problems (*See Results – Organizational Structure* (75.9%)) bedeviling Nigerian organizations is the loss of knowledge. This finding is consistent with the study on KM practices in Tanzania (Edda Tandi, 2011), but with different reasons for the loss of knowledge. However, similar studies in Malawi (Mpofu, 2011) showed that informal KM practices were prevalent, which gave them the ability to retain the knowledge of their employees.

As Hofstede's 5-Ds of Nigerian culture is the lens for this study, one way to explain the drivers behind the knowledge loss in Nigeria is as follows: Hofstede's research on masculinity gives Nigeria a score of 60 and classifies Nigeria as a masculine society because Nigerians are driven by competition, achievement, and success. They live in order to work. Based on this inner drive, it is not surprising for employees to always look for better options than their current job. Changing jobs could be within organizations based in Nigeria or by choosing better jobs abroad. While there is a natural motivation to constantly search for and move to a better job (whatever 'better' means to every individual), this culture is highly influenced by the economic situation in the country as highlighted in this paper (*See Results – Knowledge Creation Practices*); thus making skilled individuals look for better opportunities outside the country.

Furthermore, as it has been highlighted by the findings in this research, knowledge workers are seldom valued (*See Results – Basic Knowledge of KM* (50.8%), *Knowledge Management Policies and Practices* (86.7%), *Organizational Culture* (54.2)) and they rarely receive incentives, rewards, or any form of recognition for the knowledge they have gained or shared. If they find any other organization, within or outside Nigeria, which is willing to pay more for the knowledge they have acquired or if the firm values them in a special way, then they feel there is absolutely no reason why they should not change their jobs. In many cases, this leaves a huge gap in the organization they are departing from because it causes knowledge loss problems as the findings of this research have uncovered.

3. The short term orientation of Nigerians hinders commitment to relationships and motivation as values of Nigerian organizations.

According to the short term orientation dimension, Nigeria has a high score, which suggests that Nigerians like to achieve quick results; such as maximizing as much profit as possible within a short period of time. Unlike related studies in Turkey (Dilek Zamantili & Ülkü, 2008) and Malawi (Mpofu, 2011), motivation is not regarded as a value in Nigerian organizations. Here, the absence of motivation-as-a-value (*See Results: Basic Knowledge of KM (50.8%), Organizational Culture (54.2%)*) can be explained by viewing the Nigerian context from the perspective of the employers. They do not provide incentives because they want to maximize profit and minimize loss as much as possible. They are aware of the fact that their employees can decide to leave the organization any time they get a better offer because the economic situation is poor and salaries could be better. Hence, they believe that investing in employees by providing incentives is a form of waste as their stay is unpredictably temporary, though the employees may have permanent jobs.

Furthermore, Nonaka et al. (1995) provided a framework that includes socialization as a mode of sharing tacit knowledge. But more importantly, commitment to relationships has to be seen as a value in Nigerian organizations for socialization to work; thus allowing the KM behaviours in Figure 2 to emanate. In a case study conducted in Turkey, commitment to relationships was regarded as a value since the organization studied was able to demonstrate emanating principles such as storytelling, continuity, loyalty, and trust (Dilek Zamantili & Ülkü, 2008). However, commitment to relationships (*See Results: The Use of KM Tools (90.7%)*) is not seen as a value in Nigeria as the employers cannot totally rely upon or trust the employees. They have the belief that the employees may already be in search of other jobs and employers cannot be definite about the length of stay of the employees, though the employees signed a contract for a specific duration. Since commitment is expected to be reciprocal, and employers cannot vouch for the level of commitment of their employees, then there is lack of trust (*See Results: Organizational Culture*). From the perspective of the employees, who also need to achieve quick results (short term orientation) such as succeeding and getting rich quickly, it becomes convenient for them not to be emotionally attached to the organization; thus avoiding futile commitments.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on this study, this paper has identified the issues that need to be addressed before KM can be adopted, implemented, and used successfully in organizations within developing countries. These are recommendations that should be incorporated at the organizational and national level, which serve as enabling measures for the successful use of KM in such organizations.

At the National level:

1. As Nigeria aims to be a knowledge-based economy by the year 2020, it becomes imperative for the government to commence a nation-wide awareness program in order to eradicate the ignorance Nigerians have regarding KM as a concept.
2. Furthermore, the government should consider incorporating KM policies and practices within the public service such that private organizations will be able to have a good example to emulate. Also, as private organizations tend to feel the impact of knowledge loss more quickly, they

should consider incorporating KM policies and practices without necessarily awaiting a nationwide effort.

At the organizational level:

1. Organizations should provide training and awareness programs for employees on knowledge management benefits, policies, and its implementation.
2. Organizations should consider officially allocating time to learn.
3. Organizations should attach value to knowledge by providing rewards or incentives for sharing and gaining knowledge.
4. Organizations should imbibe a culture that supports sharing knowledge such as through the use of informal discussions.

CONCLUSION

This research has provided an insight into the characteristics of a developing country's culture that does not support organizations adopting and using knowledge management. Since effecting a change in the national culture is a long term challenge, there should be a shift in attention to the organizational context in order to downplay the influences of the national culture. The organizational context is a culmination of the organizational culture and organizational climate. The rationale is that an organizational climate that focuses on process issues in terms of practices and behavior as well as an organizational culture which focuses on process issues in terms of socialization can produce a sense of employee well-being (climate) by demonstrating that such organization values its employees (culture) (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2011; B. Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). Eventually, this provides a foundation upon which a strategic knowledge optimizing climate can be built. This argument is supported by Weick (1985) and E. Schein (2004), who believe that it is whatever organizations pay attention to that points out what the strategy really is towards the employees. While research has been conducted concerning organizational culture, there is a need to conduct further research on an organizational climate that focuses on optimizing knowledge, which can then be incorporated into organizations in developing countries emanating the characteristics highlighted in this research.

It was also interesting to note two important points emanating from this research. Firstly, the result of this research suggests that it is not only the Nigerian culture that influences the organizational culture in relation to KM. The level of economic development of Nigeria is another factor that can influence the use of KM in Nigerian organizations positively or negatively. Secondly, though there was evidence suggesting that lack of trust prevails in Nigerian organizations, there was no evidence substantiating the assumption that the religious and tribal diversities in Nigeria influences the KM practices therein. Perhaps an ethnographic study will be able to beam a search light into this fascinating area for further research. This study, however, serves as an initial effort into a potentially vast array of research into the issue of national culture, organizational culture, and how they both affect the use of knowledge management in organizations within developing countries.

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