

# KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS IN IT SECTOR

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## ABSTRACT

*Since it is the first stage in producing new information and is also the area that requires the most research in the arena of effective leadership and knowledge management that influence organisational success in IT sector of today's VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) world. Their actions revealed that they relied heavily on adaptation, creation and development. New start-up's IT companies of the societal systems in which they operate, are not exempt from the responsibility of providing leadership during crises; nonetheless, little is known about leadership and its impact on knowledge management during crises. Though it has been demonstrated that adaptability is essential for organisational performance and thriving, it is essentially unknown whether IT sector executives adopt an adaptive strategy when faced with crises. In order to comprehend leaders in complex situations fraught with crises, the authors looked beyond the most recent headlines. Findings give concrete evidence of how effective leadership influence knowledge management in an organisation.*

**Keywords:** Leadership, Knowledge management, Information Technology, Times of crisis.

## INTRODUCTION

Knowledge creation is the most crucial aspect of knowledge management because it is the primary step in creating new knowledge and is also the area that needs the most investigation (Gonzalez & Melo, 2017; Rosing & Zacher, 2017). Knowledge organizing is a key factor of knowledge management (KM) since, after developing ideas, Organisations must organize them correctly; otherwise, the organization could come to an unfortunate end (Alvesson, 2019). In order to streamline all processes and enhance decision-making, knowledge and information are currently used more frequently than ever across all industries. It becomes crucial to manage the knowledge and information of the businesses (Kumar et al., 2019). A company won't be able to manage itself to be profitable and competitive if it lacks information. Knowledge management systems are one of the corporate sectors that are expanding the fastest in today's cutthroat industry (Ali et al., 2019). Businesses today operate in an information economy where the creation and dissemination of knowledge and information is the primary driver of success and prosperity (Bavik et al., 2018; Kumar et al., 2019).

The importance of KM has been discovered across many industries, not just in knowledge-intensive businesses in high-tech industries. Fundamentally, KM benefits every industry, including those in manufacturing, banking, education, telecommunications and public administration (Kumar et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2016). Because of its capability to communicate to businesses strategic implications connecting to competitiveness, productivity and capacity improvement, knowledge management (KM) has generated a great deal of

attention in organizations and its management circles (Gonzalez & Melo, 2017). Knowledge management is seen as a crucial component for maintaining organizational competitiveness and organizational sustainability (Oyemomi et al., 2016; Alvesson, 2019).

Knowledge management is acknowledged as a framework for planning a firm's structures, strategies and operational procedures so that the firm may use what it already knows to learn and develop and create economic and social value for its clients and community (Wang and Wang, 2012). For businesses to maintain their leadership position and gain an advantage over rivals, they must be competent in terms of how they organize, grow, sustain and utilize their staff's skills. Organizations and their knowledge workers have challenges with effective knowledge management every day. Thus, one of the strongest motivations for knowledge management is the capacity to produce and share knowledge throughout the entire organization (Bavik et al., 2018). Studying how knowledge management techniques affect organizational performance is essential. While codification and personalization are KM Strategies, KM Processes involve knowledge production, organization, storage, sharing and utilization. Given that modern civilization is quickly transitioning to an information-based society, knowledge is one of the most important sources of competitive advantage for most businesses (Kim et al., 2014, Wang & Wang, 2012).

One of the significant subjects that is thoroughly researched by scholars is leadership (Cabrilo & Dahms, 2018). They have developed numerous ideas and definitions of the idea. We have outlined the most popular theories in Table 1 to assist readers in understanding the development of leadership theories across time. Leadership is often defined as "." (Tang & Lai, 2016).

This study examines how the creation of a knowledge management might help people share information both inside and outside of their firms. The organization now considers knowledge to be a valuable asset and using it effectively as a core competency will produce the desired outcomes. In order to make strategy execution much easier and for processes to become a mentality rather than a barrier, it is necessary to create a culture where employees can share ideas without hesitation or fear. The goal of this study is to understand the paradigm shift in knowledge management as a significant indicator for better organisational performance. (Rosing & Zacher, 2017).

This study makes important contributions to our understanding of how leadership affect knowledge management. First, by utilizing a theoretical framework related to different leadership which develops a strong operational and theoretical approach to KM. Second, given that previous research has shown that knowledge enablers and processes ensure organizational success through effective leadership, this study adds to the body of knowledge since precise decision-making by decision-makers can strengthen the relationship chain. More subtly, we suggest that the relationship between the process of knowledge generation and leadership can be moderated by the moderating effects of intuitive and rational decision-making styles. Organizations must concentrate on employee knowledge management if they want to attain higher organizational performance (Fiedler et al., 1964).

## Background of the Study

Management practices have altered as a result of recent technological breakthroughs. The amount of reliance on technology has multiplied, but the main competency is still human and their expertise which is influenced by effective leadership (Cabrilo & Dahms, 2018; McDowell et al., 2018). Although there are many worldwide aspects that influence this reality, there is still much to understand about the connection between leadership behaviours and knowledge management. The authors review the literature in the next part in three

important areas: knowledge management and leadership, the role of leadership in knowledge management and workplace leadership practises.

## Knowledge Management and Leadership

Knowledge is defined by the Oxford Dictionary (2001) as a collection of facts or anything else that is regarded favourably by the company or its employees. Making the distinction between data, information and knowledge is crucial. Raw facts make up data, whereas information is a flow of messages containing linked data. Knowledge is processed in the human mind and through technology as useful knowledge (Keszey, 2018; Wang & Wang, 2012). The strategies and processes of recognizing, capturing and exploiting knowledge, is what knowledge management is. The process a business uses to capitalize on its intellectual or knowledge-based assets is known as knowledge management (Bavik et al., 2018). The knowledge worker makes up the majority of the new positions in the knowledge-rich service sector, which is expanding more quickly than ever. The majority of firms employing knowledge management have discovered that it is significantly simpler to put processes and technology in place than it is to manage people and their leadership talents (Oyemomi et al., 2016; Alvesson, 2019). Knowledge is a strategic capability that will help an organization stay one step ahead of the competition. Positively correlated with organizational success is knowledge management's potential to create competitive advantage (Kumar et al., 2019).

In order to gain a competitive edge and quantify the influence of knowledge management on organizational performance, this study further investigates how to plan, develop and choose an effective strategy as well as how to manage organizational information successfully. In their 2003 article, Ribiere & Sitar addressed the crucial role of leadership in companies that were eager to transform their corporate cultures into ones that supported knowledge and put effective KM practises in place. Bolden (2010) asserts that organisational development, management and leadership are all components of a same process for strengthening an organization's and an individual's ability to perform better. The Center for Creative Leadership asserts that leadership plays a variety of functions in enhancing an organization's capabilities and putting strategic changes into place. Leadership makes it possible for executive teams to work together productively to drive change and carry out strategy, to develop the procedures, abilities, attitudes and tools necessary to navigate change together, to spark innovation throughout the company, to manage talent and to establish the proper culture (Metz et al., 2017).

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Description</b>
Lewin's leadership theory and styles	It includes the three prevalent behavioural leadership philosophies of autocracy, democracy and laissez-faire (Lewin, et al., 1939).
Great man theories or hero	A great guy (hero) is a wise, talented, kind man who supports a world accomplishment as the result of thoughts that dwelled in him (Carlyle, 1840).
Situational leadership theory	The situation, the people and the work will determine the leadership style to be utilised, such as telling, selling, participating, or delegating (Blanchard & Hersey, 1969)
Leadership behavior and theories	Instead, focusing on leadership qualities, these theories emphasise how leaders act towards a goal, people and participation (Vroom & Jago, 2007).
Transformational leadership	According to the thesis, effective leadership may change individuals and organisations and push them to act more morally and with greater motivation. In transformative leadership, vision, culture, values, development and teamwork all have significance (Fairholm, 2001)

Authentic leadership	Walumbwa et al. (2008) found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and ethical leadership. It includes being honest, having a self-moral perspective, being balanced and being conscious of one's strengths and limitations.
Servant leadership	Robert Greenleaf (as mentioned in <i>Essays</i> , UK, 2018) asserts that servant-leadership begins with the leader's desire to serve before changing to a leadership position.
Transactional leadership	The notion concerns those who wield the power of their office in accordance with formal legality; they adhere to the hierarchical principle, solely obey the law and owe others obligations (Weber, 1968)

The relevance of leadership support and its beneficial effects on desired individual behaviours within companies, specifically on individual behaviours geared towards knowledge sharing, are highlighted in a substantial body of existing work. According to Srivastava et al. (2006), in the context of management teams, effective information exchange was favourably impacted, which in turn improved team performance. Le & Lei (2019) recently discovered that transformational leadership had a favourable influence on knowledge sharing as well as product and process innovation. Similar findings have been made in studies on leadership support from a variety of perspectives, including ethical leadership Bavik et al. (2018), respectful leadership Gerpott & Ulrike (2019), supervisor and co-workers support, management and administration support (Galeazzo & Furlan, 2019) and organisational support. All of these studies have shown a positive impact on knowledge sharing within the context of the organisation. Mishra & Pandey (2019) review different leadership philosophies were discovered to positive significant influence knowledge sharing.

Through the development of a knowledge-friendly environment, the provision of shared objectives and a clear vision, the improvement of trust-based relationships, the use of motivators and the removal of obstacles like a lack of communication or mutual misunderstanding, effective leadership has a significant potential to increase the extent and quality of peer knowledge sharing (Bavik et al., 2018). Similarly, Jiang & Chen (2018) discovered that knowledge sharing among team members was positively benefited by transformational leadership. In the eyes of employees, supervisors and immediate managers frequently serve as stand-ins for the company (Gerpott & Ulrike, 2019). They have a considerable impact on employee behaviours connected to sharing information with their peers through the kind of assistance they offer and the cues they send since these factors are viewed as what the organisation values.

## Leadership role in Knowledge Management

The authors discovered that the complete KM capability and its different activities, such as knowledge production, transfer, utilisation, retention, integration and others, showed a favourable, substantial link with transformational leadership. In response to the systemic review's inquiry about the influence of leadership roles and styles on knowledge management, this was said (Aung & Vinitwatanakhun, 2018). Another study discovered that the association between leadership, knowledge management and organisational effectiveness was positively moderated by transformational leadership (Le & Lei, 2017). On the other side, the impact of transformational leadership on certain KM activities was researched. Transformational leadership had a direct and significant impact on knowledge sharing, according to eight research that looked into the topic (Park & Kim, 2018). Another study discovered a strong link between internal information sharing and transformative leadership (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2018 Gerpott & Ulrike, 2019).

Earlier research discovered that transactional leadership, another prevalent leadership style, significantly and favourably correlates with the talents and pursuits of knowledge management (Farooqi, et al., 2017; Mahmood & Khattak, 2017). Additionally, there is a

strong correlation between transactional leadership and specific KM elements, namely knowledge externalisation, internalisation and sharing (Aung & Vinitwatanakhun, 2018). However, several aspects of transactional leadership were discovered to have a favourable impact on knowledge management operations. One of the transactional characteristics, contingent rewards, was found to be positively correlated with information sharing with customers on both an internal and external level as well as with socialising and combination. Additionally, it was shown that communication and the issue had a favourable correlation with the initiating structure, one of the transactional aspects (Aung & Vinitwatanakhun, 2018).

According to research on knowledge leadership, knowledge development and application as well as KM benefited from knowledge-oriented leadership (Le & Lei, 2019). Regarding the other leadership styles, some studies showed that leadership in general linked with KM and had a positive moderating influence on the association between knowledge sharing and organisational learning, even while leadership behaviour (i.e., leadership style, professional authority and counselling skills) showed a positive relation with KM. According to one study, senior managers' attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control were found to positively influence the desire to encourage knowledge-sharing, which is the main factor determining corporate knowledge-sharing behaviour (Lin & Lee, 2004).

The success of KM techniques was also positively correlated with the strategic component of leadership. The leadership philosophies of directive, participative and supporting showed only marginally favourable effects on KM (Gerpott & Ulrike, 2019). According to a previous study, different leadership styles had a strong positive relationship with KM practices, whereas the directive and supportive styles had unfavourable associations with KM practices. Regarding leadership powers, the referent power had no impact on anything in the knowledge-based context, the legitimate power had a negative impact on knowledge acquisition, the coercive power only had a negative impact in small organisations and the expert power had positive and significant effect on both the dissemination and acquisition of knowledge (Jayasingam et al., 2010).

## Data Sources and Evidence

To comprehend the actual experiences of leaders in information technology companies, a phenomenological approach was used (Christiana et al., 2014). This approach was essentially described by Freeman (2021) as a manner of mining experiences to increase visibility. What statement did leaders make during difficult times? Answers to this question were combined using the common and shared stories of leaders from various companies and regional contexts as well as personal identification traits to reflect their experiences (Christiana et al., 2014). The presence and value of adaptive leadership amid global crises are highlighted by the collective lived experiences of these leaders. Individual, semi-structured interviews with leaders in a range of companies were undertaken by the writers. Among the 45 invited dynamic leaders to participate in the study. The organization's definition of a leader, appointment to leadership positions within the organisation for an extended period of time and possession of a master's or doctoral degree in higher education administration or a closely related discipline were also selection criteria.

Participants played a variety of job roles in their respective departments to senior leadership positions like provost. In order to converse with information-rich participants, a deliberate sampling technique was used (Palinkas et al., 2015), which depended on the authors' professional networks and organisations to enlist study participants. A brief exploratory survey that gathered demographic data and professional experiences was also

used to collect data, along with interviews, field notes and other methods. Over 25 pages of transcribed data were produced from interviews that lasted between 30 and 50 minutes each. To guarantee the validity of the results, the semi-structured interview technique was mapped and linked with previous research using effective leadership styles as the theoretical lens.

Three major topics were covered in the interview protocol: Career histories and entry into leadership positions, leadership experiences and behaviours in crisis situations and the impact of demographics and leadership styles on knowledge management. This chapter focuses on participants' leadership experiences and behaviours via the theoretical lens of knowledge management. Interviews were transcribed and coded to find emergent themes and patterns. The authors worked together repeatedly after completing the first coding to compare and contrast the various developing codes, to improve the codebook and to determine the final themes. In the participants' perspectives and subsequent behaviours when leading through crises, this produced evidence of adaptive leadership. The results of this study show how the effective leadership theory may be applied by leaders in times of international crises.

## **FINDINGS AND APPLICATION: EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES**

Each of the two leadership tenets is briefly discussed in this section, along with how it may look in a crisis. This is followed by a real-world application example that is illustrated by the experiences of the effective leaders who took part in the authors' study.

### **Creating the Conditions for Organizational Success**

The desire to build new surroundings is the driving force behind adaptive leadership in stable times. To ensure the success of the organisation and its members, leaders must possess a great capacity for mobilisation and change-making. This tenet's core leadership considerations centre on issues of value, purpose and methodology. High morale, a positive social and environmental impact and stakeholder satisfaction could result from the adaptive leader's capacity to respond to these questions (Heifetz et al., 2019). These lofty standards could appear suddenly unreachable in times of crisis, but it's crucial for leaders to lead their organisations' people through difficulties by projecting strength. Leadership is mandated to respond to disruption and evolution as they are taking place, not to initiate them. Leaders must instil in people a feeling of confidence in value, purpose and process, so the fundamental questions remain. A study participant provided the following personal comments on the global health pandemic and how they motivated her to use her leadership position to help others through procedures and policies.

Immediately as a woman, as a mother and as the person who sort of really manages our household, I believe as COVID was really bursting out and just rocking all of us to our core. Oh my god, all of this is occurring and I'm still employed and in good health. We have lucrative jobs. We'll be fine, I assure you. What about all the employees who lack a support system? I gave a lot of thought to how it felt to be pre-tenure and how hard I had to work. I gave a lot of thought to what it might be like for transgender people. As a result, it made me immediately aware of the necessity for our leadership-whoever they may be and in whatever situation-to be willing to consider the context of this year moving ahead. You must be willing to rethink evaluation if we're serious about retaining and advancing a broad spectrum of views. You must be prepared to move forward. You must be willing to hold yourself accountable.

### **Putting Time and Effort into the Past**

This belief obviously begs the question "*when*," but perhaps the more important query is "" In order to create a better future for their organisation, adaptive leaders must show perseverance and devotion. They must therefore be certain of the motivation that will keep them working even when the going gets tough. The resource of time may become more concentrated and have a different meaning for adaptable leaders during times of crisis. In order to work through and beyond a crisis, significant periods of time on the job may be needed over the course of hours, days, weeks, months and years. One of the employee said that she was taking time into consideration, particularly how she wanted to transform the experiences of the employees through her leadership by departing from conventional practises.

Just realising that it's difficult, even in light of the current crisis. Sometimes it feels like a daily issues and challenge. Kind of leave things alone there are many things you cannot control and if you allow yourself to get overly preoccupied with them, you may suffer serious consequences. Therefore, concentrating on what I can control has benefited me. Instead of being concerned with the outcome, I really tried to do what I could do and let others play their parts. And so, they are the methods that, in all honesty, have worked for me.

## DISCUSSION

Effective leadership is essential to navigating both short- and long-term effects, as demonstrated by the worldwide pandemic and social injustice problems. As scholars, leaders and stakeholders investigate if and how effect of leader actions and outcomes in times of crisis, questions and comparisons arise given the high visibility and immediate nature of these crises. In two significant ways, this study adds to the body of knowledge about leaders' effect on KM (Rosing & Zacher, 2017). First, the authors aimed to comprehend the strategies used by leaders in a range of roles that span programmatic, departmental and organisational levels during trying circumstances. Second, the authors used effective leadership as a conceptual framework to clarify the perspectives and methods of crisis leadership used by leaders. The authors go on to elaborate on these contributions and provide guidance from these leaders that influence KM Intellectual capital is the essential component in knowledge development, in close-knit organizations or communities of practices, knowledge is both produced and held collectively rather than individually (Kumar et al., 2019; Rosing & Zacher, 2017).

Over the years, a lot of research has been done how knowledge management plays significant role in organisational success. Processes, intellectual capital, culture and strategy are some of the ones that have been noted as being crucial to knowledge management. This study is an attempt to close the gap found in earlier research work (Kumar et al., 2019). Incentives based on performance outcomes are necessary to develop knowledge sharing behaviour since they will encourage and raise employee commitment levels while also giving them job security to ensure on-going application, sharing and usage of collective organizational knowledge (Alvesson, 2019). There is always some disagreement between what employees expect from their contributions to the company and how they agree that particular approaches will result in the desired output (Oyemomi et al., 2016). Management uses power tools to convert this disparity into collaboration. To specify what must be done and how it must be done, the management team must take an assertive role.

Consensus starts to build when employees' methods for accomplishing tasks consistently succeed. Employees don't believe their techniques of operation will be successful. No model has ever been acknowledged as the gold standard for knowledge management implementation success (Oyemomi et al., 2016). Based on the suggestions from earlier research, this study aims to present a conceptual model. The cornerstone for the

successful adoption of knowledge management systems is culture, an essential component (Cabrilo & Dahms, 2018). It is important to create a culture where knowledge creation, sharing and learning occur at all levels. This will be an indication of successful business in the future. Once you are aware of this culture, you can hire individuals who are eager to learn new things.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The aforementioned ideas are taken into consideration when conducting a conceptual framework study. The goal of this study is to increase public understanding of the importance of information for improved organisational performance. In a developing country like India, where there is room for the service industry to grow because it is still in its infancy. Over the past few years, the service industry has seen tremendous job growth and it is expected to continue rising in the years to come. In order to establish and maintain a competitive edge, the industry's competitors will encourage the development of incentives and services to draw customers. This study will help managers appreciate the importance of knowledge management and learn how to apply it effectively to gain a competitive advantage. The recommendations made by previous knowledge management researchers for all the key variables have not been significantly attempted to be integrated. With the participation of all stakeholders, the integrative influence of processes, intellectual capital, culture and strategy will result in the desired results.

Employee interaction and implementation must occur in a sharing-oriented culture. The processes of the organisation either direct or affect its strategy. Once a sharing culture has been developed, workers will feel confident, be able to share and contribute effectively and so on. Because they will be carrying out the strategy and communicating with customers, middle management should be included in its development. Their input will be very important. Organizations must manage the workforce's aptitudes, competencies and knowledge. Making optimal use of organisational assets a core competency and transforming employee strengths into organisational assets present a challenge in a dynamic economic context. If businesses want to stay competitive in the constantly changing global market, they must understand the significance of information. The awareness will encourage a culture that embraces diversity as well as a commitment to these ideals. The increased human component in knowledge exchange will foster creativity and innovative thought. The processes will be developed in line with the plans and objectives of the organisation. By making wise and effective use of the knowledge resource, you can outperform your competition. Additionally, you may keep that advantage by consistently updating your knowledge base.

## CONCLUSION

The study's findings can be summed up by saying that there are four key observations. First off, the organization's personnel put in above-average amounts of effort to generate, capture, organise, share and utilise knowledge for organisational excellence. Second, it has been discovered that directive leadership styles are most common in software organisations, where the strict regulation of co-workers' knowledge worker job behaviours is of the biggest importance. Third, it has been discovered that all aspects of knowledge management practises are considerably and negatively correlated with the leadership style of directiveness, but strongly and positively correlated with the leadership style of delegation. The fourth observation is that only delegating has been found to predict variation in both explicit and

tacit forms of knowledge management techniques, as opposed to any other type of leadership style.

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