

**STRATEGIC FACTORS INFLUENCING ADOPTION OF KNOWLEDGE  
MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The public service institutions are challenged with problems emanating from lack of a central repository of knowledge, loss of knowledge through expertise leaving the without being captured and over reliance on a few subject experts. The main objective of this study was to assess the factors that affect the adoption of knowledge management strategies at the public service in Kenya. The specific objectives of this study were to establish the influence of organizational culture and the influence of staff competencies on the adoption of KM Strategies at public service in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive case study research design. The study targets 642 employees from four ministries. Proportionate stratified sampling was used in selecting a sample size of 247 respondents. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires while the secondary data was collected from relevant literature and publications. Piloting was done on 25 respondents (10 percent of the target population). Qualitative data was analysed using descriptive analysis. Regression analysis was also computed to test the relationship between study variables. The study found that organization culture, staff competencies, management support and technology were found to have a positive significant influence on knowledge management strategies. The study recommends that a culture that is supportive of knowledge management systems should be adopted. The ministries should put in place monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the trainings. Also, the management should continue setting the tone and demonstrate that knowledge, and its management, are taken seriously in the organization. This means allocating adequate resources for the maintenance and establishment of new technologies to facilitate social interactions in the organization. This will enhance knowledge management within the organization.

**Key Words:** *Organizational Culture, Staff Competencies, Adoption of KM Strategies*

## INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management is nothing new. For hundreds of years, owners of family businesses have passed their commercial wisdom on to their children, master craftsmen have painstakingly taught their trades to apprentices, and workers have exchanged ideas and expertise on the job (Abdi, et al., 2018). Nevertheless, it will bend until the 1990's that chief executives started talking about knowledge management. As the foundation of industrialized economies has shifted from natural resources to intellectual assets, executives have been compelled to examine the knowledge underlying their businesses and how that knowledge is used. At the same time, the rise of networked computers has made it possible to codify, store, and share certain kinds of knowledge more easily and cheaply than ever before (Davenport & Prusak, 2015)

According to Davenport and Prusak, (2015), in order to manage knowledge effectively, attention must be paid on the four key components of knowledge, people, processes and technology. In essence, the focus of KM is to connect people, processes and technology for the purpose of leveraging knowledge. Davenport and Prusak opine that without knowledge to manage, there would be no knowledge management. However, despite great strides made by organizations in the field of Knowledge Management, there is still need to understand the challenges of Knowledge Management in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and more so in the public institutions (Sjoberg, 2017).

The republic of Korea and its partners in Sub-Saharan Africa (South Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Gabon, South-Africa and Tanzania) has been actively sharing knowledge for development through a Knowledge Sharing Program (KSP) and has achieved significant economic growth and development, recognizes Knowledge Sharing as an effective tool for development (Chang & Yen, 2019) China's high-priority effort to become a more knowledge-based economy and society means that knowledge management (KM) is increasingly important. For example, the timely transfer and use of business knowledge can provide a competitive advantage in practically any given industry (Adan, 2016)

Despite its enormous promise in business and science, effective KM also faces formidable obstacles. Over past two decades, Malaysia has been transitioning from relying on a production based- economy to a knowledge-based economy (Chan, 2017). The concept of knowledge management in Malaysia was born with the establishment of the "Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC)" in 1990's to accelerate this concept in Malaysia. Actually, there are so many Malaysian companies, which they are working on knowledge management, and they realize and understand the importance of it in the professional life. In January 15, 2002, one of the prestigious magazines in Malaysia, Computerworld Malaysia organized the Knowledge Management Roundtable 'A Vital Strategy or Expensive Toy' (Chan, 2017). The participants from various sectors in Malaysia shared their point of views and approaches implemented and exchanged ideas in practicing knowledge management (Chebii, 2017).

In Africa, the World Bank Group (2011), in its Knowledge for Development (K4D) program provides a platform for stakeholders and policy makers in African economies to access apply and share knowledge to grow and become more competitive. The World Bank Group (2011) add that K4D program has been rolled out in countries such as Senegal, Tanzania, South Africa and Ghana. The African Development Bank (AfDB) asserts that generating and sharing knowledge is key to poverty reduction and sustainable economic development on the continent (African

Development Bank Group, 2014). To achieve this, AfDB has systematically emphasized the critical role that Knowledge Sharing plays in the transformation of African economies (Chan, 2017).

The KMA 2007, was the second biennial conference held in Nairobi from July 17 to 19, 2007 and brought together diverse international development finance institutions, sector professionals and civil-society organizations. The conference aimed at synthesizing coalitions of independent and interdependent knowledge networks and practitioners into a conduit for the cooperative pursuit of mutual advantage to rival the countervailing dominance of trade, finance and investment by affluent countries having the muscle of strong, hi-tech economies (Dillon & McQueen, 2016). Adjacent to KMA, is Global Development Network (GDNNet) that organizes various workshops in Africa. The Knowledge Sharing for Development: Africa Regional Program workshop was held in Cairo-Egypt on February 27-28, 2005.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Knowledge has in the recent past been recognized as the organization's most important asset in boosting economic growth (Gituma, 2017). (Dillon & McQueen, 2016) indicated that with knowledge being a very complicated asset, it had received special treatment from the organization's management, unlike other resources. Despite the rising popularity of knowledge management across different organizations of the world, in Kenya, knowledge management has not received too much attention from the state corporations in Kenya (Adan, 2016). As a result, some of these state-owned commercial enterprises have failed to meet their financial goals and hence missed opportunities for development. Noteworthy is the fact that 34 percent of all state owned commercial enterprises have been making losses. This represents nearly a quarter of the state owned commercial enterprises (Government of Kenya, 2013). Additionally, mismanagement and corruption within these state owned enterprises have negatively influenced their performance (Chebii, 2017).

The public service faces several challenges in the delivery of its mandate to citizens due to lack of implementation of proper knowledge management practices. Population growth and the consequent resource fragmentation has led to an increase in the demand for services from the ministries (K & Cheruiyot, 2017). The paper-based system, which has been in use for decades, has generated millions of paper records thus undermining efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery because the data in manual form is kept in many different offices in different institutions and at different locations in the country. Access to that data takes a long time and data is not often available in a timely fashion; it is difficult to manipulate data from various sources to facilitate analysis and deriving of new relationships between data sets. The system has led to inadequate management of Government and private land with regard to allocation and development; inability to adequately record informal and user rights on land in an equitable manner and difficulty in equitable valuation and assessment for taxation and other purposes (Ringle, 2012)

Nevertheless, there is evidence from previous studies from some public sector organizations that KM has been introduced and implemented even though there is not yet clear and visible progress or benefits thereof. Malhotra, (2000) carried out a study on Managing Knowledge to Improve Organizational Performance in the public service. The study established that knowledge acquisition and knowledge repository influence the performance of the ministries. The study

recommended the creation of an office to take charge of Knowledge Management. The variables that were used to measure Knowledge Management in their study were knowledge acquisition and Knowledge Repository, which are different from the ones used in this study; hence, the study brings out a knowledge gap.

Mousavizadeh, Ryan, Harden, and Windsor, (2015) examined knowledge management practices and performance of micro-finance institutions in Kenya. According to the findings of the study, knowledge management practices positively affected the organizational performance of Microfinance institutions in Kenya. The study recommended that Microfinance institutions in Kenya to develop and adopt more solid knowledge acquisition initiatives. However, the study was carried out in a different context, that is, micro-finance institutions in Kenya. This study was carried out in State Corporations in Kenya; hence, the study brings out a contextual gap.

Chebii (2017) carried out a study on knowledge management and organizational performance: case of state owned commercial enterprises in Kenya. According to the findings of the study, knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge conversion, knowledge sharing significantly affected organizational performance. The study recommended that state owned commercial enterprises should ensure effective knowledge management processes are applied in their companies in order to improve their organization performance

It is based on the above findings that this study attempted to shed light on the organizational factors affecting the implementation of Knowledge Management Strategies in ministries and lessons to be learnt from KMS implementation, which could contribute to future KMS implementation in other state corporations.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To examine the influence of organizational culture on the adoption of KM strategies in the public service in Kenya
- To assess the effect of staff competencies on the adoption of KM Strategies in the public service in Kenya

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Competing Values Framework (CVF)**

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) emerged from an empirical study undertaken by Dalkir, (2016) has been used in different aspects and levels in organizations. This framework helps in identifying the underlying basic assumptions of an organization that influence the behaviours of the members (Sjoberg, 2017). The CVF suggests that most organizations can be characterized along two competing values, each representing alternative approaches to basic challenges that all organizations must resolve in order to exist (Chung-Ming, 2017)

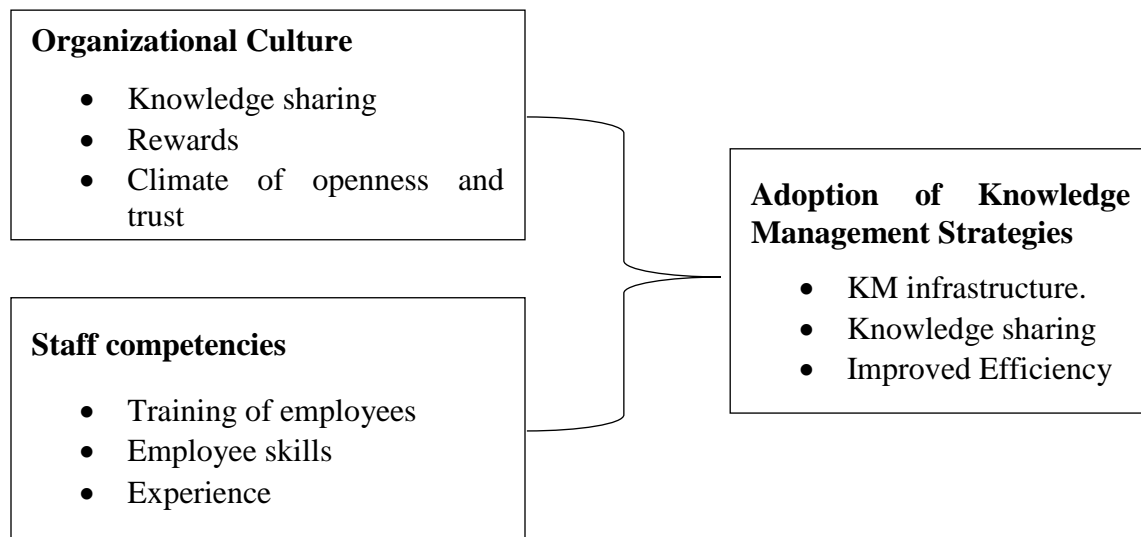
#### **Knowledge Creating Theory (SECI model)**

Nonaka and Takeuchi, (2000) propounded this theory that the information turns into knowledge when it is interpreted by someone, given a context, and is anchored in the commitments and Beliefs of individuals. The SECI model describes the knowledge creation through conversion of

tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2000). This theory espouses two dimensions of knowledge creation; the Epistemological Dimension and the Ontological Dimension. The Epistemological dimension deals with the four modes of knowledge conversion, namely socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalization.

The key of socialization is individuals doing activities together, and learning through shared experience, by spending time or living in the same environment. Since tacit knowledge is something, you cannot write down and transfer by text or words, learning has to be done by observation, imitation and practice (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2015). The key of externalization is the sequential use of metaphor, analogy and model. By doing this, one can mediate the context of the knowledge, making it accessible to others. An example would be when one or more employees, due to their experience and competency of that process (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2000), adjust a process.

### Conceptual Framework



### Empirical Review

#### Organizational Culture and adoption of KMS

Siadat, Abdollahi, & Mohseni, (2016) conducted a study on the Impact of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Management in Water and Waste Water Company of RazaviKhorasan Province in Iran. A sample of 50 individuals among the managers and employees of the company was selected through stratified random sampling to test the hypothesis (Siadat Abdollahi & Mohseni, 2016). Questionnaires were used as a data collection instrument and data symmetry was verified through data symmetry through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Spearman's correlation coefficient. The findings supported the existence of a significant association between organizational culture and different processes and aspects of knowledge management in the company. (Paliszkievicz, Svanadze, & Jikia, 2017) examined the role of knowledge management processes on organizational culture. Questionnaires which were divided into five parts in relation to each variable were used as data collection instruments. The sample size consisted of 77 employees from two of the largest Georgian cities: Tbilisi and Kutaisi. Collected

data were analyzed through multiple regression analysis. The findings indicated that Knowledge was the only significant variable associated with the Organizational Culture.

### **Staff competencies and adoption of KMS**

Azikiwe (2014) examined the Competencies for successful knowledge management Applications in Nigerian academic libraries. Cross sectional survey, approach was used for the study. Questionnaire was the main instrument to collect data from one hundred academic librarians who participated in the 47th Annual Conference/AGM of Nigerian Library Association held in Ibadan in July 2013 and 67 questionnaires were returned as valid for analysis, which gives a response rate of 67%. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation (Azikiwe, 2014). The results of the study showed that, the skills needed for successful knowledge management applications are KM cultural skills, leadership skills, strategic skills and restructuring skills.

Avelino, Salles, and costa (2017) carried out a study on the collective competencies and strategic people management in federal public organizations in Brazil. The field research was carried out in three federal public organizations. Evidence was collected from documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with ten employees from the respective Personnel Management areas (Avelino, Salles & Costa, 2017). According to the findings, there was an isolated presence of attributes and sources of creation of collective competencies, which proved to be insufficient to determine their presence in the organizations under analysis.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a descriptive research design where a case study approach was adopted. From the human resource statistics, the accessible population within these departments is 649 employees. Both primary and secondary data was collected for this study. The primary data are predominantly collected through structured questionnaires, which were administered to selected respondents. Personal delivery and administration, telephone aided administration, postage as well as drop and pick-up method. Quantitative data was coded then analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software version 22.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Response rate**

The study targeted a sample of 247 respondents from four ministries (Ministry of Sports, Culture and Heritage, Ministry of Water & Sanitation and Irrigation, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and Ministry of Lands and physical Planning) from which 217 respondents were able to complete the questionnaires making a rate of 87.85%. This response rate was considered satisfactory to me conclusions on the findings on the extent of adoption of Knowledge Management Strategies in public service in Kenya.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

#### **Influence of Organizational Culture on adoption of KM Strategies**

The researcher requested the respondents to state their level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements as they relate to organizational culture at the public sector organizations and how it impacts on Knowledge Management Strategies.

From the findings in Table 1, majority of the respondents agreed on the statements that; Sharing of individual experiences and knowledge with others is enhanced in this Organization as shown by a mean of 4.16, knowledge creation part of the Organization's culture as shown by a mean of 4.14, induction courses are organized for new members of staff as shown by a mean of 4.08 and that there are policies that promote learning within the ministries as shown by a mean of 4.05. The respondents further agreed that research results are easily accessed by the employees and new staff are taught about the job by older/experienced staff in the course of performing their duties (mentoring) as shown by a mean of 3.97 in each case.

The respondents also agreed on statements that management has a close working relationship with employees as shown by a mean of 3.95 the ministries considers organizational culture an important factor to KM Strategy implementation as shown by a mean of 3.92 and that employees generally trust each other as shown by a mean of 3.91. Consistent to the study findings, Wong (2005) supports that a culture supportive of KMS is one that highly values knowledge and encourages its creation, sharing and application.

Similarly, Chen and Lee, (2005) opined that organisational culture is one of the key parameters of successful knowledge management and can influence the procedures and influence of knowledge management. Meher and Mishra (2019) found that individuals are inclined to the use of information and conducive to the flow of information as well as the execution of the assigned project or task. This implies that knowledge sharing, knowledge integration and innovation capabilities are used as moderators for organizational productivity. KM practices OL is the catalyst to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of productivity (Abdi, et al., 2018).

**Table 1: Statements as they relate to organizational culture**

Statement	mean	Standard deviation
Knowledge creation part of the Organization's culture	4.14	0.204
Research results are easily accessed by the employees	3.97	0.224
Sharing of individual experiences and knowledge with others is enhanced in this Organization	4.16	0.258
New staff are taught about the job by older/experienced staff in the course of performing their duties (mentoring)	3.97	0.242
Induction courses are organized for new members of staff	4.08	0.206
Management has a close working relationship with employees	3.95	0.260
Employees generally trust each other	3.91	0.255
There are policies that promote learning within Ministry	4.05	0.201
Ministry considers organizational culture an important factor to KM Strategy implementation	3.92	0.160

The study further sought to find out how the respondents get to know of events at KIE. The findings reveal that 73% of the respondents indicate emails, 67.2% indicated memos, 64.9% indicated, Minutes of meetings 62.2% indicated Gazettes and Government publications, 54.1% indicated Communication through letters while 48.6% indicated by word of mouth. Therefore, the findings suggest that emails are the most used channel of communication. This agrees with Badr-al-Din, (2016) who indicated that today, information technology helps to facilitate more communication between people via channels such as email, chat rooms and video conferencing.

## **Influence of Staff Competencies on adoption of KM strategies**

The respondents were in agreement with statements that the Organization engage in Research and Development activities as shown by a mean of 4.05, the organization organize training/seminars/ workshops to build the capacity of staff as shown by a mean of 4.03, Ministry considers staff competencies an important factor to Knowledge Management Strategy implementation as shown by a mean of 4.01 and that personnel skills and competencies affect the adoption of KM Strategies at Ministry as shown by a mean of 4.00.

Respondents also agreed that they have attended trainings/seminars/workshops in the past one year as shown by a mean of 4.01, and that the training content enable them improve their performance in their duties as shown by a mean of 4.01. Consistent with the findings, Choy (2005) noted that individual knowledge acquired through training builds organizational knowledge which is enhanced through encouraging employees to share what they know. It also agrees with Azikiwe (2014) that skills needed for successful knowledge management applications are KM cultural skills, leadership skills, strategic skills and restructuring skills.

**Table 2: Influence of Staff Competencies on Adoption of KM Strategies**

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
The organization organize training/seminars/ workshops to build the capacity of staff	4.03	0.177
I have attended trainings/seminars/workshops in the past one year.	3.95	0.235
The Organization engage in Research and Development activities	4.05	0.325
the training content enable me improve my performance in my duties	3.94	0.242
personnel skills and competencies affect the adoption of KM Strategies at KIE	4.00	0.186
Ministry considers staff competencies an important factor to Knowledge Management Strategy implementation	4.01	0.252

## **Correlation Analysis**

From the findings presented in table 4.10, organizational culture is seen to have a strong positive relationship with adoption of knowledge management strategies ( $r=0.765$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the relationship was considered to be significant. This means that there is a direct relationship between the two, an increase in one causes increase in the other and vice versa. This agrees with the findings of Siadat, Abdollahi, and Mohseni, (2016) on the existence of a significant association between organizational culture and different processes and aspects of knowledge management in the company. It also agrees with Paliszkievicz, Svanadze, and Jikia (2017) that knowledge was the only significant variable associated with the Organizational Culture.

The findings also showed that the relationship between staff competencies and adoption of knowledge management strategies ( $r=0.724$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The p-value was less than the selected level of significance (0.05) suggesting that the relationship was significant. The relationship is thus considered to be direct, i.e. increasing staff competencies will cause an increase in adoption of KMS. The findings agree with those of Naim and Lenka, (2017) that knowledge sharing has a positive effect on competency development of employees, which in turn, positively predicts



affective commitment. The findings also concur with those of Oyedokun, Laaro, and Oyewumi, (2018) that traditional library skills are part of knowledge management spectrum and processes, indicating that knowledge management is highly relevant to librarianship.

**Table 3: Correlation**

		Adoption of KMS	Organizational Culture	Staff Competencies
<b>Adoption of KMS</b>	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
<b>Organizational Culture</b>	Pearson Correlation	.765**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		
<b>Staff Competencies</b>	Pearson Correlation	.724**	.469	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	

**Regression Analysis for organizational**

**Table 4: Regression analysis Model summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.745 <sup>a</sup>	.555	.523		.2145

From table 4, the significance level of 0.001 of the processed data, imply that the data was ideal for making a conclusion on the population’s parameter since the value of significance (p-value) is less than 5%. From the findings, the F calculated was 9.593 while the F critical at 5% level of significance, 4 d.f, 212 d.f was 2.668. Since F calculated is greater than the F critical the overall model was fit.

The findings also show that organization culture had a positive, significant influence on knowledge management strategies ( $\beta=0.757$ ,  $p=0.002$ ). The findings therefore suggest that a unit increase in organization culture would lead to increase in adoption of Knowledge Management Strategies by 0.757 units. The study findings concur with Siadat, Abdollahi, and Mohseni, (2016) whose findings supported the existence of a significant association between organizational culture and different processes and aspects of knowledge management in the company.

Staff competencies were also seen to have a positive and significant influence on knowledge management strategies ( $\beta=0.664$ ,  $p=0.005$ ). This suggests that a unit increase in staff competence would lead to increase in adoption of Knowledge Management Strategies by 0.664. The findings agree with Naim and Lenka (2017) that knowledge sharing has a positive effect on competency development which in turn, positively predicts affective commitment. This would result in the enhancement of employee competencies and eventually, the generation of affective commitment.

**Table 5: Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.675	0.294		5.70	0.001
Organizational Culture	0.757	0.196	0.734	3.86	0.002
Staff Competencies	0.664	0.179	0.642	3.71	0.005
Management Support	0.798	0.178	0.761	4.48	0.001
Technology	0.643	0.177	0.632	3.63	0.01

**Conclusions**

The study found that organization culture had a positive, significant influence on knowledge management strategies. It therefore concludes that a unit increase in organization culture would lead to increase in adoption of Knowledge Management Strategies.

The study found that Staff competencies have a positive and significant influence on knowledge management strategies. The ministry engages in Research and Development activities organize training/seminars/ workshops to build the capacity of staff and also consider staff competencies an important factor to Knowledge Management Strategy implementation. Based on the findings, the study concludes that a unit increase in staff competence would lead to increase in adoption of Knowledge Management Strategies.

**Recommendations**

Since organization culture influences the adoption of knowledge management strategies, the study recommends that a culture that is supportive of knowledge management systems should be adopted. The culture should value knowledge, encourage its creation, its sharing and application.

The organization organizes training/seminars/ workshops to build the capacity of staff. The study hence recommends that the organization should put in place monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the trainings.

The study found that management support influences the adoption of Knowledge Management strategies. The study recommends that the management should continue setting the tone and demonstrate that knowledge, and its management, are taken seriously in the organization.

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