EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICS AND KNOWLEDGE CULTURE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The paper studies the impact of ethics on the knowledge culture of an organization. The objective of the paper is to propose the linkage between ethics and knowledge culture. It is postulated in this paper that ethical norms pertaining in organization influence individual behaviour for creation, sharing, storage and application of knowledge. The firm can integrate ethical values in knowledge culture of an organization and can have a long-term impact. Future studies can focus on empirical research and testing of the proposed conceptual model. The main limitation arises while generalizing conclusion on linkage between ethics and knowledge culture studied through literature. The paper offers an original conceptual framework integrating ethics and knowledge culture. This model proposes a roadmap for managers to implement and practice ethical conduct while creating, sharing, storing and applying knowledge.

Keywords: Ethics, Knowledge Management, Knowledge Culture, Organizational Culture, Knowledge Creation, Knowledge Sharing, Knowledge Storage, Knowledge Application

INTRODUCTION

The technical advancement facilitated by modern science lead to a progression from an industrial economy to a knowledge-based economy. The knowledge-based economy has been labeled as a network society because of information availability and accessibility from global networks (Manuel Castells, 2004). The knowledge-based economy is the economy of knowledge sharing where knowledge sharing affirms to be a vital component contributing towards effectiveness of knowledge culture (Styhre, 2002). Ethics is the key driver to achieve a successful organization (Peyman Akhavan, 2013). The knowledge culture accelerates knowledge exchange and knowledge creation within the organizational framework. Knowledge is owned and maintained by the organization and is considered as a public good (Wasko & Faraj, 2000). Knowledge culture aggregates individual knowledge into collective knowledge through open discussion, interpersonal interaction, collaboration and knowledge exchange. Some organizations focus on organizational knowledge neglecting the concern of individual's self-interest. The individualistic as well as collectivistic approach for knowledge acquisition and retention may lead to ethical conflicts in the organization. The organizations should emphasize on creating an effective balance between individualistic and collectivistic approach towards knowledge acquisition and retention. Knowledge culture should support and leverage organizational effectiveness but not contribute to unethical practice by retrenching the members who offer their ideas and innovations regularly.

The research gap observed during literature review recognizes that there is no research which studies integrated framework of ethics that facilitates all KM processes which includes knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge storage and knowledge application. There is deliberation on impact of ethics on knowledge creation in literature but there is no research on ethical components impacting all KM processes. This paper is an attempt to identify the various

ethical and knowledge sharing culture dimensions keeping their linkage in mind which has not been explored earlier. The principal motive is to explain the conceptual framework that explains the role of ethics in knowledge culture. The structure of this paper is as follows: In the first section, we have analyzed the literature pertinent to ethics and knowledge culture. The next section deliberates on research methodology for the paper. In the third section, the linkage between ethics and knowledge culture is established through various pieces of evidence from the literature. The fourth section proposes a conceptual model integrating knowledge culture with ethics. Finally, we have concluded with some reflections and lessons extracted from the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethics

Ethics refers to the code of conduct preached by culture based on notions of value and morality. Ethics is defined as a system of moral values which judge behaviour as right and wrong (Rosenthal & Rosnow). Ethical decision making in organizational setup deliberates on the concept of moral intensity and moral sensibility (Kelly & Elm, 2003). Moral intensity refers to issue related moral imperative within a circumstance and moral sensibility is moral intent as per individual cognitive process. Organizational ethical climate reflects prevailing perception of employees regarding decision making influenced by moral component (Cohen, 1993).

Ethical codes are defined as a set of written rules which helps in resolving issues faced by a person, guiding professionals in determining the appropriate course of action and also improving ethical beliefs and behaviour (De Gorge, 1995). Thus, ethical codes must be backed by appropriate mechanism and structure (Shaw & Barry, 1992).

School of Thoughts in Ethics

Two primary schools of thoughts cited in the literature are deontology and teleology. Deontological approach refers to the action as ethical or unethical. Deontology talks about evaluation of inherent action rather than its consequences (Clark & Mills, 1993). Teleological approach refers to the consequences of an action as an indicator of good or bad (O'Boyle & Dawson, 1992). There is Aristotle's Nicomachean approach to Ethics which states that its person's behaviour and not a consequence of action or action itself that has to be ethically just.

Ethical Issues

According to Frank Land (2003), there are three dimensions to ethical issues: socio-economic issue, technical issue and legalistic issue. According to Bryant (2006), there is an underlying motivation and hidden agenda behind implementing KM in an organization focussing on lay off or opting for downsizing. While advocating for KM, KM systems may be prone to unethical stances specifically while designing and implementing KM systems. The knowledge is prone to ownership conflict as employers exploit the knowledge of employees as they don't acknowledge and incentivize the employees with rewards for their contribution.

The literature on knowledge culture reveals the unethical practices observed in the organizations. This includes undesirable practices like manipulation of knowledge, conflicts over property and privacy rights, hoarding of knowledge, lack of autonomy for knowledge workers, falsification of facts, disclosing confidential information and plagiarism (Suzanne Zyngier, 2015).

Ethical Indicators

There are various ethical indicators which affect an organization's knowledge culture. The various ethical indicators are grouped into ethical constructs, namely organizational value and justice, commitment and responsibility, intellectual ownership and trusteeship, team working morale (Peyman Akhavan, 2013). Organizational value and justice constitute honesty, humility, collective trust, organizational trust, fair behavior, perseverance in works and criticism taking. The commitment and responsibility constitute ethical items like responsibility, loyalty, commitment, foresight and working conscience. The intellectual ownership and trusteeship constitutes secrecy, intellectual property right, trusteeship and care in authenticity. The ethical indicator team working morale constitutes council with others, affability, helping and empathy with others, self-control.

Primes Model

The PRIMES model of ethics constitutes of personality, integration of morality, moral ecology and skills (Chuck Huff, 2010). This model leads to a sustained moral action in a social context. This model embeds moral action in personality characteristics, guides moral action in the self-system through integration of morality, shapes moral action through surrounded moral ecology and facilitates moral action through moral skills and knowledge. Personality influences the way people undertake and they go about their work (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Integration of morality refers to moral commitment and persistence towards moral action. Moral ecology refers to moral surrounding in the organization (Huff, Barnard & Frey, 2008). Pursuing moral course of action and to navigate in moral ecology requires possession of moral skills and knowledge (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2005). The moral skill and knowledge aids in moral decision making. The next section deliberates on knowledge culture for creating, sharing, storing and applying knowledge in organizational context.

Knowledge Culture

Knowledge culture is attributed as a culture preponderating in organizational dynamics for smooth facilitation of creating, sharing, storing and applying knowledge. Knowledge culture facilitates acquisition, refinement, up-gradation, maintenance and application of knowledge. Existing perspective in knowledge culture provides cost and benefit analysis, but ethical issues concerning the technology are neglected (Gotterbarn et al., 2008). Knowledge culture improves organizational performance through continuous up-gradation of knowledge leading to innovation and competitive advantage. The essential attributes for a knowledge culture encompass collaboration, interaction amongst employees, sharing knowledge, exchange of ideas, trust, innovation, tolerance of mistakes, openness about failures, encouragement to generate new ideas and solutions (Nina Evans et al., 2011). Knowledge can be created and it can also be omitted, suppressed, amplified, exaggerated, diminished, distorted and withheld depending on the prevailing knowledge culture.

Knowledge Creation through SECI

Knowledge culture encompasses both forms of knowledge: explicit and tacit. Tacit knowledge resides in the employees mind and cannot be articulated; it evolves from social interaction between people. Explicit knowledge is documented, structured and can be externalized in written or verbal form. Knowledge culture promotes the creation, sharing and conversion of both knowledge types through knowledge conversion cycles. There is a four-dimensional process for

mutual conversion of explicit and tacit knowledge, SECI constituting socialization, externalization, combination and internalization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Socialization generates new tacit knowledge from existing tacit knowledge. Externalization converts tacit knowledge into new explicit knowledge through documentation. The combination creates new explicit knowledge from the existing explicit knowledge. Internalization refers to the conversion of explicit knowledge into new tacit knowledge.

Knowledge Sharing

In knowledge culture individual's knowledge sharing is the initial stage to create organizational knowledge (Choi et al., 2008). Knowledge can be easily acquired through sharing and its value can be augmented if transferred effectively between individuals. It is said that knowledge grows with use rather than getting exhausted with use, unlike other resources (Styhre, 2002). Knowledge culture witnesses how individual share knowledge within the groups, across hierarchical levels and networking organizational units (Choi et al., 2008). Knowledge culture encourages transferring the knowledge and experience of predecessors to new employees. Trust is a vital factor which governs personal knowledge sharing among employees. The leadership style is another important factor which provides direction and supports knowledge culture through action and not just words.

Knowledge Storage and Application

The knowledge storage is facilitated through the use of information technology infrastructure, which includes databases, data repositories, expert systems, online storages and other information systems (Tseng et al., 2008). The knowledge culture facilitates application of knowledge through innovation. Important factors essential for innovation are open communication, trust, autonomy, collaboration, competitiveness, empowerment, continuous learning and leadership commitment (Miller & Triana, 2009). Knowledge culture facilitates innovation in the form of a new product, service, new social structure, new production process etc. Knowledge culture provides an environment of experimentation, workgroup support, support to novelty, creativity which fosters innovation. The subsequent section discuses research approach adopted for the current paper.

RESEARCH APPROACH

To study the impact of ethics on knowledge culture and to integrate ethics into knowledge culture of an organization, required data is gathered from the literature. This study has performed a detailed analysis of literature to develop a deeper understanding of the concepts. A comprehensive review of literature has been carried out as an approach to recapitulate the literature as it is transparent and furnishes a clear structure for the literature selection process.

Literature selection process constitutes various stages. Data for this research was gathered until December 2020 through a series of searches through extant literature. The first step was running a search on social sciences databases. Research papers concerning ethics, organizational culture, KM and knowledge culture were accessed utilizing social sciences databases. The peer reviewed journal articles were searched for literature review. The databases used for research are Emerald, ProQuest Central, Inderscience, Business source complete (EBSCO).

Reasons for inclusions included a set of selection criteria:

- The papers selected were obtained from peer reviewed journals, which guarantee the minimum quality of relevant studies.
- The language of articles was English as it adds to the transparency and replicability of review.
- The articles were included on the basis of "well specified subject", *i.e.,* ethics and knowledge culture.
- The literature from business and management was selected as this focus area has highest probability for managerial contribution.

Taking into consideration all the predetermined selection criteria the research was carried out further which resulted in 371 articles. In the succeeding stage of literature review, the articles were screened by title. The searches were conducted using these keywords: knowledge sharing, ethics, knowledge management, knowledge culture, knowledge sharing and ethics, knowledge management and ethics, knowledge culture and ethics. These searches were repeated using the above-mentioned search strings in these databases. The research papers selected for the study used the term: knowledge management or knowledge sharing or Knowledge culture and/or ethics in their title for better clarification of concept. Those research articles which did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria were excluded from further stages. After the article title limitation, the number of relevant articles was reduced to 268. In the third stage, references for all research papers selected were scanned to identify relevant research on the topic. All research papers were analyzed from the perspective of the theme of the study. This is followed by the abstract scanning of all the papers. If the abstract didn't match the theme of the study, they were excluded from further study. This has led to 117 papers. Next step was a detailed examination of papers where full text of article was read. After the thorough examination, 33 papers were finalized and were further analyzed and summarized. After conducting this process, various components of ethics and knowledge culture were identified (Refer table 1). Theoretical and empirical findings from previous literature have been reviewed to support the linkage between ethics and knowledge culture and to develop a conceptual framework integrating ethics and knowledge culture (Figure 1). In the conceptual framework dependent variable is knowledge culture which is grouped into three constructs culture for knowledge creation, culture for knowledge sharing and culture for knowledge storage and application. The independent variable is ethics and on the basis of literature review it is grouped into six constructs. In the next section authors have proposed a conceptual framework integrating ethics and knowledge culture in prevailing organizational dynamics.

INTEGRATING ETHICS AND KNOWLEDGE CULTURE

Knowledge culture facilitates opportunities for achieving competitive advantage through better handling of information, rapid response to market dynamics and fluctuations in the business environment. But in many instances, the existence of knowledge culture is seen in the universe of dynamic tension because of disrespect to privacy, conflict of knowledge ownership, data theft etc. Also, the knowledge is hoarded, suppressed, distorted and misappropriated for self and organizational motive. This different side pertaining in knowledge culture suggests organization to have an ethical inclination. The literature on knowledge culture predominantly discusses its positive view that it encourages knowledge creation, sharing, storage and its future application. The utopian view or knowledge culture Nirvana fails to address unethical issues that are faced by an organization which includes distortion, suppression and misappropriation of knowledge (Alter, 2006). The ethical orientation of an organization nurtures its knowledge culture with trust, data privacy, intellectual property and intellectual capital protection. The ethical knowledge culture is culture facilitating knowledge processes and supporting purposive moral action and possessing ethical dissent. Ethicality, fair behaviour and trust are the essence of knowledge culture of an organization. The success of knowledge culture may depend on KM initiatives and its features but its sustainability depends on following ethical practices.

Unethical Practices in Knowledge Culture

Knowledge culture experiences manipulation and monitoring of knowledge at sourcing, acquisition, storage and dissemination phase. Knowledge can be created, acquired, omitted, hoarded, suppressed, amplified, distorted, diminished, misappropriated and suppressed. Employee's resistance and reluctance to share knowledge is one of the major problems faced by the organizations. Employees are more inclined to hoard knowledge instead of sharing because of competition. The hoarding of knowledge may create obstacles in organizations survival. This seems to be a very unethical practice on the part of employees. On the other hand, if knowledge of employees is captured into data warehouses and expert systems, knowledge workers become less valuable and more prone to layoff or retrenchment. The downsizing is an unethical practice on the part of the employer. The ethical consideration is to maintain a balance between the rights of an organization to use employee's knowledge and the right of an employee to job security and rewards for knowledge sharing.

Knowledge is possessed by employees and resides in their memory. The "knowledge is power" influences knowledge sharing and knowledge processing behaviour of individuals. Fairness is observed when employees are treated equally and both organizational and individual needs are given equal priority. Justice is a moral obligation between organization and employees so that ethical and effective processing of knowledge can be done. Trust is also an essential factor in knowledge culture as it reflects the care and reliability of organization towards employees. Top management should initiate providing company support by tolerance to mistakes, providing rewards for knowledge creation and sharing. To avoid, reduce and manage the tension between organizations and employees, the foundation of knowledge culture should be laid on ethics, deriving a moral contract between both parties.

Role of Ethical Leadership and Stakeholders in Knowledge Culture

The firms managed by leaders who value ethical principles and have ethical orientations create an opportunity for employees and other stakeholders to contribute to knowledge creation and knowledge acquisition. The ethical leadership also creates trust, fairness and transparency which encourages knowledge share and knowledge transfer. The top management lead by ethical leader plays a pivot role in knowledge creation by encouraging all stakeholders to contribute in knowledge creation.

Ethics and Knowledge Management Processes

The study by Rai (2011), noticed that the Competing Value Framework (CVF) of culture does not include the dimension of ethics and trust. CVF was revised by adding aspects of ethics and trust to culture. The competing value framework research was based on identifying indicators of organizational effectiveness (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1988). The four culture types in competing value framework are termed as clan, adhocracy, market and hierarchy culture. There is a linkage observed between competing value framework of organizational culture and SECI model of knowledge conversion (Rai, 2011). Ethical and trusting culture is an important dimension for knowledge creation and conversion (Curry & Stancich, 2000). Knowledge sharing culture will be diminished in the absence of mutual trust.

Rezaiian & Ghazinoory's (2010) research presented a significant relationship between ethical aspects and functional aspects of knowledge management processes. There is a correlation between trust, respect, honesty, ownership, support, empathy, accountability, commitment, secrecy,

care in authenticity on one side and creation, storage, sharing and utilization of knowledge on another side.

Peyman Akhavan (2013) studied the impact of ethical indicators on knowledge management processes. The research finding of Peyman Akhavan indicated combination is affected most by ethical principles followed by socialization and externalization. Also, internalization is not at all affected by ethical principles. Ethical indicators like trust, secrecy, and care in authenticity, confidence and intellectual property play a vital role in converting explicit knowledge to new explicit knowledge and storing it. This is the reason why ethical principles facilitate combination. The ethical indicators like team working encourage socialization through sharing experiences among members in team and organization. The role of ethics is highlighted as socialization is based on the social interactions of people. The ethical principles play an important role in externalization by encouraging employees to revel their knowledge.

S.No	Ethics	Knowledge management & organiazational culture	Literature Support
	Table 1		
	INTEGRATING ETHICS AND KNOWLEDGE CULTURE		
1	**Ethical issues** Privacy Integrity Honesty Fairness Openess Autonomy Accountability	**Culture Change -** Knowledge creation and application (Innovation in policies, procedures and work methods; openesssn to change)	Jean Woodall(1996)
2	**Ethical issues** Socio economic issue Technical issue Legalistic issue	Knowledge creation (Top management support for knowledge creation) Knowledge storage (Information systems & expert systems to store knowledge) Knowledge sharing (Sharing information freely) Knowledge use(Strategic flexibility and tolerance to mistakes while knowledge application)	Frank land & Urooj Ajmad (2003)
3	Honesty Integrity Trust Justice Right & duties Good personal relation Teamwork Care	Diverse organizational cultures (Navy, Police, Family owned engineering business)	Michael W. Small(2006)
4	**Victor Cullen's ethical climate** Self interest Company profit Effciency Friendship Team interest Social responsibility Personal morality Company rules/procedures Laws/ professional codes	Organizational knowledge management Creating knowledge (creativity for knowledge creation) Storing knowledge (Databases and information systems) Transferring knowledge (Sharing information freely) Application of knowledge (Communication & information flow for application)	Fan-Chuan Tseng, Grace Feng Weng, Yen-Jung Fan(2008)

5	Personality Integration of morality Moral ecology Skills	Knowledge culture	Chuck Huff (2010)
6	Ethical leadership	Knowledge exchange with stakeholders (Working closely with others for knowledge sharing) Knowledge creation (Top management support for knowledge creation)	Fatima Guadamillas-Gomez and Mario J. Donate-Manznares (2011)
7	Ethical issues Knowledge omission knowledge distortion knowledge supression Knowledge amplification Knowledge hoarding Knowledge ownership conflict	Knowledge management Knowledge sharing (Culture that value knowledge sharing; sharing knowledge by experienced employees)	Nina Evans, Mary Mckinley (2011)
8	Ethical and trusting culture	Knowledge creation Knowledge creation through socialization (Clan culture) Knowledge creation through externalization (adhocracy culture) Knowledge creation through combination (market culture) Knowledge creation through internalization (Hierarichal culture)	Rajnish Kumar Rai (2011)
9	**Ethical theories** Consequentialist Dentology Virtue ethics	Knowledge economy	John Harrison & David Rooney (2012)
10	**Ethics** Denteology Teleology	Identifying knowledge Capturing knowledge Retriving knowledge Sharing/Transfer of knowledge	Seow Ting Lee (2012)
11	Conflict of knowledge ownership (between organization and employee)	Knowledge acquired/created Knowledge exchange/transfer Knowledge stored Knowledge protected	Isabel Rechberg & Jawad Syed (2013)
12	Organizational value and justice Commitment & responsibility Intellectual ownership & Trusteeship Team working morale	Knowledge creation through Socialization Externalization Combination Internalization	Peyman Akhavan, Majid Ramezan, Jafar Yazdi Moghaddam (2013)
13	**Ethical theories** Consequentialist Denteology Virtue ethics	Knowledge creation (Motivators and Rewards for knowledge sharing) Knowledge storage (Storing in information systems) Knowledge transfer (Culture that value knowledge sharing) Knowledge application (Employee empowerment for knowledge application)	Sutirtha Chatterjee, Suprateek Sarker (2013)
14	Organizational value and justice Commitment & responsibility Intellectual ownership & trusteeship	Knowledge creation through Socialization Externalization Combination Internalization	Peyman Akhavan, Majid Ramezan, Jafar Yazdi Moghaddam (2014)

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	Team working morale		
15	**Ethical issues** Knowledge hoarding Knowledge manipulation and misappropriation Knowledge ownership conflict	Knowledge exchange (Open communication for knowledge sharing)	Suzanne Zyngier, Aarti Nagpal (2015)
16	Ethics in knowledge organization	Slanted knowledge organization	Jose Augusto Chaves Guimaraes (2017)
17	Information integrity	Information system pactices (storing and managing information) Data governance	Simon Rogerson, Keith W. Miller, Jenifer Sunrise Winter & David Larson (2017)
18	**Ethical decision making** Process oriented (Denteology) Outcome oriented(Teleology)	Organizational culture	Eileen Bridges(2018)
19	Ethics	Safety and security culture from emerging technologies (new knowledge creation and its distribution)	Monique Ischi & Johannes Rath (2019)

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

A holistic view of ethics and its linkage with knowledge culture is presented. In this paper, authors have tried to identify various constituents in ethics from the literature that guides knowledge processes. To investigate the perspective of ethics in knowledge culture, it is important to examine the ethical climate, ethical indicators, ethical issues and model of ethics in practice. The encapsulation of these parameters in the conceptual framework will guide managers to deal with dilemmas and will nurture values to sustain ethical standards while practising knowledge management activities. The Victor & Cullen model (1964) of ethics did not include many aspects of ethics like socio-economic aspect, technical aspect and legalistic aspect. PRIMES Model by Chuck Huff (2010) also ignored many important aspects relevant to knowledge sharing in an organization. Similarly dimensions of ethical principles mentioned by Peyman Akhavan (2013) lacked in many aspects relevant to knowledge culture of any organization. These models lack in mentioning obstacles in ethical behaviour for knowledge culture. The ethical issues are important which constitutes knowledge hoarding, knowledge ownership conflict, privacy rights, knowledge manipulation and misappropriation. The proposed conceptual framework in figure 1 depicts the impact of ethics (independent variable) on knowledge culture (dependent variable).

The culture that promotes knowledge creation and knowledge sharing is the culture characterized by open communication, creativity, culture offering rewards, incentives and publicly recognizing employees for knowledge creation and sharing. Knowledge sharing should be initiated by top-level management and its success to an extent is dependent on leadership style in the organization. The top management should have strategic flexibility and also be tolerant to mistakes while knowledge application (Frank land et al., 2003). Information technology support is predominant for knowledge storage through the use of databases, expert systems and other information systems (Fan-Chuan Tseng et al., 2008). Also, sharing knowledge by experienced employees, internal communication, developing friends at work, employee involvement and employee empowerment for knowledge application are essential attributes of knowledge culture (Nina Evans et al., 2011; Elspeth N. Tilley, 2012; Chen-Fong Wu, 2016). According to the

suggested conceptual framework in figure 1, there are various determinants and indicators of ethics which are required by an organization for thriving knowledge culture.
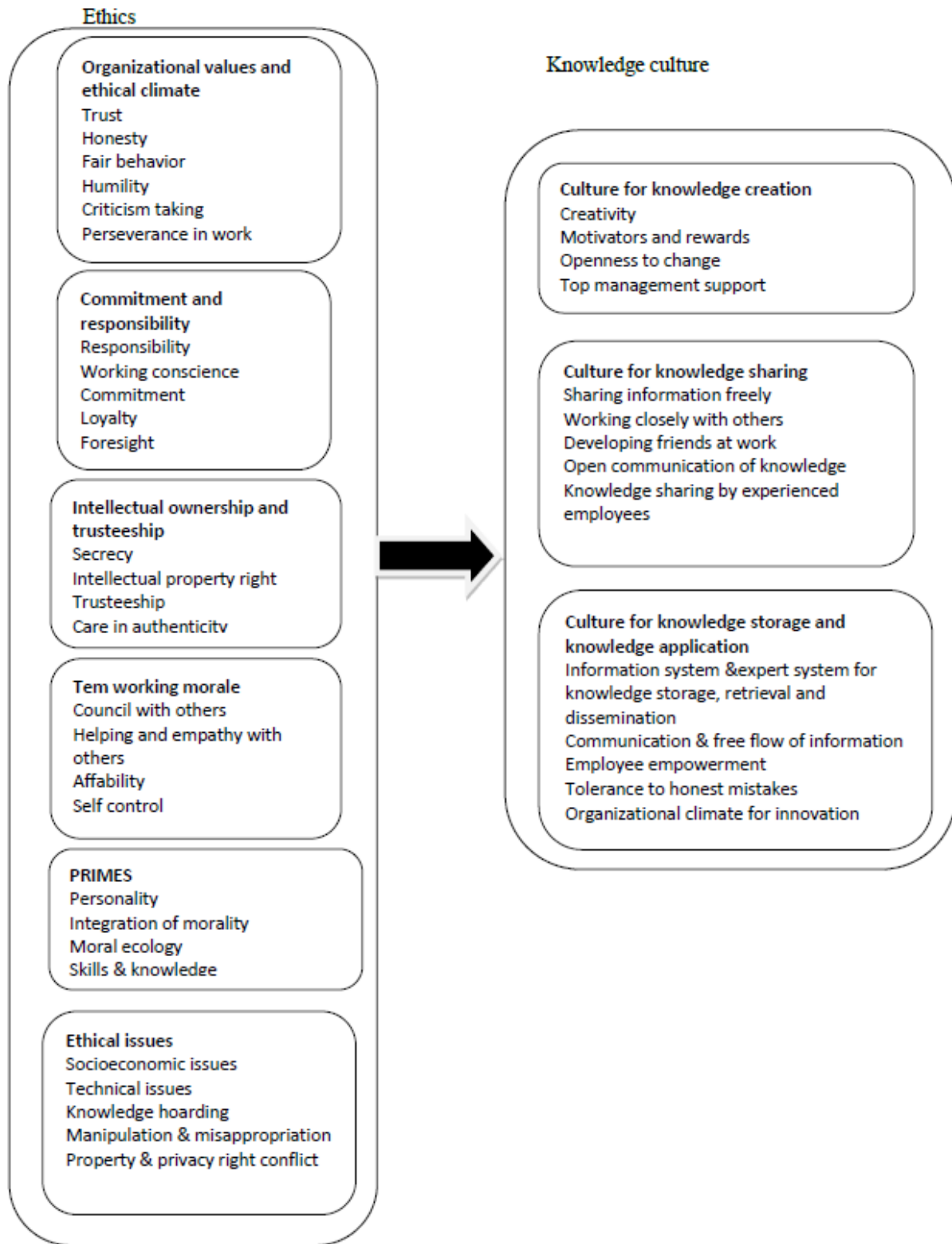

FIGURE 1
PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATING ETHICS AND KNOWLEDGE CULTURE (COMPILED BY AUTHORS)

CONCLUSION

The linkage studied in literature give an understanding that organizations culture has a potential effect on KM processes. Ethical norms are one of the most influencing dimensions of organizations culture to guide ethical behaviour and activities in an organization. The literature examines how organizations ethical norm influence individual behaviour for executing, implementing and accomplishing KM processes. The conceptual framework proposed explains the influence of ethics on knowledge culture. While thinking carefully about ethics and knowledge culture, organizations should rethink about purposive moral action in KM processes. For ethical KM culture, the organization should provide access to tacit and explicit knowledge, organizational processes. Ethical KM system is one that supports the acquisition, storage and access to knowledge through moral action. One of the ethical concerns is KM conflict that arises because of nature that knowledge is considered as a private asset or public good. Thus, organizational members perceive KM as a private asset or organization's asset reckons on their ethical judgment capability.

Organizations effort for knowledge appropriation has a negative impact on employee's knowledge processing behaviour and their participation in knowledge culture. The organization should provide a conducive environment to encourage knowledge sharing and knowledge creation for an effective knowledge culture and it should be based on ethical grounds where the organization provides a trustworthy environment, fair rewards and a transparent culture for employees. The knowledge culture now recognizes that they have responsibilities, in addition, to generate wealth and sustain profits; these responsibilities are moral in nature. The knowledge culture should also diffuse ethical responsibilities, ethical code of conduct that the organization expects from employees.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study will enable the organizations to adopt proposed conceptual framework where ethics fosters knowledge creation, sharing, storage and application for attainment of long-term competitive advantage and its sustainability. The organizational ethical norms discussed in the paper can be practically implemented, executed and assessed in KM initiatives where members of the organization can create, acquire, store, transfer and apply knowledge with shared ethical beliefs. The ethics can be built into future strategies of the organization for knowledge management leading to strategizing of ethics into knowledge culture. Establishing linkage between ethics and knowledge culture may lead to ethical conceptualization in knowledge culture of an organization.

This paper may raise several potential research questions which may be converted into a research hypothesis and tested empirically. The research questions may include: To what extent knowledge can be manipulated for organizational gain or individual gain? To what extent personality, skills, moral integration and moral ecology influence knowledge creation and sharing? To what extent management can appropriate knowledge possessed by employees? To what extent building a knowledge culture is a long-term strategy in comparison to reaching short term profit? To what extent socio-cultural issue, technical issue and legalistic issue influence knowledge culture? To what extent ethical and trusting culture influences knowledge creation activities? To what extent value, justice, commitment, responsibility, trusteeship and team working morale influence knowledge conversion cycle?

Ethical indicators can be studied in KM practices, KM initiatives and KM models. Ethical principles application in knowledge culture may lead to long term economic performance and profitable business. Thus, the business should develop and practice model of ethics guiding and supporting an organization's knowledge culture.

More qualitative and quantitative research is needed to affirm the role of ethics in knowledge culture. One of the limitations in this paper is the difficulty of establishing the relationship between ethics and knowledge culture. Second difficulties emerge in generalizing conclusion from the literature and linkage studied between ethics and knowledge culture. Also, there may be many other ethical issues that have not been included in this paper. The paper has not deliberated much on intellectual property rights to ascertain whether ethical issues of employees in knowledge culture have been addressed or not.

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