Selective knowledge concealment –
the influence of culture and mental models
vs. the ability to share knowledge

Abstract

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: Knowledge management (KM) issues support the possibility of achieving competitive advantage. However, it is not a simple process, as knowledge sharing does not come naturally. Hence, there is a need for research on individual, team and organisational antecedents using a wider range of methods. Investigating the causes of selective knowledge concealment is the main objective of the article, as well as the impact of organisational culture and the determinants of knowledge concealment or sharing by employees.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS: Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with managers and employees to collect empirical data, while thematic content analysis was used to analyse the collected data and draw conclusions.

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: Perceptions of the world and of organisations are shared by people from a given environment. Mental models take into account the multifaceted nature of the phenomena under study: perception, focus and experience. The beliefs held by employees are important because they imply management actions at all levels: tactical, operational and strategic.

RESEARCH RESULTS: Employees do not hide their knowledge automatically but selectively. They subliminally assess the value of the knowledge sought, the value of the seeker, the immediate situation and wider contextual and organisational factors. Interestingly, respondents surveyed were more likely to share...
knowledge with foreign colleagues from a different national culture than with colleagues of the same nationality and cultural background.

**CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**
A number of recommendations of an applied nature were presented in the article. It is important to create a common willingness to share knowledge among employees. A skilful increase in social capital should foster a decrease in the concealment of valuable knowledge and at the same time increase the extent of sharing. An efficient reward system, individually designed for the needs of the organisation, could support this process.

**Keywords:**
- selective knowledge concealment, knowledge management,
- mental models, explicit and tacit knowledge

**INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge has been and will continue to be one of the most essential tools for gaining a competitive advantage. Hence, managing it and transforming tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge is a critical aspect of contemporary management issues and knowledge management (KM). Knowledge sharing has been found to have a positive impact on an organisation’s innovation, productivity, satisfaction and financial performance. However, knowledge sharing does not come naturally as employees tend to hide it for various reasons. It is important to isolate individual behaviours and analyse them in detail as the apparent concealment of knowledge can be intentional, or it can be unintentional, stemming from aspects of national or organisational culture (Małecka, 2018; 2019; 2022). Research devoted to various aspects of knowledge concealment is widely discussed in the relevant literature. However, there are still research gaps and a significant need to delve deeper into individual, team and organisational determinants (Demigha & Kharabsheh, 2019; Connelly et al., 2012), hence the idea of using a wider range of methods, including social networks and qualitative research, to enable in-depth analyses. Indeed, a standardised mental model that allows for accurate diagnosis of aspects of knowledge concealment should take into account both national and organisational cultural influences. However, such a model has not been disseminated (Issac, Baral & Bendnal, 2020).
Selective knowledge concealment

Published research into the impact of national and organisational cultures on knowledge concealment continues to be a timely and global research topic. With that said, a scholarly discourse can be initiated on the impact of national and organisational cultures on knowledge sharing, but not on knowledge concealment (Kharabsheh & Malalla, 2021). Thus, mainly the factors that facilitate knowledge sharing – but not those that hinder it – have been studied and described in the literature. Although knowledge sharing is not the opposite of knowledge concealment, research findings in this area should help to better understand the importance and determinants of factors that influence knowledge concealment.

Organisational culture has a huge impact on employee behaviour, both inside and outside the organisation, therefore how culture influences the creation, sharing and use of knowledge becomes important (De Long & Fahey, 2000). Indeed, both national culture and regional subcultures significantly influence knowledge processes: (1) they shape assumptions about which knowledge is relevant; (2) they mediate the links between individual and organisational knowledge; (3) they create a position for social interaction, and (4) they shape the creation and acceptance of new knowledge. Both national and organisational culture influence values, norms, and mental models, which then reflect the behaviour and actions of employees in organisations. Employees’ knowledge concealment is not a simple action but the result of deeply ingrained beliefs, ideas, assumptions and mental models about the organisation, the market, and the world itself. It is mental models that regulate how employees perceive their environment and evaluate situations in which they are asked to share their knowledge.

There is a plethora of descriptions of the impact of organisational culture on KM processes, but they are still inadequate. Large organizations in particular may have a wide internal division in terms of cultures and subcultures. Therefore, there is a need for a model that is capable of mapping organizational structures and adapting them to the needs of enterprises in terms of the phenomenon of knowledge concealment (Małecka, 2022; Kharabsheh, Ensour & Bogolyubov, 2017; Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

Hence, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the causes of selective knowledge concealment, as well as the impact of organisational
culture and the determinants of knowledge concealment or sharing by employees in the selected organisation.

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to achieve the stated goal, a qualitative study was conducted. In constructing the methodology of the study, intensive interviews were used with managers and employees from four different organizations of different sizes: 5 participants from a large company (A), 10 participants from medium companies (B and C) and 5 participants from a small company (D). The selected companies had to have existed and operated successfully for the last 3 years in Bahrain. Knowledge concealment affects employees at all levels of the organization, hence participants were selected from all organizational levels. The samples were homogeneous across all companies: five managers and employees from each company were studied. Due to the industrial nature of the companies involved, there were more males (15) than females (5). Purposive sampling was used, i.e., taking into account cultural and national differences in the organizations (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants’ profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Academic Rank</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Job level</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>46–56</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Plant manager</td>
<td>15–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>35–45</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Planning head</td>
<td>10–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>&lt;57</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Business development</td>
<td>15–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>&lt;57</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>15–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>35–45</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>5–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>35–45</td>
<td>Bahraini</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>5–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>35–45</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>15–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>24–34</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>BSc.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Plant manager</td>
<td>15–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>35–45</td>
<td>Bahraini</td>
<td>BSc.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Department head</td>
<td>15–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>46–56</td>
<td>Bahraini</td>
<td>BSc.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>10–15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thematic content analysis was utilised to analyse the data from the interviews, looking for recurring or common themes. The idea was to look not only for repetitions but also for meaning in the texts, themes and ideas. Six steps that exist in the literature for conducting thematic analysis were used: (1) familiarization, (2) coding, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing. As the number of interviews and the data set were small, the thematic content analysis was conducted by the researcher without the use of any software. (Appendix 1 – Interview protocol and questions.)

Theoretical background:
How mental models affect knowledge concealment

Mental models take into account the multifaceted nature of the phenomena under study: (1) what employees perceive, (2) what they focus on, and (3) what they remember from their experiences. This means that if employees think their colleagues are untrustworthy, this will reinforce the mental model that they need to be vigilant and attentive to colleagues’ betrayal, and this in turn may create a feeling that their positive knowledge sharing actions will not be reciprocated by colleagues. Employees will subliminally fill in information gaps based on initial or prior assumptions that are consistent with their
previous mental models. They may even reinterpret information about a colleague or organization that seems inconsistent with the category to which they have assigned a person or object so that the information fits the category of the chosen behavioural model (Baldwin, 1992). Beliefs held by employees are important as they enable thinking and action, but they also constrain it. Employees perform better when their mental models are correctly aligned with the task at hand (Todd & Gigerenzer, 2000; Griffin, Dunning & Ross, 1990). However, mental models can be out of sync with the real world, can significantly reduce the amount of information used by decision makers, and can cause management to be ineffective because incorrect assumptions are made. When employees believe that their colleagues will not respond positively or share their knowledge, they may assume that this is the prevailing status quo in the organization and that they cannot change it, therefore they tend to hide their knowledge. Such a belief may limit their ability to see the opportunities that may exist by sharing their knowledge with colleagues (Malecka, 2018).

According to Barny, organizational culture consists of “a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions and symbols that define how a company conducts its business” (Barny, 1986). Researchers and practitioners have studied organizational culture from a variety of perspectives (Heritage, Pollock, & Roberts, 2014; Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011; Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Tseng, 2010; Schein, 1990). One of the most widely used topologies is the typology of competing values of organizational culture described by Cameron and Quinn (2006). It consists of clan, hierarchy, adhocracy and market culture, with each culture represented along one spectrum of stable and flexible approaches to work and another spectrum of internal and external organizational focus (Cameron & Quinn; 2006). The idea is not that organizations should adopt some ideal type of culture, but rather that they should carefully consider efforts to promote or inhibit certain behaviours in order to move in a certain direction. The described images of organizational culture can be useful, hence it would seem that the adopted model has been defined adequately. However, business practice has shown that this is still not sufficient. This is because the models described in the article have a positive view of organizations and therefore does not reflect what really happens inside them. In addition, a large organization may have a wide range of cultures
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In the same way that a mental model of the world is created, on the same basis both companies and employees create their own mental models that reflect their understanding, perceptions and assumptions about the nature of the organisation, the competitive economic environment in which the company operates, and the people surrounding them in the workplace. Employees may view other colleagues as co-workers, friends, bosses or subordinates. They may feel sympathy, jealousy, rivalry and, in extreme cases, hatred. They may perceive co-workers as linked to them in an alliance to gain more resources, power or benefits. From the perspectives of the concealer and the knowledge seeker in a situation in which knowledge is being concealed, employees may or may not be of the same nationality.

The analysis of the data showed that employees do not hide their knowledge automatically but rather go into a selective hiding mode. Knowledge concealment is widespread in organizations, which is almost entirely natural given the increased competition among employees in particular work environments. Employees make subliminal judgments about the value of the knowledge sought and the value of the knowledge seeker (seeker or recipient); they then assess
the immediate situation and broader contextual and organizational factors. When asked to share knowledge, employees reflect on the relevance and value of the knowledge sought from them. If they judge that the value of the sought knowledge they are asked to share is low, there will be no hiding. An employee will perceive the sought-after knowledge as valuable if it gives them a competitive advantage over their co-workers, is unique, gives them a higher functional position in the company, or if it is so-called proprietary knowledge that is only available to senior employees.

Regardless of the level of the relationship, a knowledge-seeking employee may be a co-worker belonging to the same national culture and speaking the same language, dialect or accent, but on the other hand, it may be a co-worker who is not of the same nationality, does not come from the same region, or does not belong to the same culture. This means that if the seeker is a competitor, if there is jealousy between the seeker and the knowledge giver, if the seeker poses a direct threat to the knowledge owner, then hiding knowledge is the most likely behaviour. In fact, the results of the interviews showed that locals are more likely to hide knowledge deemed important from their own colleagues of the same nationality and are more willing to share the same knowledge with foreigners or strangers. For example, locals reported that they were willing to share valuable knowledge with British and American employees they did not know well or at all, but they were not willing to share it with other local colleagues. When asked why, they explained that they felt less threatened and that sharing knowledge would not cause them to lose power or have their positions undermined. One participant commented:

When I share it with foreign colleagues (British in this organization), they appreciate my knowledge sharing, but when I share knowledge with one of my own people, I regret having done so because later they will use the knowledge against me or put me at a disadvantage.

In addition, employees were less likely to withhold knowledge from colleagues with whom they worked in a joint project or had similar goals and aspirations. It was observed that co-workers working in a group to achieve a common goal and have shared experiences were less likely to hide their knowledge from group members, but they hid knowledge from members outside the group. Common goals
Selective knowledge concealment were stronger in this case than nationality and common language. One participant explained: “We are working together on a project, so I will not hide any knowledge from my colleagues, and I expect them to do the same, but I will be considerate of others, even if they are from my country (home group) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Hider/giver knowledge evaluation process

Source: own elaboration.

Another issue raised by participants was the existing reward system. In many cases, when there was a prize to be won, knowledge hiding disappeared or was greatly reduced, especially if the rewards for sharing knowledge outweighed the losses or costs of hiding it. One participant commented: “...knowledge hiding can sometimes be costly because it deprives me and my colleague of rewards offered by the company. In that case, we cooperate in a win-win situation”. This applies to both individuals and groups, like in the case of sales teams, where group members can help each other against other groups inside and outside the company, thus reducing knowledge hiding behaviour.
Participants mentioned the cost of sharing knowledge and that they therefore practiced knowledge concealment to reduce losses. In two of the five companies surveyed, participants agreed that knowledge comes at a cost and that the cost of sharing it should be offset by rewards or benefits so that knowledge hiding is reduced or eliminated. This was confirmed by the other two companies, which managed the knowledge cost issue by providing abundant rewards for knowledge sharing and creating effective work groups and a knowledge sharing culture in which employees are aware of the benefits and value of knowledge sharing and the dangers of knowledge hiding.

Reasons for knowledge hiding

According to survey participants, employees may have many reasons for hiding their knowledge. In accordance with the methodology presented, a table of barriers directly affecting knowledge concealment was constructed (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jealousy</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Benign jealousy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fear of loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Burn out / Organizational disidentification / Lack of motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lack of transparency/ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ambiguous performance-evaluation criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lack of procedural and distributional Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lack of professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of qualified people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Organizational structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Negative communication patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Terms of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lack of effective team culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Incompetent leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own elaboration.
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The most commonly cited reason is (1) competition. Employees will withhold their knowledge if they believe it can help a co-worker get better opportunities, resources or more power. This is especially true if both the knowledge seeker and the knowledge giver work in the same department or compete for similar benefits. The second reason was jealousy. Participants distinguished between (2) jealousy and (3) mild jealousy. The difference between the two is based on the employee’s intentions: the former is based on bad intentions and a desire for a co-worker to lose their advantage, while the latter (benign jealousy) is a form of competition in which the employee may want to gain someone’s knowledge but does not necessarily have bad intentions towards him or her, i.e., they do not want that person to lose their advantage or knowledge, and thus their job.

Fear of loss was cited as another barrier (4): “as long as you have the knowledge the company needs and your managers rely on you to get things done, you are safe. If you give away all your knowledge, you become obsolete and lose power” (respondent’s statement).

The fourth element highlighted was (5) job burnout. When employees are stressed, exhausted, overloaded with work or unhappy, they feel indifferent to the organization and its future, goals and success, which can result in hiding knowledge. Participants agreed that an employee who feels burned out will not feel sympathy for his colleagues or the organization, thus reinforcing the second reason already described for hiding knowledge.

Another reason turned out to be (6) misunderstanding of received orders/decisions. When the reasons for actions taken are not clear and decisions are based not on analysis of factual information but on the subjective opinions and character of a manager, employees tend to hide their knowledge. Ambiguity can also be a problem in performance evaluation. Participants explained that sometimes a company does not have clear and precise criteria for evaluating performance, or it may be using a different, unofficial set of criteria that causes employees to hide their knowledge. Some explained that “this is a control mechanism that allows the company to promote those who are in line with the company’s stated and hidden goals” (respondent’s statement).

Participants in the study also mentioned (7) lack of fairness as a reason for employees hiding knowledge. As a result, due to the
lack of clarity in the criteria for evaluating performance, the wrong people are rewarded, while good employees are sidelined or even punished. As a result, there is a lack or deficiency of both procedural and distributive justice in the organization. “We don’t know how our performance is evaluated. The criteria that are used publicly are not true even if they are used because there is always a way to distort the system to reward those who follow the unwritten rules – if you know what I mean. There is no justice, and I won’t share my knowledge” (respondent’s statement).

According to participants (8), lack of professionalism is another reason for hiding knowledge. Professionalism means honesty and the assumption that the knowledge given will not be used by the seeker against the giver. Professionals will also reciprocate and give back in return for the help they receive to build trust. When the knowledge sought is used against the person who shared it, employees tend to hide their knowledge.

Also mentioned was (9) the lack of qualified people. A workplace with many skilled workers helps reduce knowledge hiding behaviour. Skilled workers strive to expand their own and others’ knowledge. When employees perceive the workplace as lacking professionals, they mentally close down and tend to hide their knowledge.

Also mentioned was (10) organizational structure. According to employees, “when management does not rely on existing structures to obtain information about performance, people and the organization, but relies on subjective and informal channels to obtain information, it thereby forces employees to hide their knowledge” (respondent’s statement).

It was also pointed out that (11) negative communication between co-workers and supervisors can result in a toxic work environment, thus creating negative attitudes and feelings of hatred toward others. These feelings can escalate into conflict. This, in turn, is one of the main reasons for hiding knowledge in the workplace. “Communication in the company is very negative. Managers do it on purpose, which creates a toxic workplace. The workplace is full of gossip and conflict, which makes employees hide their knowledge” (respondent’s statement).

Participants also mentioned (12) the type or duration of employment. There were two types of employment in the studied companies:
indigenous workers employed full-time, and foreign workers who are forced to renew their contracts every year or two. When workers feel low job security, they tend to hide their knowledge, while workers who feel high security are less likely to hide their knowledge from other workers. Similarly, those who had been on leave or were working temporarily (usually one to five years) were less likely to hide their knowledge from co-workers.

Participants also mentioned (13) the lack of an effective team culture. Teams increase interaction, trust and interdependence, thus reducing knowledge hiding behaviour. One participant explained: “We all work as individuals and therefore the true spirit of cooperation and assistance is limited. It’s human nature. I worked in teams in my previous organization and there is an incentive to share and care”.

The last barrier identified in the survey is (14) incompetent leadership. Almost all participants emphasized the role played by top management and its leadership. Employees follow their leaders. One participant said: “Whatever is important, top management will emphasize it more with their actions than with words”. Of course, employees watch and follow. When leadership is lacking, little is achieved, selfishness prevails, and thus knowledge is hidden.

Mapping of organizational cultures in light of knowledge hiding

In the following Figure (2), organizations do not choose an ideal culture, nor do they use a model to inhibit or encourage certain behaviours. Instead, the company culture is a manifestation of what actually happens in reality through contingency measures. Emergency action – without a specific procedure and devoid of thoughtful management – is a departure from the ideal picture of organisations and organisational cultures presented in the relevant literature. The reality of organizations is different. So, how does this depiction help? We think it is important for any cultural change process or evolving culture process. Change starts with a deep understanding of the current culture, how knowledge moves through the organization, and how knowledge hiding happens. The next step should be to establish
the way the change will be implemented, as some of the surveyed organisations show internal behaviors which require countermeasures.

A detailed analysis of data regarding the impact of organisational culture on knowledge concealment revealed certain patterns of behaviour and issues. Analysis of this data can be used to both understand and represent the existing organisational cultures prevalent in the surveyed companies, which can help to better understand the occurrence of knowledge concealment. For example, participants referred to open and closed circles of trust, a focus on innovation versus compliance, and the importance of the individual versus the group. For example, participants from company B, where sales teams are dominant, strongly emphasized closed circles of trust where group members were willing to share knowledge with their team members but not with other teams or outsiders. In contrast, in small company D, where innovation was most dominant, participants reported open circles of trust where everyone trusted each other, and the focus was on the success of the whole company through truthful sharing of knowledge. As such, 4 organisational cultures emerge, as represented in the 4 quadrants (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Mapping of organizational cultures

Source: own elaboration.
In the first quadrant, the focus is on innovation and openness, hence the representative group is called the Cloud. The second quadrant reflects the Closed Circles of Trust and Innovation group, which comprises territorial and essentially bureaucratic companies. The third quadrant emphasises Compliance, Closed Circles of Trust and a group called ‘One Man Show’. The last quadrant focuses on Compliance, Closed Circles of Trust and a group that the study calls Competitive and Bureaucratic. However, the model of companies presented contains some gaps due to the reliability of the respondents in the survey as to the comprehensiveness of the answers given. This is because enterprises may exhibit many common characteristics while at the same time there is a group of contradictory characteristics.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The increase in the importance of information systems and the ability to collect and process collected data has led to a situation in which economic efficiency reaches out for support offered by management methods. The tacit knowledge that employees possess as a result of their experiences, training or talents has proven to be problematic in management. This has given rise to the creation of a set of processes that enable the creation, dissemination and use of knowledge to achieve organizational goals, i.e., knowledge management (KM).

The purpose of this paper is to examine how national and organizational cultures affect knowledge hiding in companies and to identify the determinants that affect employees’ hiding or sharing of their knowledge. In pursuit of this goal, we have examined how employees make the decision to hide or not hide their knowledge. The general conclusions are as follows:

1. employees do not automatically hide their knowledge but do it selectively, which means they subliminally assess the value of the knowledge sought, the value of the knowledge seeker (seeker or recipient), the immediate situation and the broader contextual and organizational factors;

2. when asked for knowledge, employees reflect on its meaning and value; the knowledge sought may be considered valuable if it gives an employee a competitive advantage over colleagues,
is unique and thus providing the employee with a position of power, or even – if the knowledge is conditioned by a position held and a place occupied in the company hierarchy – there is a need to apply the principle of prioritizing access to knowledge and creating a ‘need to know’ system;

3. the selection of a model to implement changes that reduce knowledge concealment should be done individually by each organization – the organization’s needs may be mapped by different companies but the hierarchy of their importance for a given working environment is not the same;

4. when employees feel job insecurity, they tend to hide knowledge, while employees who feel job security are less likely to hide their knowledge from other employees.

The specific conclusions were classified through a qualitative study in selected companies of various sizes (large – A, medium – B and C, small – D). Classified in this way, the 14 most significant barriers that encourage the hiding of knowledge were identified, Most of them are based on (10) feeling internal competitive pressure, (2 and 3) jealousy, (4) fear, (5) social inequality and (6) cultural and national differences reflected by discriminatory working conditions.

It should be noted, however, that work experience and shared goals with other colleagues were more important than cultural background alone in determining employees’ tendency to hide or share knowledge. Another interesting observation is an inversion phenomenon: employees were more willing to share knowledge with a foreign person than with a colleague of the same nationality and cultural background, while foreign employees showed no such difference. This value is of applied relevance, as it has been shown that culturally diverse organisations should take into account both national culture and factors related to the internal heterogeneity of the people employed when introducing knowledge sharing facilities. Businesses should encourage mixed work groups among their employees, and the leaders of these groups should encourage the sharing of tacit knowledge among employees.

One more thing will help to achieve such a goal: creating a shared vision among employees and embedding in the company a mission to foster internal attitudes aimed at reducing the desire to hide knowledge. Shared goals increase commitment among employees, and the
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drive to succeed fosters an atmosphere of trust. By increasing social capital along this path, the degree of hiding of valuable knowledge will be simultaneously reduced, and the extent of knowledge sharing will be increased.

Finally, establishing an effective and efficient reward system can significantly reduce knowledge hiding by employees. The study was conducted in an international environment, thus it has significant value for business practice. This means that the described conclusions can be implemented in companies around the world with diverse structures in terms of gender and company size.

Limitations of the study

The study has several limitations. There is a need to examine the effect of national culture on knowledge hiding and how people from different cultures share or hide their knowledge. The study did not examine the effect of cultural dimensions on organisational culture, such as Hofstede’s cultural dimension and how that may affect knowledge hiding. The mapping of organisational culture was based on the analysis of 4 companies, therefore it may not be all-inclusive and comprehensive. There is a need to include a larger number of organizations to ensure diversity in order to account for all possible factors.

References


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