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ANALYSIS OF MECHANISMS THAT MOTIVATE KNOWLEDGE SHARING
A Case Study

Master's Thesis in
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TABLE OF CONTENTS   page

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

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ABSTRACT

In today's fast-paced business environment, organizations have realized the significance of knowledge sharing as a strategic source of competitive advantage. This realization has led to increased attention from the academic community in the last two decades. However, despite the importance, existing research in this area have claimed insufficient attention to micro-level (individual) variables and relationships that lead to knowledge sharing.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the mechanisms that motivate employee knowledge sharing. The empirical part of the study was conducted between May and June 2015, through a qualitative single case study of a Finnish company in a multi-sector training, consultancy, and planning. Data for the research were collected using both primary and secondary methods to ensure triangulation. Five semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted and analyzed using inductive reasoning approach.

The results suggest that human, cultural and social psychological factors are central to the success of knowledge sharing among employees. Further, HRM practices were found to help enhance human and social psychological factors that promote both individual capabilities, as well as, their willingness to share knowledge with others. Also, organizational cultural factors were found to play a crucial role in motivating employees to share knowledge with others. The study contributes to the theory by drawing attention to the significance of micro-level dynamics in knowledge sharing practices through the formulation of the theoretical framework. Furthermore, managers can use the results of this study to enhance the well-being of employees by actively implementing HRM practices that will promote and increase the organization's knowledge base.

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will briefly describe the background of the study and the strategy used to conduct the research. The chapter will also present the research problem, followed by research questions and objectives. Thereafter, the scope of the study will be given, and the structure and organization of the thesis will be presented.

1.1. Background of the study

Over the years, market shifts, technology advancement, competition growth among firms, and overnight product obsolete has brought challenges in integrating firm-wide resources. These resources have been recognized as the firm strategy for competitive advantage. According to Peng (2009: 4), "To stand out among the crowd, valuable, rare, and hard-to-imitate capabilities are a must". Moreover, the resource-based view (RBV) affirms that organizational resources can result in organization competitive advantage (e.g. Barney 1991; Nonaka 1991; Liu & Phillips 2011). The RBV suggests that the firm must have resources that are superior to those of its competitors to have a competitive advantage. Furthermore, the RBV rests on two key assumptions: (1) resources vary across organizations, and (2) there must be no strategically uniquely valuable resources that are themselves either rare or imitable. Consequently, the control of these resources can lead to a firm's competitive advantage, allowing it to outperform others. More importantly, competitors may not be in a position to challenge the focal organization due to the lack of similar resources (Barney 1991: 105-111).

Additionally, there is an emerging importance in the strategic management of knowledge as a critical organizational resource that provides a sustainable competitive advantage (e.g. Nonaka & Tekeuchi 1995; Daveport & Prusak 1998; Foss, Husted & Michailova 2010; Mäkelä, Andersson, & Seppälä 2012). According to Hislop (2013: 2), prior studies show that there are three key assumptions to the importance of knowledge management in organizations' management of their workforce. First, the assumption that the end of the twentieth century witnessed an enormous social and economic transformation, that resulted in knowledge becoming the key asset for organizations to manage (Spender & Sherer 2007: 6). A second key assumption is that the nature of

work has also changed significantly, with the importance of intellectual work increasing significantly (Sewell 2005: 685-6). The third, related, key assumption is that the effective management of its knowledge base by an organization is likely to provide a source of competitive advantage (e.g., Swart 2011; Barney 1991; Grant 1996;); productivity (Choi, Lee, & Yoo 2010); and performance and other capabilities (Haas & Hansen 2007; Liu & Phillips 2011).

From the resource-based view of the firm's standpoint, scholars have suggested that firms are dependent to some extent on the ability to create the knowledge required to adapt to their environments internally. The formal repositories and documentation are effective for capturing knowledge that can be easily communicated, but are unable to capture important 'tacit' knowledge (Polanyi 1966), which resides in key employees (Storey & Quintas 2001). This development is as a result of the highly complex knowledge that cannot easily be codified and is dependent on specific context, or a system of knowledge is difficult to transfer (Reychav & Weisberg 2009). Moreover, valuable and rare complex knowledge can be an important source of superior performance and sustainable competitive advantage (Spencer & Grant 1996: 8; Liu & Phillips 2011). Hence, the process of sharing complex knowledge within an organization becomes important (see Foss et al. 2010: 458.)

1.2. Research Problems and Research Gap

There has been an increased importance of knowledge management research, especially in the last two decades. Unfortunately, according to Foss et al. (2010), knowledge sharing is an area of inquiry that still requires much attention, and whose key variables, relationships, and implications are unclear. It is therefore not surprising that many organizations are left struggling with how to share their knowledge and that many knowledge management systems implemented in practice fail to achieve their original goals (Akhavan, Jafari & Fathian 2005). Therefore, for knowledge management initiatives to benefit organizations, the variables and relationships that lead to knowledge sharing must be better understood. The majority of previous research on managing knowledge has examined constructs and relationships at the macro level, generally at the firm level, leaving little work rooted in micro foundation at the

individual level (Foss et al. 2010). According to a study by Foss et al. (2010), 71 of the 100 reviewed articles addresses macro-macro relationships. Only 20 studies analyses micro-micro interactions.

Practically, this study seeks to fill this gap by including a focus on individuals; ultimately, only individual employees can contribute and draw from an organization's knowledge base to share knowledge. Therefore, understanding an individual employee's need and relationships may yield new organizational insights and lead to a better understanding of what mechanism influence individuals to share their knowledge in an organization. Moreover, if no specific assumptions are made about organizational members, it is difficult to theorize meaningfully their interaction, including how such interaction aggregates to organization-level knowledge sharing outcomes. The lack of attention to micro-foundations has the potential of making it difficult to come forward with managerial advice. Organizational design implementations that aim at influencing knowledge sharing but pay no attention to informal organization are likely to be misguided. This attributes to the limitations by the current literature to equip managers make decisions about how to incorporate knowledge sharing initiatives in existing organizational structures and cultures, and they lack robust research-based models for assessing the organizational costs and benefits of engaging in knowledge sharing. (ibid: 467).

Furthermore, how knowledge sharing on the level of organizational members adds up to organizational level knowledge sharing is an issue of concern. This issue has been treated in some detail in parts of the knowledge sharing literature and has been seen as a key issue since the early founding statements (notably Nonaka 1991). Likewise, it is a key theme in the organizational learning literature (Crossan Lane, White & Djurfeldt 1999). Nevertheless, open issues remain.

'Knowledge aggregation' is problematic because it is often not a matter of simply summing all the individual knowledge sharing activities (e.g. knowledge may be redundant), and because 'knowledge aggregation' is not independent of the organizational design. The first issue suggests that there is a limit to how much knowledge sharing should efficiently be undertaken in an organization. Efficient

organizational knowledge is seldom, if ever, identical to maximum organizational knowledge sharing. In fact, it has been argued that the key advantages of such mechanisms as pricing (Hayek 1945) and managerial authority (Demsetz 1988) is that they reduce the need for knowledge overlap, and therefore for knowledge sharing efforts. The broader lesson is that the aggregation of individual knowledge sharing to organizational knowledge sharing may be critically dependent on not just informal knowledge sharing networks (Tsai 2001), but also formal governance mechanisms. Such mechanisms not only influence the motivation to share knowledge, as argued earlier, but also influence the ability and the opportunity to do so. Organizational design variables such as specialization and departmentalization may be expected rather directly to influence knowledge sharing ability and opportunity. Therefore, this study will investigate this gap by looking at the extent to which such organizational variables moderate the relation between individual knowledge sharing behaviors and organizational knowledge sharing outcomes.

Finally, the role of motivation has been recognized and emphasized in the knowledge sharing literature (e.g., Fey & Furu 2008; Liu & Phillips 2011). These studies have used different motivation theories such as social dilemma theory (Cabrera & Cabrera 2005), social capital and social exchange theories (Kankanhalli 2005). Therefore, the current study intends to investigate knowledge sharing using these theoretical frameworks (at a micro-level or the organization) given the insight they have provided in understanding employee knowledge sharing behaviors (e.g., Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; He, Qiao & Wei: 2009).

1.3. Research Question and Objectives

Following the research problems and gap discussed in the preceding section, the purpose of this study is *to understand the mechanisms that motivate employees to share knowledge with others*. To address this purpose, this study is divided into two parts. Firstly, the theoretical part of the thesis discusses previous research on knowledge sharing. Based on this, a theoretical framework will be derived. Secondly, the empirical case study will test the assumptions that arise from the theoretical framework. Moreover, using a qualitative case study, this thesis will focus on the organization's

micro-level knowledge sharing. Specifically, answering the following research questions.

RQ1: What mechanisms motivate employees to share knowledge with others?

RQ2: How do these factors help facilitate knowledge sharing among employees?

In order to answer the research questions, the following empirical objectives (EO) have been formulated, which will also provide triangulation on the topic.

EO1: To find out how the organization motivate employees to share knowledge.

EO2: To investigate how the organization's culture affects employee knowledge sharing

EO3: To identify HRM practices that motivates employee knowledge sharing

EO4: To identify the different social structures embedded in the firm, and their impact on employee knowledge sharing

This study utilizes the theories of social capital, social dilemma, and social exchange theory to understand individual-level motivating factors to knowledge sharing. The subsequent section will now discuss the delimitations and scope of the study.

1.4. Scope of the study

This study focuses on the individual level rather than organizational level knowledge sharing. The study aims at investigating the factors that motivate employees to share knowledge with work colleagues in the case company. Throughout this paper, the term 'knowledge sharing' will be used interchangeably with terms, knowledge management initiatives, and knowledge transfer. This study defines Knowledge sharing as a personal responsibility for acquiring, processing and sharing of information.

Furthermore, this study is limited to the internal investigation of the organizational climate, and how it affects knowledge sharing among employees at the chosen firm. Aside from this, the study will try to identify the different organizational social

structures, and their impact on employee knowledge sharing. For the theoretical approach, this study will build a bridge between the theoretical starting points, the results of the empirical research and the usability of the presented findings in practice. This approach will contribute to the enhancement of knowledge sharing among employees. This thesis also assumes that the findings will be able to contribute to the literature on knowledge sharing at a micro-level from the organization's perspective. Central to this study is the work by Hislop (2013) on knowledge management in organizations.

This study investigates HRM practices and how they facilitate knowledge sharing among employee. The study concentrates on identifying the activities within the organization aimed at managing the pool of human capital (employees) and making sure that the capital is employed towards the fulfillment of organizational goals (Wright, McMahan & McWilliams 1994: 301). This notion leads to recognizing two aspects of human resources, (1) the knowledge, skills and abilities of organizational members, and (2) employee behavior as the mediator in the relationship between a firm's strategy and performance. (Wright et al. (1994: 304-305.)

The study is conducted in a multi-expertise group of companies, with extensive international operations. However, due to the time limit, the sample population selected for this study is limited to four Training Managers within a company under the Group in Finland and one HR representative at the Group level. Thus, units falling outside this company fall outside the scope of this study. The following section gives an outline structure for the study.

1.5. Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into five parts. The paper proceeds with a review of previous studies within the knowledge sharing literature. Thereafter, the qualitative case study method is discussed before presenting empirical findings and analysis regarding employees' motivations for knowledge sharing. Finally, conclusions, including implications for managers, limitations of the research, and future research direction will be discussed. Figure 1 below shows an outline followed by this study.

1. INTRODUCTION

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

❖ General background to the topic was presented. The research gap was identified, leading to Research the question and objectives.

❖ This chapter discusses the theoretical framework relevant to the study purpose and research question and objectives.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4. EMPIRICAL DATA

❖ This chapter discusses and motivates the methodological issues connected to this study. The research approach, methodological choice, case study and selection procedure, data collection, data analysis, and ethical issues related to this study are discussed.

❖ In this chapter the empirical data collected for the case study have been presented. The first section gives an introduction to the case company, and thereafter, findings from the interviews are presented.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

❖ In this chapter results from the interviews are discussed, following a within-case analysis, and compared with the previous research discussed in chapter 2.

❖ Conclusions are drawn, with Future research and recommendations given.

Figure 1. Thesis Outline.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter casts light on the theoretical background for the study's major constructs: knowledge sharing; the role of HRM in knowledge sharing; the role of organizational culture in knowledge sharing; and psychological determinant of knowledge sharing. Besides books, this study considered articles published in the last ten years against the key words 'knowledge sharing', 'knowledge exchange', and 'knowledge transfer'. Furthermore, in spite of sustained efforts to be thorough in the search using Nelliportalli's Business Source Premier, the possibility of having missed some articles has been acknowledged, but trust that the few potential unintentional omissions would not significantly modify the conclusions.

To gain a systematic understanding of the mechanisms that motivate individuals to share knowledge with others, articles in top-tier management journals were reviewed. This approach is in consideration of the journal lists compiled by Foss et al. (2010) and Van Wijk et al. (2008). The review work also included Journal of Applied Psychology and Journal of Organizational Behavior, but no articles published in the considered period were found. Also, most important to the review work was the book by Hislop (2013) on knowledge management in organizations.

This chapter will be organized as follows. Firstly, it is important to set the context of the literature review by discussing the theories on which this study is based. The concept of 'knowledge', different types of knowledge, and how that knowledge has grown to be an organizational resource come next. Thereafter, comments of the previous treatment of the broad topic of knowledge sharing, and the role of HRM in such activities will be reviewed. Ideally, the work on knowledge sharing would analyze the individual level knowledge sharing. Thus, a review of previous studies on HRM practices that enhances knowledge sharing between individuals will be presented. Still, the multiple ways in which organizational culture may interact in influencing knowledge sharing outcomes will be discussed. Finally, an indication of the scope of the work presented in this chapter will be discussed.

2.1. Socio-Psychological Determinants of Knowledge Sharing

In this section of the literature review, the theories that this study will utilize to give a better understanding of individuals' motivating factors to share knowledge with others will be discussed. The socio-psychological theories of social capital theory, social dilemma theory, and social exchange theory, will be used to shed light on individual motivation to share knowledge.

2.1.1. Social Capital Theory

Social capital is defined as "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit" (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998: 243). It represents embedded values, such as social ties, trusting relations, and value systems that facilitate actions of individuals (Tsai & Ghoshal 1998). In this regard, if one person does not behave accordingly, the relationship will not be successful. Moreover, in the process of creating social networks, social capital plays a role in enforcing behavioral norms among the various members of the network (Walker, Kogut & Shan 1997) as well as promotes the flow of information (Coleman 1988). Consequently, the formed network serves to develop social constraints, which directs the flow of information in the building and maintaining of social capital (Walker, Kogut & Shan 1997). Therefore, if the environment is rich in social capital, as identified by the existence of a strong network, trust, shared behavioral norms, reciprocity, and respect, the environment significantly contributes to the creation and sharing of knowledge (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998; Sharatt & Usoro 2003). This means that having strong social interactions and network ties positively influence knowledge acquisition (Yli-Renko, Autio & Sapienza 2001).

According to Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998), social capital consists of structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions. Prior knowledge management studies identified social ties, shared goals, and social trust as major constructs representing the structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of social capital, respectively (e.g., Chow & Chan 2008; He et al. 2009; Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998). Moreover, employees' social ties, shared goals, and social trust have a combined effect on their knowledge sharing (He et al. 2009). They are independent variables representing the three dimensions and forming social

capital (Chow & Chan 2008), the change of which does not necessarily go with the same changes in the three dimensions. Therefore, this study considers these dimensions of social capital as the key drivers of forming employees' knowledge sharing intentions: social ties (the structural dimension), social trust (the relational dimension), and shared goals (the cognitive dimension).

The *structural dimension* refers to the way individuals relate one with the other. This dimension includes the social relations among network members as well as the overall network configuration, which considers factors such as structural holes, centralization and density of the network (Cabrera & Cabrera 2005: 722). In other words, this dimension involves the degree to which people in an organization relate, or are connected to each other (Bolino et al. 2005: 56). In essence, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998: 252) argue, "Who you know, affects what you know." For example, social network theorists (e.g., Hansen 1999b) highlight some benefits concerning social relationships such as: (1) having access to valuable information and knowledge; (2) timing, that is "the ability of personal contacts to provide information sooner than it becomes available to people without such contacts" (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998: 252); and (3) referrals which provide "information on available opportunities to people or actors in the network" (ibid: 252-253), hence creating an environment for knowledge sharing

The *cognitive dimension* of social capital is the extent to which employee within a social network shares a common perception or understanding, such as, a shared language. This enables communicating meaning, enabling access to information, as well as enhancing understanding among employees (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998: 252-253). Furthermore, this is also in line with Tsoukas & Vladimirou (2001: 985-991) who argue that, individuals' ability to draw differences within a collectively generated domain of action is dependent upon the cultural tools they utilize with language being the most important one. Shared language (verbal or non verbal communication) is important not only that it provides an easy avenue for knowledge sharing, but also that integration of knowledge mainly through the creation of common cognitive schemata and frameworks, such as representations, analogies, and stories, which act as the means for integrating individual understandings and experiences. Subsequently, when there is a

shared vision among individuals or groups, it helps facilitate knowledge sharing and integration by providing meaning to their actions. Moreover, a shared vision represents the collective goals and objectives of the members of an organization and therefore employees who share a vision will be more likely share or exchange their resources' (Tsai & Ghoshal 1998: 467).

Finally, regarding the ***relational dimension,*** trust is a key mechanism by which social capital outcomes are achieved. It concerns relationships individuals or groups of individuals have developed with each other through a history of social interaction. According to Bolino et al. (2002: 510), the relational dimension of social capital is characterized by high level of trust, shared norms and perceived obligation, and a sense of mutual identification. Thus, people are more willing to experiment and take risks in sharing their knowledge. Accordingly, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995: 712) defines trust as "the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party", where trustworthiness is "the quality of the trusted party that makes the trusting party willing to be vulnerable" (Levin & Cross 2004: 1479). The existence of high trust in a relationship produces certain outcomes such as cooperation, and sensitive information exchange (Mayer & Davis 1999). Moreover, trust is the ability for an individual to willingly and confidently act on the basis of someone's words, actions, or decisions (McAllister 1995: 25). Therefore, the relational dimension of social capital can be said to be the strength of the relationship between people. However, relationships can vary from weak relationships to strong relationships characterized by high levels of trust. Furthermore, previous research has shown that knowledge sharing is common among relationships based on trust. This attributes to the fact that individuals are much more willing not only to share valuable knowledge but also learning from others (e.g., Mayer et al. 1995; Andrews & Delahaye 2000). Accordingly, as trust entails a willingness to take risks (Mayer & Davis 1999), it has also been argued that risk-taking individuals tend to engage in experimentation, accessing and integrating various pieces of information and knowledge. This behavior can result in the creation of new knowledge (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998: 245).

Therefore, regarding knowledge sharing, structural and cognitive social capital determines whether or not individuals have the opportunity to share their knowledge

with others. Consequently, the opportunity to share increases when individuals spend more time interacting, not only because increased interaction leads to more frequent communication, but also because communication can be more effective due to the fact that these interactions also result in a shared common goal (Cabrera & Cabrera 2005: 722). Moreover, the more time spent between people interacting, the better the understanding, and, as a result, creating an environment for learning. Hence increasing structural and cognitive social capital should help promote knowledge sharing (ibid). Similarly, social ties and having a shared goal should help to create an environment favorable for knowledge sharing and enhance knowledge sharing behaviors.

Regarding the relational social capital dimension, individuals have the motivation to share what they know with others. Despite having an opportunity to share, an individual may not be willing to share if the environment is not favorable to do so. Therefore, to influence the willingness or motivation to share, employees need to be given an opportunity to trust and identify with one another. Also, relational social capital should help to encourage knowledge sharing and therefore, trust and group identification should encourage positive attitudes toward knowledge sharing and enhance knowledge-sharing intentions and behaviors.

Therefore, based on the knowledge of prior studies, this study suggest that social capital has an impact on individual knowledge sharing, as it involves the collaborative nature and environment of an organization. In other words, how much one is willing to share knowledge will depend on the atmosphere surround their workplace (e.g., job design, employee relationships, etc.). The preceding section looks at some of the factors that inhibit knowledge sharing among employees.

2.1.2. Social Dilemma Theory

According to Kollock (1998: 183), "Social dilemmas are situations in which individual rationality leads to collective irrationality." Similarly, the decisions employees face about whether to participate in knowledge related activities have been likened to a classical public good dilemma (Cabrera & Cabrera 2002; Renzl 2008). A public good is a shared resource which members of a community or network can benefit from, regardless of whether they contribute to it or not, and whose value does not diminish

through such usage (Hislop 2013: 138). However, this may encourage people to 'free-Ride' on other's contribution. Moreover, the dilemma for the employee is to choose between two choices: to share knowledge and contribute to the public good or hoard knowledge and act as a free rider. Therefore, in deciding how to act in such situations, employees are likely to attempt to evaluate individual benefits of sharing or hoarding knowledge. Table 1 below shows some of the advantages and disadvantages of employees' sharing or not sharing their knowledge.

Table 1. The Potential Advantages and Disadvantages to Workers of Sharing their Knowledge.

Knowledge Sharing	Advantages	Intrinsic reward of process of sharing Group/organizational level benefits (such as improved group performance) Material reward (financial or non-financial) Enhanced individual status
	Disadvantages	Can be time-consuming Potentially giving away a source of power and expertise to others
Knowledge Hoarding (Free-Riding)	Advantages	Avoids risk of giving away and losing a source of power/status
	Disadvantages	Extent of knowledge may not be understood or recognized

Source: Hislop (2013: 139)

Further, Cabrera and Cabrera (2002) point out that the social environment may encourage or hamper successful knowledge sharing. Reward and development policies have to be adapted accordingly to overcome individuals' reluctance to share knowledge. Such activities may include creating a trustworthy atmosphere or, even more comprehensively, a *knowledge-friendly culture*, establishing an atmosphere of openness, demonstrating commitment to training and development, showing leadership support, enlarging organizational commitment, showing the benefits of knowledge sharing, rewarding participation, and aligning work processes and tasks accordingly. Therefore, in understanding the socio-cultural factors, which shape employee's willingness to participate in organizational knowledge sharing activities, it is important to take into account key factors, which can play a crucial role in shaping individual motivation to sharing knowledge. Hislop (2013: 140-150) highlights five key socio-cultural factors:

the nature of the *employment relationship, the conflictual nature of intra-organizational relations, interpersonal trust, the role of personal identity,* and *the role of personality*.

Firstly*, the **nature of employment relationship** means that about knowledge management initiatives, the interest of employees and their employers may not always be compatible (Hislop 2013: 151). Hislop (2013) argues that the origin of this tension is the inherent character of the employment relationship in private business organizations. Therefore, regarding employee's knowledge, this tension relates not only to 'who owns' an employee's knowledge but how and for what purposed such knowledge is used. For example, while management may feel that it is in the interest of the organization to encourage knowledge sharing, employees may be unwilling to do so if they perceive that such efforts will negatively affect them through diminishing their power and/or status. For instance, Liao (2008) found that, in terms of the direct effect, only reward and expert power had a direct impact on employees' knowledge sharing. On the other hand, the importance of reference and expert power in building trust suggests that managers should develop both types of power, through managing employees so that they respect both the expert knowledge of employees and them as individuals.

Furthermore, an indication that employees can perceive there to be differences between their interests and opinions and those of their managers relate to situations where they have been reluctant to express particular views (Hislop 2013:141). For instance, both Hayes and Walsham (2000) and Coborra and Patriota (1998) found that concerns held by a number of employees about the visibility of their opinions to senior management actively hindered them from participating in electronic exchange forums.

Additionally, it is also important to realize that factors other than employment relationship affect an employee's relationship with their employer, and can shape their knowledge-sharing attitude. Kim and Mauborgne (1998) suggest that 'procedural justice' is one such factor. Procedural justice represents the extent to which organizational decision-making processes are fair, with fairness being related to how much people are involved in decision-making, the clarity of communication regarding why decisions are made and clarity of expectations (Hislop 2013: 142). According to Kim and Mauborgne (1998), when all these factors are in place, employees will feel

valued for their intellectual capabilities and skills and that, experiencing such feelings can impact on employees' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, "when they felt that their ideas and person were recognized through fair process, they were willing to share their knowledge and give their all" (Ibid: 332). Moreover, these finding also agrees with Han et al. (2010), whose study show that employee participating in decision making process provided them with a sense of psychological ownership over the decisions. Furthermore, this sense of psychological ownership was positively linked to employee levels of organizational commitment, which was in turn positively related to levels of knowledge sharing.

Secondly, the ***conflictual nature of intra-organizational relations*** relate to the issues of conflict, power, and politics in an organization (Hislop 2013: 142). Literature has shown numerous examples where such conflicts have affected attitudes to knowledge sharing (e.g., Currie & Kerrin 2004; Hislop 2003; Newell & Swan 2000). Hislop (2003) examined some case studies where organizational change was hindered by a lack of willingness among staff to share knowledge across functional boundaries. This unwillingness to participate in cross-functional knowledge sharing was suggested to be partly due to a history of inter-functional conflict and rivalry (see Currie, Waring & Finn 2008). Moreover, power and political environment are also associated with processes of knowledge sharing. For example, Willem and Scarbrough's (2006) study of the relationship between social capital and knowledge sharing, found that what they referred to as 'instrumental social capital' was often used politically through a very selective form of knowledge sharing.

According to Hislop (2013: 144), the typical neglect of conflict (and power and politics) in the mainstream knowledge management literature is largely due to the assumptions of consensus and goal congruence in business organizations that exist in the majority of the knowledge management literature. For example, Schultze and Stabell (2004) suggest that one dimension against which the knowledge literature can be characterized is the extent to which consensus in society and organizations prevails, with their analysis suggesting that consensus represents the mainstream perspective in the knowledge management literature. This is in line with Fox's unitarist framework on

organizations, where everyone in an organization is assumed to have common interests and shared values (Fox 1985, as cited in Hislop 2013: 144).

However, such a perspective on organizations can be challenged by evidence and analysis, which suggest the opposite, that conflict is an inherent and unavoidable feature of business organizations. For example, Schultze and Stabell (2004) suggest that potential conflict between management and employees is an inevitable part of the employment relationship. In contrast, Marshall and Brady (2001: 103), reflecting on the pluralist perspective (Fox 1985, as cited in Hislop 2013: 144) on organizations, where organizations are regarded as a coalition of different interest groups acting in a coordinated way, refer to the 'frequent organizational reality of divergent interests, political struggles, and power relations'. This notion is also supported by the work of Buchanan (2008), where political behavior has been found to be a common feature of organizational life.

However, the importance of taking into account of how conflict (and power and politics) shapes people's willingness to participate in KM processes is not just due to the fact that conflict is an inherent/common feature of organizational life. But, it is also because the inter-relationship that exists between power and knowledge means, that knowledge can be used in a highly political way and is a resource people commonly draw on in dealing with situations of conflict. (Hislop 2013: 144)

Thirdl*y, **Interpersonal trust** is an important aspect, with lack of trust likely to inhibit the extent to which people are willing to share knowledge with each other (e.g., Newell et al. 2007; Holste & Fields 2010). Trust can be defined as the belief people have about the expected behavior of others, and the assumption that one will honor his or her obligation. Moreover, a trusting relationship is based on an understanding of 'give and take' or reciprocity, in which everyone benefits (Hislop 2013: 145). However, knowledge sharing on the basis of trust arguably involves an unavoidable element of uncertainty, and can thus be a process, which produces and is shaped by emotion. For example, Holste and Fields (2010) investigated whether trust affected both the extent to which people share tacit knowledge with others, and the extent to which they use that tacit knowledge that has been provided by others. They found that trust in the

relationship with others played a key role in the sharing of tacit knowledge. However, that when it came to using tacit knowledge that had been provided by others, people's trust in the competence of others was more primarily important. (ibid.)

Research has found trust to be a complex concept (Hislop 2013: 146). One aspect of this is the distinction that can be made between a person's general tendency to trust others and specific instances where trust exist in particular people (Mooradian et al. 2006). Moreover, some analyses introduce another layer of complexity by suggesting that trust has multiple dimensions and that it can exist in different forms. For example, Wang, Asleigh, and Meyer (2006) differentiate between calculus, knowledge, and identification-based trust. Similarly, Holster and Fields (2010) differentiate between affect- and competition-based trust. While Lee et al. (2010) talk of reliance and disclosure-based trust. Furthermore, Hislop (2013) suggest that each type of trust is developed in quite different ways and that they have a complex and mutually independent relationship.

In Newell and Swan's (2000) three-dimensional typology (see Table 2), companion-based trust represents typically the strongest form of trust that can exist. This form of trust is developed over time and is built up gradually based on the perception of acts of goodwill and generosity. Thus, this form of trust cannot develop quickly, and requires extensive interaction to occur between people.

Table 2. Newell and Swan's three Types of Trust.

Types of Trust	Description of Trust
Companion	Trust based on judgments of goodwill or friendship, built up over time
Competence	Trust based on perception of others' competence to carry out relevant tasks
Commitment	Trust stemming from contractual obligations

Source: Newell and Swan 2000

Typically, interpersonal relations at work with colleagues will involve elements of all three forms of trust. Hence, if two colleagues who have known each other for some years have to collaborate in a particular project there may be an element of companion and competence-based trust due to the personal relationship that may exist between

them and their confidence in each other's ability from knowing how they have performed on previous projects. Furthermore, there may be an element of commitment-based trust due to promises that may have been made to particular tasks within particular timescales. However, the interpersonal trust may be based on one element alone. (Hislop 2013: 147.)

Moreover, trust can be developed not only in individual people, but also within groups, teams, or organizations. Accordingly, these types of trust can have an equally important influence on an individual's willingness to share knowledge with others. For example, Renzl (2008) found that the greater the extent to which employees trust their managers, the more they are likely to share knowledge with colleagues. Ardichvili, Page, and Wentling (2003) reached a similar conclusion based on their analysis of what factors shaped workers' willingness to contribute knowledge within a virtual community of practice. They talked about institution-based trust, which referred to the extent to which people trusted the organization to provide a working environment conducive to positive knowledge sharing and where people were unwilling to act opportunistically or excessively selfishly. They found that employees were likely to share knowledge to the virtual community of practice when this form of trust existed, as they were confident that others would not use this knowledge opportunistically. Finally, Usoro et al. (2007) suggest that the greater a person's level of trust in, and identification with a particular workgroup or community, the more likely they will be willing to share knowledge with others in the community/group.

Fourthly, *Group identity* deals with personal identity and how it affects the degree to and ways in which employees participate in organizational knowledge processes. Research has shown that the extent to which people feel a part of and identify with their organization, a project team a work group, a community of practice can significantly shape their willingness to participate in knowledge processes (Hislop 2013: 148). Furthermore, the literature on communities of practice (e.g., Usoro et al. 2007) shows that when people feel a sense of identity with a community, this facilitates the development of trust with other community members. Moreover, some studies have shown how employees' identity with the particular functional group or business unit that they work in can influence their knowledge-sharing patterns. The studies argue that

people who have a strong sense of identity with their function or business unit show no willingness to share knowledge with people from outside of these areas (e.g., Hislop 2003). For example, Rosendaal (2009) found that the more people identify with the teams they worked in, the more likely they were to share knowledge with other team members. Further, Currie and Kerrin's (2003) study of the sales and marketing business of a UK-based pharmaceutical company found that the extent of strong subcultures within the sales and marketing divisions created unwillingness among staff to share knowledge across these functional boundaries.

Fifthly, *National cultural characteristics*, a subject whose research is limited, as it has not been extensively researched, have been found to shape people's attitude to knowledge processes (Hislop 2013: 151). Moreover, much of the analysis which links issues of national culture to knowledge management has come from studies of cross-national collaborations, where cultural differences have been found to play a significant role (e.g., Inkpen & Piens 2006; Li 2010; Chen et al. 2010). The current study however, seeks to examine the influencing factors to share knowledge of employees of same national culture.

According to Hislop (2013: 149), the assumption that a person's culture background will shape their attitude to knowledge, and KM activities is something that is explicitly acknowledged within practice-based epistemology. Thus, this epistemology suggests that people's knowledge and understanding, and also what counts as valid types of knowledge, will be shaped by cultural factors, including national cultural characteristics (e.g., Huang et al. 2008; McAdam et al. 2012). For example, Kanzler (2010) on Germany and Chinese scientists found that concerns about a loss of power were negatively related to the intention to share knowledge of the German, but not the Chinese scientists. Kanzler argued that this was because Germany society is more individualistic than Chinese society, and so, concerns about a loss of power due to sharing and 'giving up' knowledge were greater for the Germany scientists.

Finally, research suggests that people with certain *personality traits* may have a more positive attitude to knowledge sharing than others (e.g., Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; Mooradian et al. 2006). All these studies make use of the five-factor personality model

(see sub-section 2.5.1), which suggest that human personality can be understood to be made up of five broad traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Hislop 2013: 150). Openness (or openness to change) is the extent to which someone is imaginative, creative, and curious. Furthermore, extraversion can be defined as the extent to which someone is sociable, talkative, enthusiastic, and assertive. Similarly, neuroticism is the degree to which someone experiences negative emotions, such as anxiety, anger, or guilt. Likewise, conscientiousness can be defined, as the extent to which someone is careful, self-disciplined, hard working, dependable, and reliable. Agreeableness is when someone is generous, trustful, cooperative, and forgiving. As stated previously, this is a very under-explored topic and is inconclusive regarding exactly how personality relates to a person's proclivity to share knowledge or their willingness to participate in any organizational knowledge processes (Hislop 2013: 150).

In summary, this section has revealed that understanding the theory of social dilemma is crucial to the success of knowledge sharing among employees. Moreover, a review of prior studies has shown mixed and diverse results on different constructs that influence employee knowledge sharing. However, the current study seeks to understand qualitatively how social dilemma in the case company affects employees' attitude to knowledge with others. The next subsequent section introduces the social exchange theory.

2.1.3. Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory (SET) derives from the fields of economics, psychology, and sociology. This theory suggests that individual actions are influenced by the desire to maximize profit and minimize costs. The economic exchange theory asserts that human relationships are as a result of rewards outweighing costs. For example if an investment reward gained is alleged to be less than its cost, the transaction ceases. However, exchange behavior is not influenced by economic desires alone, but also by psychological desires.

A literature review has shown that SET is one of the models used in explaining knowledge sharing behavior (e.g. Blau 1964). Similarly, this theory is concerned with

people behavior, outcomes or benefits, environment and the interpersonal network between individuals (Blau 1964). According to Krok (2012), there are three cases to consider in which knowledge sharing can be beneficial. First, there is the reciprocity standard as mentioned earlier. People act, as they would want others to act towards them, or choose to share knowledge depending on reciprocity. Second, knowledge sharing is based on the intrinsic motivation, as stated in section 2.4 below. Lastly, knowledge sharing can yield recognition, which can either be monetary or none monetary recognition (such as, promotion, or positive thinking about someone).

Accordingly, reciprocity indicates that people may demonstrate knowledge-sharing behavior with the intention of gaining positive rewards. Moreover, the SET also posits a similar thought line that individuals share their knowledge only when they perceive benefits after doing so. Therefore, the SET can be assumed as the foundation of mutual reciprocity, which argues, based on the benefit returns and states that one will not demonstrate certain behavior unless the expected results are positive (Blau1964).

Contrary to trust, individuals will not consider certain activities when they feel uncertain about the related outcome. In other words, people will behave based on the trust they have for the system. Individuals develop their trust for another only when they are guaranteed that their transactions with the person will not cost them. Moreover, when there is an existence of trust between individuals they turn to cooperate easily with each other (Molm 2003). Consequently, this alludes to the fact that when individuals perceive other partners untrustworthy they will not exchange or cooperate with them since there is a certain level of uncertainty. Based on this discussion on trust one may conclude that trust within two individuals may encourage them to share their knowledge. The link between social exchange theory and trust is that knowledge being shared will not cause harm to the one offering it.

In summary, this section has show that social exchange theory is crucial in determining the behavior of employees towards knowledge sharing. Previous studies have shown diverse results on the topic (see subsection 2.5.5. below). Moreover, results from prior studies have also shown that organizational rewards have commonly been studied within this topic and produced mixed results. The current study suggests that employees

will share information with each other provided the one receiving such information does not use it against the giver. In other words, the study investigates the issues related to social exchange centered on individual interactions, organizational context, and individual perception. The subsequent section introduces the concept of knowledge.

2.2. The Concept of Knowledge

The concept of "knowledge" has seen its growth since the 90s. Organizations have realized that better management of the learning process leads to efficiency. A review of the knowledge management (KM) literature reveals many different definitions and perspectives on knowledge. For example, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) adopt a traditional definition of knowledge as 'justified true belief'. Belief is critical to this concept of knowledge because it is closely tied to an individual's, or groups', values and beliefs. From this perspective, knowledge derives in the minds and bodies of individuals. Paramount to the concept of knowledge is the process of learning. For it is through the process of getting to know and learning that knowledge is acquired. Chaffet and White (2011), suggest that when there is an integration of theory, information, and experience, it builds on to knowledge.

Prior research on knowledge distinguishes between data, information, and knowledge. Miller and Morris (1999), for example, define knowledge as the intersection of information, experience, and theory. This definition is extended to include wisdom, described as successfully applied knowledge and which will often be tacit in nature. This concept of knowledge is shown in Fig. 2 below. Chaffey and White (2011: 208-210) have defined data as discrete, objective facts, such as numbers, symbols, and figures. Data is usually without context or interpretation. Information however can be defined as data that adds value to the understanding of a subject and is usually in context. According to Chaffey and White (2011), information is the basis for knowledge, as it has no value until knowledge is applied to act upon it.
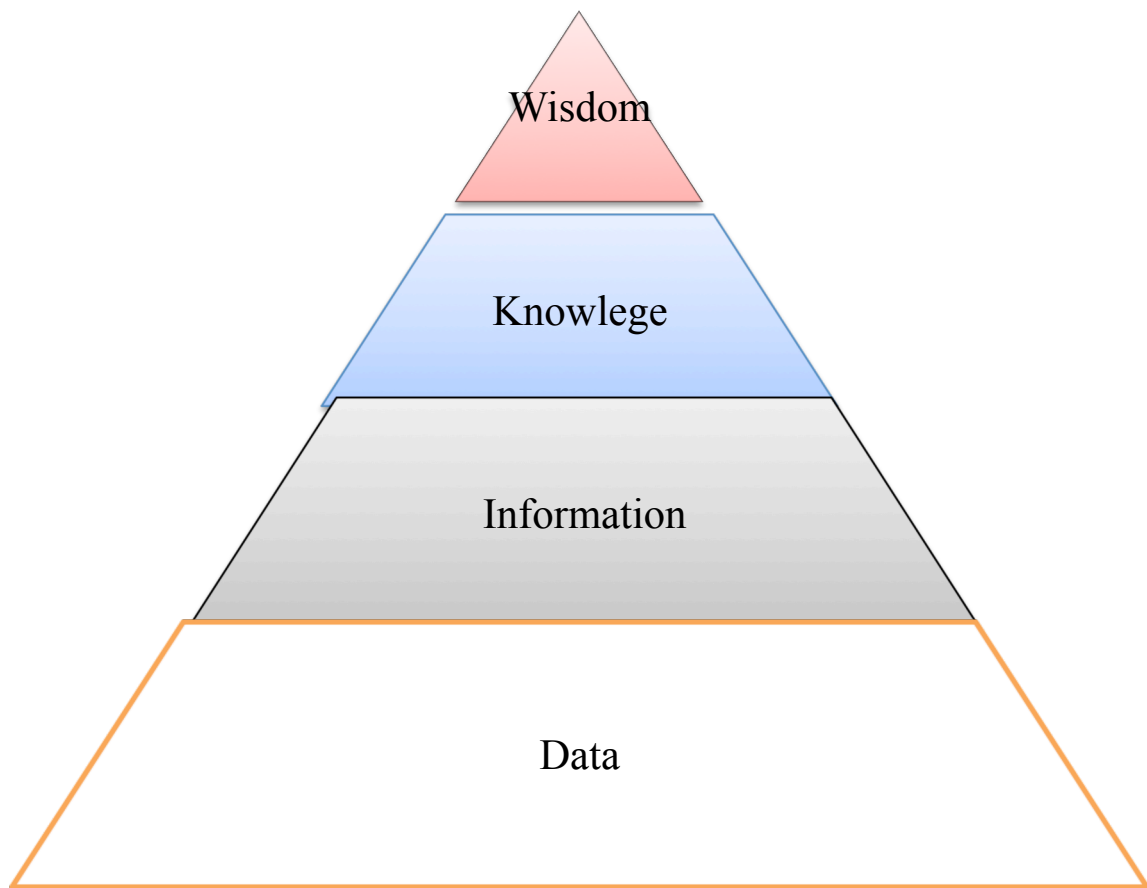
Figure 2. Hierarchical Structure of Data, Information, and Knowledge.

Knowledge is similar to data and information, but it has a much deeper meaning among them. For instance, while information is a product of meaningful processing of data, knowledge is the value added to information (Davenport and Prusak 1998). According to Brown and Duguid (2000: 147-71), there are at least three important distinctions between information and knowledge. Knowledge entails a knower; it is much harder to detach, transfer, and share than information; and knowledge is much more difficult to assimilate and understand than information. Moreover, data, information, and Knowledge are interrelated in a hierarchical structure (see Figure 2) where the relationship between them is dynamic and interactive. The data and information can provide the building blocks of knowledge. Equally, knowledge can be used to generate data and information. Furthermore, knowledge shapes the type of information & data collected and the way it is analyzed.

While these and other such studies report a positive interaction between the above-stated concepts, this study will adopt the definition of Davenport and Prusak (1998). This is because 'knowledge' as a concept has been explanation in a comprehensive manner:

> "Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms."(ibid: 5.)

2.2.1 Typologies of Knowledge

Hislop (2013: 21-22) examined two of the most common distinctions of knowledge typologies: tacit and explicit knowledge, and individual and collective or group knowledge. There is much agreement on the overall organizational implications of the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge (e.g. Grant 1996; Nonaka 1991; Osterloh & Frey 2000; Spender 1996). These studies show that 'there are two types of knowledge: explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge' (Nonaka et al. 2000). Typically, this contrast is based on the work of Michael Polanyi (1958).

Tacit-explicit contrast is widely used in analyses of organizational knowledge. According to Hislop (2013: 21), explicit knowledge is regarded as objective, standing above and separate from both individual and social value system. Additionally, this type of knowledge is easy codified into a tangible form (ibid). Further, it is regarded as relatively less expensive because it is easy to transfer to others. Moreover, explicit knowledge is formal and systematic (Nonaka & Tekeuchi 1995). Explicit knowledge can be found in (hard) data records, and it is easily captured, manipulated and accessible.

Tacit knowledge, as the basis for this thesis on the other hand, represents knowledge possessed by people, and which may importantly shape how they think and act, but which cannot be fully made explicit (Hislop 2013: 21; Nonaka & Tekeuchi 1995). It is mainly intangible knowledge that is typically intuitive and difficult to codify. Tacit knowledge is highly personal; it is hard to formalize and difficult to communicate to others (Ipe 2003; Sazali et al. 2010). According to Marzana, Jabar, Sidi and Selamat

(2010), the most pressing issue in an organization today is how to capture and codify employee's tacit knowledge. In line with this, two of the most commonly referred to examples of tacit knowledge are the riding a bike or swimming. The knowledge possessed by people of how to carry out these activities is difficult to communicate, articulate, and share. Table 3 below shows the difference between tacit and explicit knowledge.

Table 3. Characteristics of Tacit and Explicit Knowledge.

Tacit Knowledge	Explicit Knowledge
Inexpressible in a codified form	Codified
Subjective	Objective
Personal	Impersonal
Context-specific	Context independent
Difficult to share	Easy to share

Source: Hislop (2013: 21)

Furthermore, Osterloh and Frey (2000) also distinguished between tacit and explicit knowledge sharing. They argue that the different types of motivations (extrinsic and intrinsic) are important in sharing the two kinds of knowledge. Accordingly, Smith (2001) compared the distinctive roles of the two types of knowledge sharing. Their results show that a supportive and interactive learning environment is ideal for both tacit and explicit knowledge sharing. Moreover, Becerra, Lunnan and Huemer (2008) also found that the transfers of tacit and explicit knowledge, respectively, have different trust and risk issues. Furthermore, Reychav and Weisberg (2009) found that employees who are willing to share their tacit knowledge are likely to be willing to share their explicit knowledge to earn monetary and non-monetary benefits. Similarly, Huang, Davison, and Gu (2011) investigated the impact of trust and guanxi orientation about the intention to share knowledge in Chinese firms. They argue that tacit and explicit knowledge has different levels of impact, depending on the type of knowledge.

While Nonaka's theory is very prominent and widely referenced, some critics (Gourlay 2006; Collins 2007) argue that there are still some limitations to it. Many aspects of it remain to be fully empirically evaluated. Furthermore, Hong (2012) relate to the conceptualization of tacit knowledge conversion and the extent to which it is a theory

that is relevant beyond the Japanese business and cultural context that it was developed in. However, Nonaka's theory has been developed for more than twenty years and represents the single most significant theory in the area of knowledge management.

Individual-group knowledge: Although knowledge can reside within individuals, there is a sense in which knowledge can reside in social groups in the form of shared work practices and routines, and shared assumptions or perspectives (Collings 2007; Hecker 2012). Spender (1996) merged the tacit-explicit dichotomy with the individual-group dichotomy to produce a two-by-two matrix with four generic types of knowledge (see Figure 3)

	Individual	**Social**
Explicit	CONSCIOUS	OBJECTIFIED
Tacit	AUTOMATIC	COLLECTIVE

Figure 3. Generic Knowledge Types.

Source: Adapted from Spender (1996)

According to Hislop (2013: 23), *Objectified* knowledge characterizes explicit group knowledge, for example, a documented system of rules, operating procedures or formalized organizational routines. On the other hand, *Collective* knowledge characterizes tacit group knowledge, knowledge possessed by a group that is not codified. This knowledge includes, for example, informal organizational routines and ways of working, stories and shared systems of understanding (Ibid). Accordingly, Hecker (2012) makes three distinctions of collective knowledge. Table 4 below summarizes this difference.

Table 4. Overview of Collective Knowledge Types.

Types of Collective Knowledge	Definition	Locus	Relationship to Individual Knowledge	Origin
Shared Knowledge	Knowledge held by individuals in a group	Individuals	Intersection of sets of individual knowledge	Shared experiences
Complementary Knowledge	Knowledge regarding the division of expertise within a group	Relationships between knowledge sets	Knowledge not included in any individual knowledge set but implicated by interdependencies between individual knowledge sets	Specialized division of knowledge within group
Artifact-Embedded Knowledge	Knowledge incorporated in collective artifacts	Artifact	Individual knowledge in explicated form	Codification and explication of knowledge

Source: Hecker (2012: 430)

In summary, a review of the literature shows that the categorization of knowledge is significant to the understanding of employees' knowledge sharing behaviors. Moreover, the difference between explicit- and tacit knowledge sharing, make it likely that they related to various levels of organizational rewards, satisfaction, and social capital. In this thesis, knowledge sharing intention refers to the belief that one will engage in a tacit knowledge-sharing act. While explicit knowledge sharing intention is belief that one will engage in explicit knowledge sharing act (Bock, Zmud, Kim & Lee 2005).

2.3. Knowledge as an Organizational Resource

According to the knowledge-based theory of the firm, knowledge that is difficult to replicate is firm-specific knowledge. It builds from and links to existing knowledge within an organization and is related to firm-specific products, services or processes (Wang, He & Mahoney 2009). The Knowledge-based theory of the firm also assumes that organizations provide a more efficient mechanism than markets do for the sharing and integration of knowledge between people.

The central idea stemming from the knowledge management literature that it is important for organizations to manage their workforce's knowledge, flows from some key findings. For example, that "some think the 'knowledge turn' a matter of macro-historical change; citing Drucker, Bell, Arrow, Reich or Winter. They argue that, "we have moved into an Information Age wherein knowledge has become the organizations' principal asset" (Spender & Scherer 2007: 6). Furthermore, Sewell (2005: 685-6) assumes that the aspect of work has changed from the physical toil of manufacturing to the world of working more with minds than our hands. Moreover, "a firm's competitive advantage depends more than anything on its knowledge: on what it knows – how it uses what it knows – and how fast it can know something new." (HR Magazine 2009: 1). Therefore, this thesis assumes that it is not just the realization of the organization's specific resources, but the management of those resources that makes an organization outperforms others.

Accordingly, these studies illustrate the fact that, first, the end of the twentieth century witnessed an enormous social and economic change, which resulted in knowledge becoming a significant asset for organizations to manage. Secondly, that the nature of work has also significantly changed, with the importance of intellectual work notably increasing. Thirdly, that an organization's active management of its knowledge base is likely to provide a source of competitive advantage. For example, Bogner and Bansal (2007) conducted research, which tested certain aspects of the KBV. Specifically, they examined whether an organization's ability to create and utilize new knowledge links to business performance. In their study, they used patent-intensive industries (Pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, forest products, oil and gas, and automotive). Two of the hypotheses that their research data supported, which they argued provided support for the KBV of the firm, were that first; business performance strongly relates to an organization's level of knowledge creation. Secondly, that business performance also relates to an organization's ability to 'recycle' new knowledge and use it to improve future organizational knowledge creation activities. Thus, this thesis will add to the research finding that there is an association between individual motivations and organization wide knowledge sharing from a multi-sector training, consultancy, and planning perspective. Thus, it is likely to provide a source of competitive advantage (e.g. Foss, Minbaeva, Pedersen & Reinholt 2009).

Research on knowledge sharing often is associated with enhanced organizational capabilities. According to Prahalad and Hamel (1990: 84-91), it is often the attribute of individuals that characterizes the core competency of an organization. This attribute is because the knowledge and capabilities of individual employees within an organization are significant in ensuring organizational competitiveness (Pfeffer 1994:18-19). Accordingly, organizational knowledge and the sharing of it has become a topic of interest (e.g., McEvily & Chakranarthy 2002; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995; Tsang 2002). Prior studies suggest that the concept of knowledge is far broader and richer than the concept of data or information, as seen in section 2.2. While individual knowledge is a fundamental organizational resource, it is the collaborative knowledge that determines its sustainable competitiveness (Hoops & Postrel 1999: 838).

Prahalad and Hamel (1990:18-19) define core organizational competencies as the collective organization learning concerning knowledge that is hard to imitate by competitors (e.g., production, marketing, and technological knowledge). Likewise, Leif Edvinsson and associates (2004, as cited in Chowdhury 2005: 312) suggest that the developing of an organization-wide knowledge base and effective utilization and creation of new knowledge is significant in ensuring innovation and performance. Therefore, a well-implemented knowledge sharing processes can enhance an organization's knowledge base and competitiveness (Andrews & Delahaye 2000; McEvily & Chakranarthy 2002, cited in Chowdhury 2005: 312). Moreover, sharing of tacit knowledge is a challenging but crucial task of developing organizational knowledge (Chowdhury 2005: 312). Both tacit and related natures of complex knowledge make it difficult to share. Similarly, complex knowledge sharing is considered to be a spiral process, which starts at the individual level and expands to greater organizational communities (ibid). According to Nonaka (2007: 165), socialization and combination are two crucial processes in an organization's effort to develop and leverage its knowledge base that starts with individual knowledge. Specifically, socialization involves the exchange of knowledge between individuals by observation, imitation, and practice through informal interactions during work related tasks. On the other hand, combination involves the integration of disconnected shared knowledge into complex sets of a knowledge base for the organization (ibid). Furthermore, since both processes require active collaboration between individuals,

sharing of complex knowledge can only be achieved through social structures that comprise of trust and cooperation (Rastogi 2000: 47). Thus, mutual trust fosters interpersonal complex knowledge sharing.

In summary, this section has shown that knowledge, as an organizational resource needs to be managed well to maintain the organization's competitiveness. It has demonstrated that there is a consensus among researchers on the importance of the individual knowledge to the organizational-wide performance. Additionally, it has also been seen that it is the collaborative knowledge that determines sustainable competitiveness, despite its complexity. However, sharing of knowledge will not just take place without the willingness of individual, and very few studies have been carried out regarding intentions to share knowledge. Thus, this thesis seeks to fill this gap by finding out what motivates employees to share their knowledge with others.

2.4. Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing in this study is defined as the process of mutually exchanging knowledge and jointly creating new knowledge (Wang & Noe 2010: 117). This definition is significant in that the extent to which knowledge sharing occurs between employees determine team and organizational level knowledge (e.g., Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; Polanyi 1966). Moreover, knowledge sharing is an important part of developing a knowledge-based competitive advantage (Alwis & Hartmann 2008; Grant 1996). According to Polanyi (1969), knowledge sharing is a deliberate subjective act, which makes knowledge reusable by other people through knowledge transfer. It suggests collaboration of individuals who work towards a common goal (Boland & Tenkasi 1995). Wang and Noe (2010) provide a comprehensive literature review on knowledge sharing in organizations. They identified five areas of emphasis of knowledge sharing research: organizational context, interpersonal and team characteristics, cultural characteristics, individual characteristics, and motivational factors.

Similarly, Fey and Furu (2008), look at which organizational policies lead to knowledge sharing between multinational units. Based on 164 MNC subsidiaries in China and Finland, their study show that, the transfer of tacit knowledge, which is also critical to

MNCs, is especially problematic and often dependent on informal interactions among individuals and organizations. The current study focuses on knowledge sharing as rooted in individual behaviors and their motivation to share knowledge with others.

Organizations have recognized the need to share knowledge. Knowledge sharing often involves mutual exchange among individuals, including sending and receiving knowledge. Moreover, it is a social act based on a sender-receiver relationship that involves communicating one's knowledge to others as well as receiving others' knowledge. In other words, individuals serve as knowledge creators and knowledge receivers. They create knowledge by exchanging their ideas and experience through social relations. As a receiver of knowledge, individuals seek and interpret the knowledge before transferring it to any repository (Nonaka & Tekeuchi 1995). This view means that creation and sharing of knowledge depend on the willingness of an individual who has to take initiative for knowledge to be shared or horde.

For instance, an employee is made known of a work problem faced by a colleague. The employee has the solution to the problem. The employee may share or may not share the knowledge with the co-worker. Therefore, it is up to him or her to share the knowledge. The decision to share the knowledge may be influenced by his or her personal beliefs on knowledge sharing. The example indicates that individuals serve a central role in the process of knowledge sharing. According to Nonaka and Tekeuchi (1995), knowledge sharing will not be successful within an organization without the involvement of humans. Therefore, this thesis will show that it is important to understand individual factors that influence knowledge sharing among employees. While researchers have given considerable attention to organizational level mechanisms, they seldom have, if ever, explicitly considered individual mechanisms that foster knowledge sharing motivation (Foss et al. 2010). The following section will review the role of HRM, and how different HRM practices have contributed to individual motivation to knowledge sharing.

2.5. The Role of HRM in Knowledge Sharing

Prior studies have shown that Social and cultural factors are significant in creating a successful knowledge sharing culture. This finding is primarily so because such factors have increasingly been recognized as fundamental in determining the workers' willingness to participate actively in knowledge management activities. Inevitably, this has led to organizations putting up deliberate measures of managerial practices to encourage employees' participation in knowledge management activities and initiatives. This section focuses on how different HRM practices can impact on individual employee's attitude toward and participation in knowledge sharing.

Accordingly, the attitudes and behaviors that are relevant to knowledge management initiatives are outlined in Table 5 below. Thus, it can be seen that HRM practices not only help create a positive attitude towards, and a willingness to participate in organizational knowledge sharing activities but also enhance employee commitment and loyalty to their employer. This notion is because, if employees are not committed and loyal to their organizations, there is a risk that organizations will lose any tacit knowledge those employees possess through staff turnover. Therefore, HRM practices concerned with supporting organizational knowledge sharing efforts should be concerned as much with developing the commitment and loyalty of workers as they are with persuading them to share, collect, or create knowledge. Hislop (2013: 220.)

Hislop (2013: 221-23) considers three separate reasons why HRM practices can help produce the type of behavior and attitudes that are necessary to make knowledge sharing efforts successful. First, making links between the share/hoard dilemma as outlined in section 2.1, and the concept of motivation, HRM practices can be used to motivate employees positively to participate in knowledge sharing. Secondly, HRM practices can be utilized to support and facilitate organizational knowledge management activities through developing employees' organizational commitment. Moreover, it has been suggested that commitment may be an important variable, which mediates the relationship between HRM practices and knowledge sharing. Lastly, it is suggested that HRM practices can facilitate knowledge sharing through positively influencing the type of social-cultural factors, which have been shown to be crucial to employee

participation in knowledge sharing. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate empirically how HRM practices help foster knowledge sharing among employees and the types of practices embedded at the firm in support of knowledge sharing initiatives.

Table 5. Attitudes and Behavior Relevant to Knowledge Management Initiatives.

Attitudes	Behaviors
Positive attitudes towards knowledge management initiatives	Active participation in knowledge management initiatives
Level of loyalty and commitment to the organization, and the goals it is perusing	Having continuous employment for significant periods

Source: Hislop (2013: 221)

In considering motivation, it is necessary to differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the pleasures and positive feelings people can derive from simply carrying out a task or activity, rather than for any reward derived from doing so. In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to the external rewards people derive from carrying out a task, such as money. Therefore, in terms of linking HRM practices, motivation, and knowledge sharing, HRM practices can be utilized to provide both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for undertaking knowledge sharing activities. For example, concerning intrinsic motivation, HRM practices can be used to design jobs that are intrinsically interesting and challenging, and which thus encourage and motivate employees to utilize and share their knowledge. On the other hand, HRM practices such as reward systems can be used to motivate extrinsically employees to participate in knowledge sharing through offering financial incentives.

Gagne (2009), present a model of knowledge-sharing motivation based on a combination of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and self-determination theory (SDT). She proposes five important predictors of attitudes, need satisfaction, and sharing norms: *staffing, job design, managerial styles, performance appraisal and compensation systems, and training*. Hislop (2013) added *coaching and mentoring*, and *communities of practice* (CoPs) to the list. These can be developed and managed in ways that will influence knowledge-sharing behavior in organizations. Table 6 summarizes HRM practices identified as supporting knowledge sharing, which this study proposes as facilitating employee motivation to share knowledge with others.

Table 6. HRM Practices Identified as Facilitating Knowledge Sharing.

HRM practices	How it facilitates Knowledge Sharing	Authors
Recruitment and selection	Recruit people whose values 'Fit' the organizational culture, and have personalities conducive to KS	Swart & Kinnie 2003; Robertson & Swan 2003; Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; Matzler et al. 2011; Mooradian et al. 2006
Job Design	Introduce challenging work tasks, adopt collaboration way of working	Foss et al. 2009; Robertson et al. 2003; Chen et al. 2011b; Horowitz 2003; Khatri et al. 2010; Kuo & Lee 2011; Holste & Fields 2010; Kase et al. 2009
Training and Development	Introduce formal & social programs, adopt training programs that best fit the organization's KM process	Kase et al. 2009; Robertson & O'Malley 2000; Hunter et al. 2002; Garvey & Williamson 2002; Nohria & Tierney 1999
Coaching & mentoring	Introduce social exchange programs, introduce programs that support interpersonal relations, intra-team working	Garvey & Williamson 2002; Harrison & Kessels 2004; Karkoulian et al. 2008; Kets de Vries 1991; Orlikowski 2002; Lee et al. 2011; Swart & Kinnie 2003
Performance Appraisal & Compensation	Adopt a reward system that fits an organization's KM strategy, introduce non-financial rewards, adopt a group focused reward system	Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; Oltra 2005; Hansel et al. 1999; Osterloh & Fey 2000; Fahey et al. 2007; Milne 2007; Nayir & Uzuncarsilli 2008; O'Dell & Hubert 2011; Teo et al. 2011; Paroutis & Al Saleh 2009
Communities of practice	CoPs support by management, simplify the communication of Knowledge; adopt individual and group learning	Hughes et al. 2008; g Moran 2010; McLeod et al. 2011; Bertels et al. 2011; Bradley et al. 2011; Bettiol & Sedita 2011; Hislop 2013

Source: Adapted from Gagne 2000; Hislop 2013

2.5.1. Recruitment and Selection

Knowledge management literature according to Hislop (2013) shows that there are two ways in which recruitment and selection processes can help support knowledge management activities. First, recruiting people whose values are compatible with the existing organizational culture, and secondly, individuals with personalities that are conducive to knowledge sharing (e.g., Swart & Kinnie 2003; Robertson & Swan 2003). According to Hislop (2013: 224), recruiting people whose values and norms are compatible with those of an organization, help facilitate a sense of identity among new

recruits with their employer and work colleagues. Additionally, it helps provide a suitable foundation for the development of strong trust-based relations between new recruits and their colleagues. For example, Chen, Hsu and Lin (2011a) investigated how a range of different HRM practices affected the willingness of people within R&D teams in Taiwan to share knowledge. All the R&D teams surveyed were in high-technology industries. They analyzed the surveys of over 200 employees from fifty separate R&D teams. Overall, they found that most of the HRM practices examined did affect people's knowledge sharing behaviors. The current study seeks to investigate HRM practices using semi-structured interviews in a single case study.

Furthermore, how personality relates to knowledge-sharing attitudes is a topic that is significantly under-researched, with very few empirical studies being done into this topic (Hislop 2013: 224). Moreover, while prior research use the five-factor personality model (openness, extraversion, neuroticism, consciousness, and agreeableness), they reach different conclusions about which personality traits positively influence knowledge-sharing attitudes (e.g., Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; Matzler, Renzl, Mooradian, von Krogh & Mueller 2011; Mooradian, Renzl & Matzler 2006). Accordingly, Cabrera and Cabrera's (2005) research, based on a survey of a single Spanish organization, found that the 'openness to change' personality variable relates to a positive knowledge-sharing attitude. On the other hand, Mooradian et al.'s (2006) study, also based on a survey of a single organization, found a link between 'agreeableness' and positive knowledge-sharing attitudes. Finally, Matzler et al.'s (2011) study, based on a survey conducted within a single Australian company, found that both agreeableness and conscientiousness positively relate to knowledge-sharing attitudes. The results from these studies cannot be generalized because they are all based on single organization studies. This current study, however, tries to extend this generalizability through a single case study using the same research question but tested on a different population.

In summary, this section has shown that how organizations recruit its employees play a major role in employee knowledge sharing motivation. Literature has shown that organizations need to find 'fit' between individual values and that of the organizational culture to enhance knowledge sharing among the workforce. However, the literature review has also shown that there is a lack of consensus of prior studies on which

specific personality traits promote knowledge sharing among workers. This study, therefore, seeks to identify what factors motivate employee knowledge sharing. The subsequent section discusses the relationship between job design and employee knowledge sharing.

2.5.2. Job Design

Jobs contain characteristics that influence different kinds of motivation towards knowledge sharing, which have different effects on individual knowledge sharing behavior (Foss et al. 2009: 872). According to Hislop (2013: 224), work should have three key features. First, it should be exciting and thought provoking. Secondly, employees should have high levels of autonomy concerning decision-making and problem solving. Lastly, it should encourage and require interpersonal collaboration. This categorization compares with Foss et al. (2009: 872) who asserts that job characteristics, such as task identity, autonomy and feedback, determine different motivations to share knowledge. This motivation in turn predicts employees' knowledge sharing behaviors (ibid). For example, Chen, Zhang and Vogel (2011b) conducted a study into the link between conflict and knowledge sharing in some Chinese software companies. Their results suggested that interpersonal knowledge sharing would be encouraged if employees had both thought-provoking and meaningful work tasks and had high levels of autonomy.

Additionally, in line with the first characteristic, work should also provide opportunities for employees to develop continuously their knowledge and skills (e.g., Robertson & O'Malley Hammersley 2000; Swart & Kinnie 2003). Moreover, the significance of having interesting and challenging work is also supported by the findings of Horowitz, Heng and Quazi's (2003) study of Singaporean knowledge workers. This study found that managers for helping to retain their knowledge workers ranked providing challenging work as the most important factor. Similarly, Han, Chiang and Chang (2010), as seen earlier, found that participation in decision-making positively linked to levels of organizational commitment and knowledge sharing.

Furthermore, in terms of autonomy, prior studies suggest that knowledge workers also place much importance on having high levels of autonomy at work (Khatri, Baveja,

Agarwal & Brown 2010). For instance, a study by Robertson and Swan (2003) found autonomy to be important to the consultants, and extended to the projects they worked on. It also showed in the selection of the training and development activities they undertook, work clothing, and work patterns (ibid). Finally, Kuo and Lee's (2011) study into empowering leadership concluded that providing workers with high levels of autonomy was likely to help with the development of knowledge-sharing culture.

The third feature of work tasks argued to encourage worker's participation in knowledge management activities is that they should require and/or encourage collaboration amongst people. This is because collaborative working makes knowledge sharing a central feature of work activities (Holste & Fields 2010; Kase, Paauwe, & Zupan 2009). Moreover, it is likely to facilitate the development of the type of strong interpersonal relations, which are conducive to interpersonal knowledge sharing (ibid).

In summary, job design may, therefore, be an important avenue for firms that want to benefit from employees' sharing of relevant knowledge. This consideration may be particularly relevant when the risk of highly knowledgeable employees leaving the organization or when the high costs of retaining such talent materialize, as seen above (Foss et al. 2009). Moreover, these are pressing problems for many consulting, accounting, and professional services firms that knowledge sharing may alleviate (ibid).

2.5.3. Training and development

As outlined in the previous section, providing opportunities for self-development can be integrated into the way people's work activities are organized. However, it can also be achieved by providing appropriate opportunities to undertake formal training (Hislop 2013: 225). Previous studies on the topic suggest that knowledge workers regard the provision of such opportunities by their employers as vital (e.g., Hunter, Beaumont & Lee 2002; Robertson & O'Malley, Hammersley 2000). Consequently, the provision of such opportunities is critical for employers, as without supporting continuous development, staff may be likely to leave. According to Garvey and Williamson (2002), the most useful sort of training to promote a culture of learning and knowledge development is not investing in 'narrow' skills-based training. However, they suggest training with a broader purpose to encourage reflexivity, learning through

experimentation, and how to conduct critical dialogues with others. Furthermore, Hansen, Nohria and Tierney (1999a) also suggest that the type of training provided should reflect the particular approach to knowledge management an organization adopts. For example, about their distinction between codification- and personalization-based approaches to knowledge management, they argue that the provision of IT-based training be relevant for organizations pursuing a codification-based strategy. Whereas training to develop interpersonal skills and team working is most appropriate for organizations pursuing a personalization-based knowledge management strategy (ibid).

Additionally, some studies into the role of Web 2.0 technologies to facilitate knowledge management suggest that the provision of training on the use of such technologies is likely to encourage employees to use them for knowledge sharing (e.g., Paroutis & Al Saleh 2009; Teo, Nishant, Goh & Agarwal 2011). Finally, Kase et al. (2009) suggest that one of the knowledge-related benefits of training is that it facilitates the development of good interpersonal relations between those undertaking it. This relationship is likely to encourage such people to share knowledge with each other in the future.

2.5.4. Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and mentoring in organizations can facilitate the informal sharing of knowledge (e.g., Garvey & Williamson 2002; Karkoulian, Halawi & McCarthy 2008; Kets de Vries 1991). Accordingly, coaching and mentoring are both concerned with the sharing of knowledge between a relatively experienced person, the mentor or coach, and someone less experienced, the mentee (Wilson & Ellman 1990). However, they differ from each other on some issues. First, while mentoring has an indefinite timescale, coaching is for a set duration. Secondly, coaching is more structured concerning organization, for example, occurring at set regular times, for specific time periods. Finally, while coaching concerns the development of relatively narrow and specific skills and knowledge, mentoring is less focused in this way. (Hislop 2013: 226.)

However, both coaching and mentoring can take many forms. For example, mentoring can be done in high-formalized ways, or relatively informally, and coaching can be done on a one-to-one basis or in groups. Some brief examples provide the knowledge-

sharing benefits of mentoring and coaching. First, in the software company examined by Swart and Kinnie (2003), mentoring was used to facilitate cross-project knowledge sharing. Secondly, Kets de Vries (1991) in evaluating a single, intensive group coaching activity found that the development of trust among participants in this activity facilitated interpersonal knowledge sharing. Thirdly, Karkoulian et al. (2008), in a study of mentoring in Lebanese banks, found that informal mentoring had a positive impact on knowledge sharing behaviors. Finally, in the study of leadership by Lee, Gillespie, Mann and Wearing (2010), one of the ways intra-team trust and knowledge sharing was through a process of mentoring. This process involved pairing experienced team members with less experienced ones. Thus setting up and facilitating both coaching and mentoring activities represents another way for organizational management to facilitate interpersonal knowledge sharing.

2.5.5. Performance Appraisal and Compensation System

A literature review in the area of reward has shown no consensus regarding how systems can best be used to support knowledge management activities. Some suggest that rewarding people for appropriate knowledge-related behaviors and embedding knowledge-related attitudes and behaviors in performance appraisal processes represent a potentially significant way to use HRM practices to underpin organizational knowledge management efforts (e.g., Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; Oltra 2005). Moreover, it is also agreed that such reward systems should reflect the particular knowledge management strategy adopted by an organization and the type of knowledge processes associated with it. Hansen et al. (1999a) argue that, if a strategy pursued is codification, the pay and reward system should acknowledge the employee effort to codify their knowledge, and search for the knowledge of others. While with a personalization strategy, pay and reward system should recognize the effort of workers to share their tacit knowledge with each other (ibid).

However, some scholars, who suggest that there may be negative consequences to directly linking individual, financial rewards to knowledge behaviors, challenge this perspective. For instance, Osterloh and Frey's (2000) study distinguished between extrinsic forms of motivation (such as monetary), and intrinsic forms of motivation (motivation related to the benefits derived from carrying out an activity itself). They

concluded that financial rewards are likely to inhibit the sharing of tacit knowledge. Fahey, Vasconcelos and Ellis (2007) and Milne (2007) both reach a similar conclusion. They argue that directly associating individual rewards to knowledge sharing may mean people develop instrumental attitudes to such processes. Thus, people would only participate in knowledge processes when they derive some form of financial reward from doing so, which may inhibit knowledge sharing when such rewards are not available (ibid).

Another area of debate concerns whether individual or a group-based reward provides the best way to facilitate positive knowledge-related attitudes and behaviors. Thus, some research suggests that individually focused financial rewards can play a positive role. For example, Herowitz et al. (2003: 32) conducted a survey of Singaporean knowledge workers. Their findings ranked a 'highly competitive pay package' as the second most effective way to help retain knowledge workers. Furthermore, Kankanhalli et al. (2005) and Huang et al. (2008) also found that individually focused reward systems support participation in knowledge management activities.

Others suggest that such individually focused rewards can inhibit knowledge sharing. They argue that such rewards create an instrumental attitude to knowledge sharing (Nayir & Uzuncarsili 2008). Moreover, that such reward mechanism may undermine people's sense of team or community spirit (ibid). For instance, in the organization studies by Lam (1997), the use of individually focused rewards contributed importantly to the individualistic culture, which existed. This finding meant that people were unwilling to codify and share knowledge with colleagues. Thus, some suggest that the best way to develop group focused knowledge sharing is through making knowledge related rewards group, rather than individually focused (Cabrera & Cabrera 2005; Chen et al. 2011a).

Finally, some scholars suggest that non-financial rewards such as recognition can play a significant role in facilitating and encouraging appropriate knowledge behaviors in people (e.g., Nayir & Uzuncarsili 2008; O'Dell & Hubert 2011; Teo et al. 2011). While Huang et al. (2008) found that financial rewards did encourage knowledge sharing among the Chinese workers they studied; their findings show that non-financial rewards

strongly influenced people's attitudes to knowledge sharing. Paroutis and Al Saleh's (2009) studied the intentions for people to share knowledge using Web 2.0 technology. They suggested that 'companies should consider introducing soft rewards like praise and recognition to encourage employee participation.

2.5.6. Communities of Practice

According to Hislop (2013: 155), communities of practice (CoPs) are an "informal groups of people who have some work-related activities in common." The CoPs literature closely relates to the practice-based perspective on knowledge, as it assumes that the knowledge people have is embedded in and inseparable from (collectively based) activities that people carry out. Moreover, the informality of these communities is as a result of social interactions that are a necessary part of the work that people undertake. Furthermore, while most of the literature on CoPs focuses on specific communities within the organization, communities can span organizational boundaries (e.g. Bettiol & Sedita 2011).

The concept of 'CoPs' has been one of the most popular topics in the vast literature on knowledge management. This popularity is evident in the large quantity of academic articles and books produced on the subject (see e.g. Amin & Roberts 2008; Hughes, Jewson & Unwin 2008). Thus, a growing number of scholars suggest that developing CoPs can provide an effective means for people and organizations to manage and share knowledge.

The CoPs literature considers CoPs to be advantageous for both individuals and organizations. Thus, they provide employees with a sense of identity, and a social context in which they are argued to have the potential to develop efficiently and utilize their knowledge (e.g., Bettiol & Sedita 2011). For an organization, they can provide a vital source of innovation. Moreover, prior studies on knowledge management, which have utilized the CoPs concept, argue that they can facilitate organizational knowledge processes, and thus yield some benefits to the organization.

A review of the literature on CoPs revealed potential to provide benefits in two broad areas. First, CoPs can underpin levels of organizational innovativeness through

supporting and encouraging the creation, development, and use of knowledge (e.g. Bertels, Kleinschmidt & Koen 2011; Bradley, Mathieu, Corderly, Rosen & Kukenberger 2011). Secondly, the common knowledge possessed by members of CoPs, combined with their sense of collective identity, and system of shared values, means they have the potential to facilitate individual and group learning, and the sharing of knowledge within the community (e.g., Moran 2010; McLeod, O'Donohue & Townley 2011).
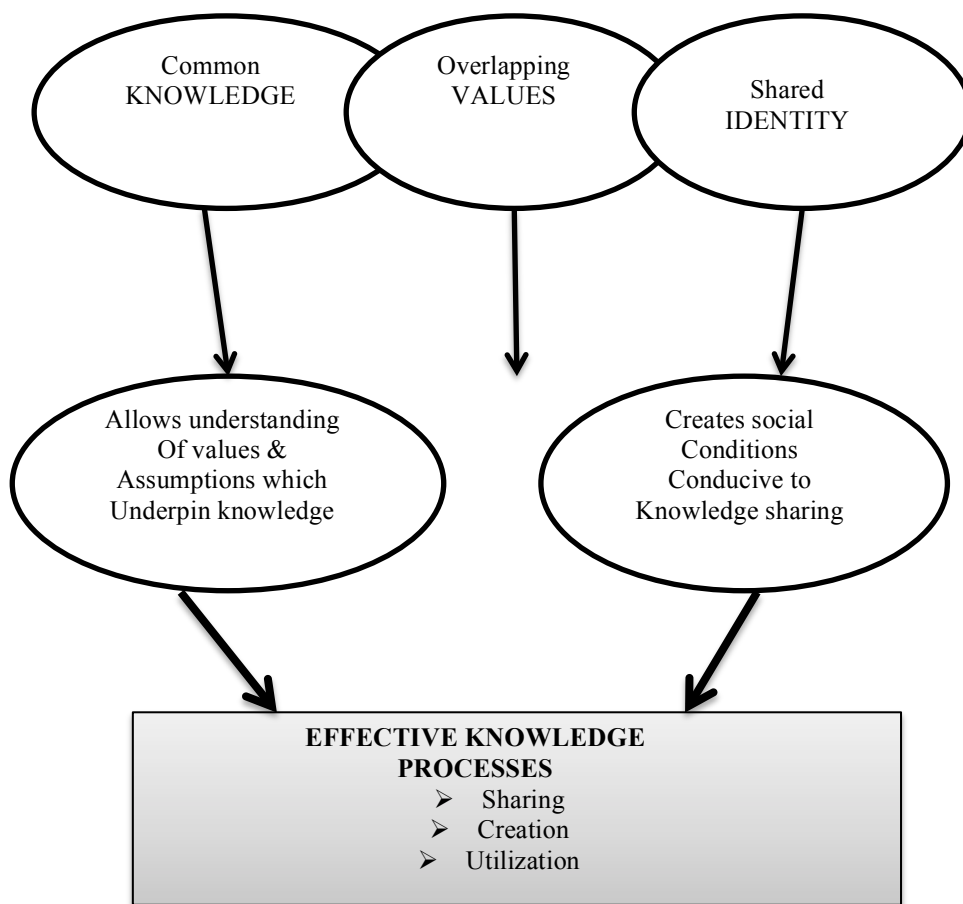

Figure 4. How Communities of Practice Underpin Knowledge Processes.

Source: Hislop 2013: 160

Furthermore, the advantages of CoPs in enabling such knowledge are closely related to the elements that members of a community share (see Figure 4). As outlined earlier, members of CoPs not only have a stock of common knowledge, but also have a shared

sense of identity, and some overlapping, common values. According to Hislop (2013: 159), the simultaneous existence of these elements enables knowledge processes, as they simplify the communication of knowledge that is inherently sticky: tacit knowledge. He argues that, first, the existence of these three elements make appreciating the taken for granted assumptions and values that underpin tacit knowledge easier to understand. Secondly, the existence of these elements is likely to produce and sustain trust-based relations, creating social conditions that are conducive to knowledge sharing. Section 2.1.2 above gave a more detailed discussion on how identity and group-based identities can affect people's knowledge sharing behaviors.

2.6. The Role of Organizational Culture in Knowledge Sharing

An organization's culture consists of practices, symbols, values and assumptions that the members of the organization share concerning appropriate behavior (Schein 1990). Moreover, the artifacts can include the dress code, infrastructure design, how people conduct and address each other and the overall atmosphere, to more permanent aspects such as products, archival records, statements and annual reports. Accordingly, values are organizational norms, charters, ideologies, and philosophies. Similarly, basic underlying assumptions are based on an organization's historical events that determine perceptions, thought processes, feelings and behavior (Martin & Meyerson 1988, cited in Schein 1990). On the other hand, the basic underlying assumptions are the least apparent but are much more influential on behavior than adopted artifacts and values (Schein 1990).

Prior studies in this area suggest that cultural values promote knowledge sharing behaviors by influencing the quality of interactions needed to leverage knowledge among individuals (e.g., Alavi et al. 2006; De Long & Fahey 2000; Gray & Densten 2005). Moreover, Culture establishes an organizational setting for social interaction and creates norms regarding what is 'right' and 'wrong' (e.g., Ajmal & Koskinen 2008; De Long & Fahey 2000). Therefore, it can have an effect on how people network and share knowledge. Furthermore, Friesl, Sackmann and Kremser (2011) suggest that organizational structure has an impact on approaches to knowledge management. For instance, De Long and Fahey (2000) argue that knowledge sharing can be influenced by

different cultural attributes in the organization. This influence can be across (horizontal) and on the various levels of an organization (vertical). According to Foss et al. (2010: 456), organizational structures and mechanisms can influence the process of how people use, share, integrate, and create knowledge in preferred directions and towards preferred levels. They argue that informal aspects of the organization are subjective to formal organizational mechanisms. Accordingly, Wang and Noe (2010) suggest that organizations should create opportunities for employee interactions to occur. Moreover, employees' rank, position in the organizational hierarchy, and seniority should be deemphasized to facilitate knowledge sharing (ibid).

Researchers that link culture and knowledge management have not clearly stated the characteristics of organizational culture that facilitates knowledge management activities (Hislop 2013: 237). Thus, for example, O'Dell and Hubert (2011) simply talk about a 'knowledge sharing' culture, while Donate and Guadamillas (2010), talk about 'knowledge centered' culture. Within this literature; however, there is a consensus on the general characteristics of organizational culture likely to promote knowledge sharing activities. These characteristics are that, first; *knowledge sharing is regarded as a norm*. Second, that *organizational staff has a strong sense of collective identity*. Third, those colleagues *highly trust and respect each other*. Fourth, those *organizational processes are regarded as fair*. Lastly, that *staff has a high level of trust in and commitment to management*.

Recent studies on knowledge management however, have used **typologies of organizational culture** to identify which one best support knowledge management activities. While numerous typologies of organizational culture exist, the most frequently used in the knowledge management literature is that developed by Cameron and Quinn (e.g., Sanz-Valle, Naranjo-Valencia, Jimenez-Jimenez & Perez-Caballero 2011; Stock, McFadden & Gowen III 2010; Suppiah & Sandhu 2011).

Cameron and Quinn's competing values framework (2006: 35-53) uses two dimensions to develop a typology, which differentiates between four distinctive organizational culture types (see Figure 5). In this framework, one dimension is flexibility/adaptability versus stability/continuity, while the other examines whether the culture is focused

internally within the organization, or whether its primary focus is external, on the market and general business environment.
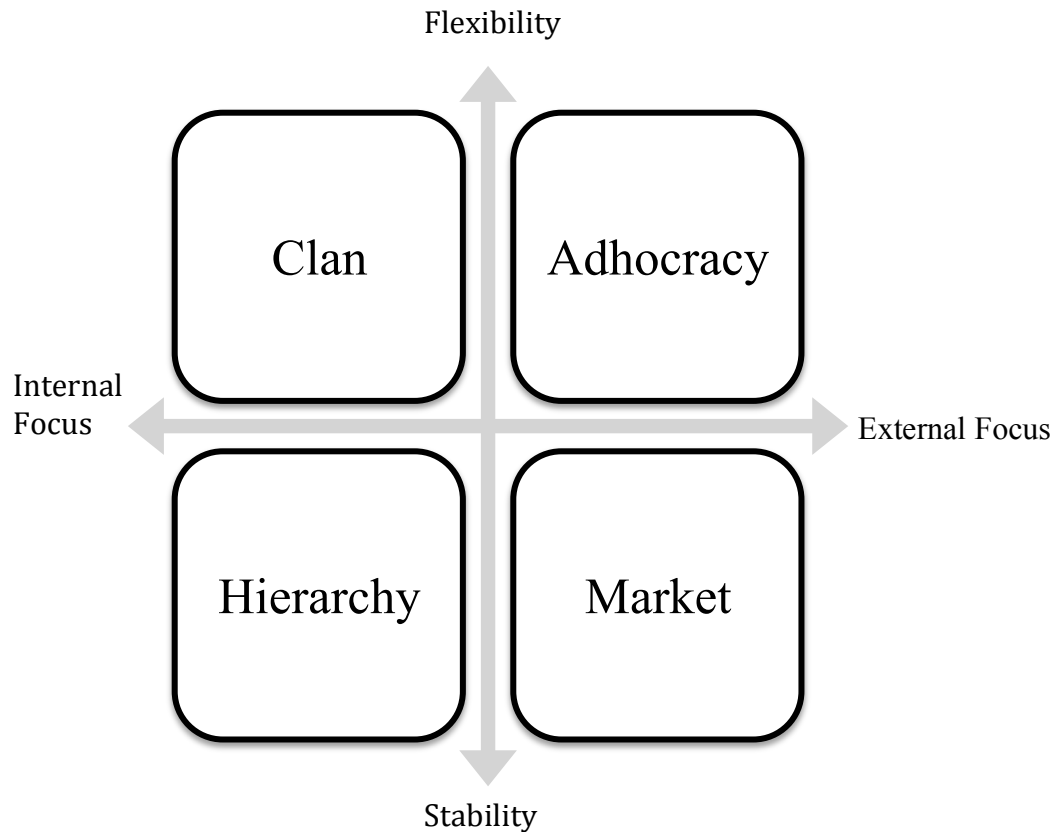
Figure 5. Cameron and Quinn's Organizational Culture Typology.

Source: Adapted from Cameron and Quinn (2006: 35)

Using these dimensions, Cameron and Quinn differentiate between what they refer to as a clan culture, a culture of adhocracy, a hierarchical culture, and a market-focused culture. The characteristics of a clan culture are that, it is a culture that is flexible and adaptable, and which is primarily internally focused, being concerned with facilitating collaboration among staff and the development of a strong sense of group and team identity among staff. A culture of adhocracy is also flexible and adaptable but is most focused on the market and external business environment. This type of culture suits companies that operate in dynamic markets and emphasizes values of creativity and innovation. A hierarchical is one that is both internally focused and concerned with stability and continuity. The characteristics of this culture are focused on adhering to organizationally defined rules and norms within organizations that have clearly defined

authority structures. Finally, a market-based culture is one which is externally focused, but where the emphasis is on stability and continuity. This culture is appropriate to business environments that are not characterized by high levels of change, and where the focus of the culture is on factors such as consistency, incremental innovation or change, and maintaining and developing levels of competitiveness in business markets.

Accordingly, recent research on organizational culture types indicate consensus on the types of organizational culture that facilitates and inhibit knowledge sharing processes in organizations (e.g., Suppiah & Sandhu 2011; Stock et al. 2010; Liao et al. 2012; Sanz-Valle et al. 2011). The type of culture, which most enables knowledge sharing activities, is a culture of adhocracy, with Sanz-Valle et al. (2011) finding this culture type to be positively related to levels of organizational learning, and Liao et al. (2012) finding a culture of adhocracy to be positively related to levels of organizational innovation. On the other hand, a hierarchical or bureaucratic culture has been found to inhibit knowledge sharing, with Stock et al. (2010) finding it to be negatively related to levels of knowledge dissemination within organizations, Sanz-Valle et al. (2011) finding it to be negatively related to levels of organizational learning, Liao et al. (2012) finding it to be negatively linked to levels of organizational innovation, and Suppiah and Sandhu (2011) finding it to be negatively related to the sharing of tacit knowledge among employees.

In this section, the study has identified factors that may influence knowledge sharing by creating a favorable organizational environment. This section has shown that; organizational culture may influence individuals to share knowledge with others by creating an environment where; 1) knowledge sharing is regarded as a norm. 2) Organizational staff has a strong sense of collective identity. 3) Employees have trust in and respect for each other. 4) Organizational processes are regarded as fair. 5) Staff has a high level of trust in and commitment to management. Lastly, 6) having an organizational culture type of adhocracy. The subsequent section presents a summary of the theoretical findings.

2.7. Summary of the Literature Review

This thesis seeks to investigate the factors motivating employees to share their knowledge with others. Literature has shown that the potential facilitator for knowledge sharing is the differences that exist in people's knowledge and understanding, which help encourage people to reflect on their knowledge and ideas and possibly modify them. However, such differences in knowledge and values may also be a source of conflict and disagreement between people, requiring issues of knowledge management to be given a greater level of attention.

This chapter has revealed some mechanisms that facilitate and influence knowledge sharing among employees. These factors include: social ties or interactions with other employees, trust, a shared language, nature of the employment relationship, personality traits, and the role of personality, perceived cost, perceived rewards, and reciprocity. Figure 6 below summarizes the mechanisms deemed to motivate knowledge sharing among employee as identified in this study. Fundamentally, this chapter has shown that human, social psychology, and cultural factors are a significant aspect of the success of employee knowledge sharing. This finding is because; they have a major influence on the individual employee's willingness to participate in such activities, and that without such willingness, it is unlikely that the knowledge sharing initiatives will succeed. Additionally, the resources these factors are focused on managing and sharing (individual employees' knowledge), will remain under-utilized.

Furthermore, the chapter has shown that HRM practices are linked to high levels of delegation of decisions, broad lateral and vertical communication channels, high reward systems, often related to several performance indicators, and other practices assumed to achieve high levels of organizational performance (Teece 2007; Colombo and Delmastro 2008, cited in Laursen et al. 2013). Moreover, the chapter reveals that using a system of management practices providing employees skills, information, motivation, and autonomy result in a workforce that is a source of competitive advantage.

In line with Foss, Laursen and Pedersen (2011), the chapter has shown that the HRM practices involve: a) delegation of responsibility, such as team production; b)

knowledge incentives, such as profit sharing, individual incentives and incentives for knowledge sharing; c) interpersonal relations between employees, encouraged by practices related to knowledge sharing or job rotation; d) employee training, both internal and external; and e) recruitment and retention, such as internal promotion policies). It can be noted that the first three classes of practices include the practices that are usually included as "modern" HRM practices in the literature (Teece 2007), while the latter two categories can be considered more traditional HRM practices. In general HRM Practices have been found to play a major role in facilitating employee knowledge sharing. Table 6 above provides an overview and describes the results of some representative papers from various parts of the literature.

Moreover, the literature review highlighted some key social-culture factors, which play a central role in shaping employee motivation to participate in knowledge sharing. First, the nature of the employment relationship means that, about knowledge sharing, the interests of workers and their employers may not always be compatible. Secondly, the conflictual nature of intra-organizational relations was found to shape the character of organizational knowledge sharing. Thirdly, interpersonal trust was found to be important, with a lack of trust likely to hinder an individual's motivation to share knowledge with others. Fourthly, the role of personal identity was also found to be important, with a individual's identity often shaping with whom they were and were not willing to share knowledge. Fifthly, national cultural characteristics have been found to shape people's attitudes to knowledge processes. Finally, the role of personality in shaping people's general tendency to share knowledge was also emphasized.

Figure 6 below summarizes the literature review for the study. The identified mechanisms are interlinked one with the other and constitute some influencing factors towards employee knowledge sharing as stated above. The theoretical framework assumes that the social psychological factors mediate the relationship between HRM practices and knowledge sharing. Specifically, three key factors as earlier stated, have emerged from the literature review, as constituted by the model. These are the social psychological factors, HRM practices, and organizational cultural factors. The social psychological factors express the relationship between employees (such as, social exchange factors) mediated by employee attitudes (such as intrinsic motivation,

commitment, and satisfaction). This notion is based on the concept of reciprocity and social exchange, in which a supposed individual employee willingly shares his or her knowledge. Thus resulting in a level of satisfaction, commitment, and motivation in the other individual with whom the knowledge has been shared, and so reciprocating by sharing their knowledge.

Furthermore, the chapter has shown that HRM practices (such as rewards, training and other practices discussed above) have an influence in shaping the culture of an organization. According to Guest (1994), through staffing, socialization and training procedures, HRM may contribute to both the emergence and maintenance of shared patterns of norms, values and informal rules within organizations. Therefore, HRM practices and, more specifically, high-performance work practices may have an impact on organizational culture, and vice versa. The dominant culture may influence the HRM policy and practices adopted by organizations. Likely, the influence runs both ways.

The literature review also emphasized the role of HRM as a means of managing human and social capital (Cabello-Medina, Cabrales & Cabrera 2011). Youndt, Subramaniam and Snell (2004) suggest that HRM investment has a significant role to play in creating human and social capital. Nonetheless, they do not consider the effects of specific HRM practices separately. Subramaniam and Youndt (2005) conclude that an organization's efforts in hiring, training, designing work and implementing other HRM practices may need to focus not only on maintaining their employees' functional or specific technical skills and expertise but also on developing their abilities to network, to collaborate and to share information and knowledge. Consequently, this thesis proposes that both human and social psychological factors could be enhanced through the implementation of HRM practices that promote both the competence of individual employees and their willingness to interact and to share knowledge.

It can, therefore, be concluded that employees perceive HRM practices as a 'tailored' commitment by the organization that is then reciprocated back through positive attitudes and behavior. Since the focus of the exchange relationship is the employees, this thesis concentrates on cultural, organizational behavior towards the individual, rather than towards another organization. Thus, this chapter has shown that employees who have

positive perceptions of their HRM practices demonstrate more organizational cultural behaviors and are less likely to quit their organization.

HRM Practices

- Recruitment and selection
- Job Design
- Training and development
- Coaching and Mentoring
- Performance appraisal and compensation system
- Communities of practice

Social Psychological Factors

Social Capital	Social Dilemma	Social Exchange
• Structural social capital • Cognitive social capital • Relational social capital	• Employment relations • Intra-organizational relations • Interpersonal trust • Group identity • National cultural characteristics • Personal traits	• Reciprocity • Perceived rewards • Perceived cost • Intrinsic motivation • Recognition

Knowledge sharing Attitude/Behavior

Organizational Cultural factors

- Cultural values
- Organizational structure
- Typologies of Organizational culture
- Organizational culture characteristics facilitating Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing intentions

Figure 6. Mechanisms motivating employee knowledge sharing.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The final objective of this chapter is to articulate the research methodology used in this study. According to Quinlan (2011: 481), research methodology can be defined as the manner in which the research is conducted. The theoretical as well as practical methodology followed by this thesis will be explained following Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2012:128) research onion (Figure 7), which will also be the basis for the structure of the chapter. The onion will be peeled from the outer layer through to the center, starting with the research approach, and then the methodological choice, followed by the case study and selection procedure. Thereafter, data collection, and data analysis methods will be discussed. Finally, the research ethics for this study will be justified. The following section discusses the research philosophy.

Figure 7. Research Onion.

3.1. Research Approach

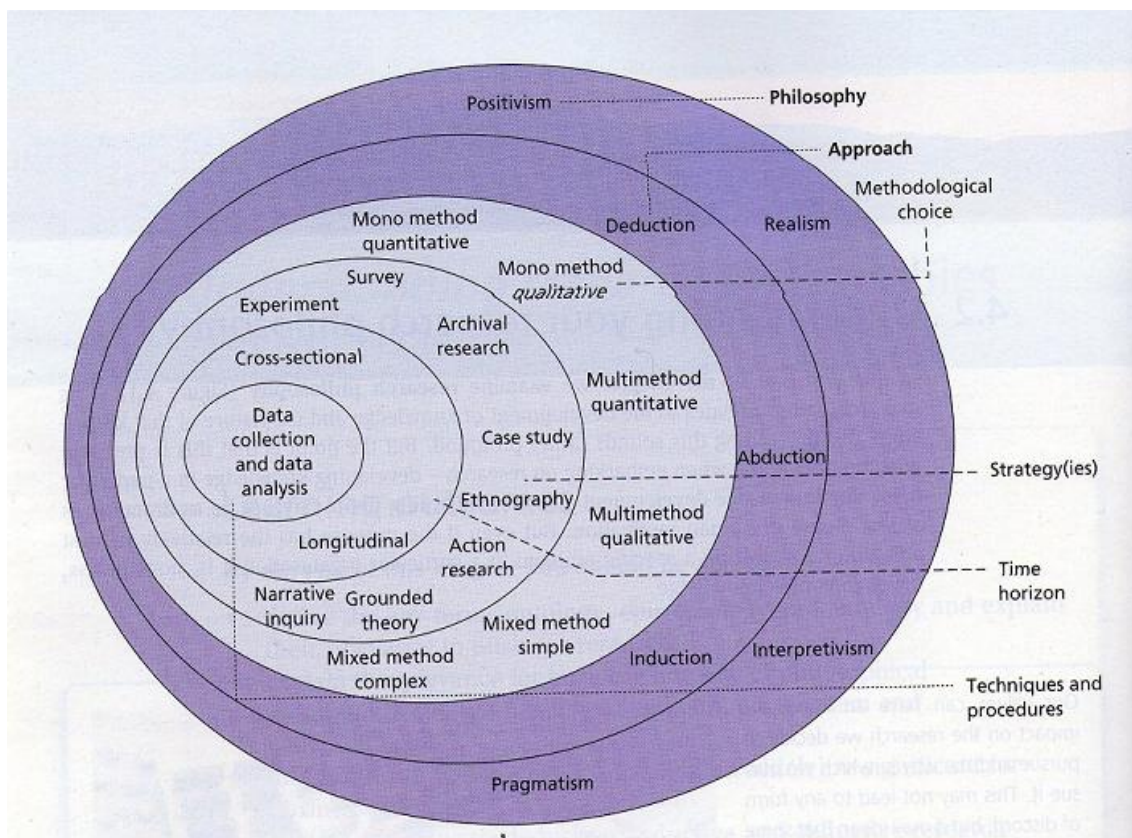Based on the research purpose and objectives, it is evident that this study is descriptive and exploratory in nature. According to Robson (2002: 59), an exploratory study is a valuable way of examining what is happening, seeking new information, or assessing a phenomenon in a new light. Because knowledge sharing is still a new topic of inquiry, as stated earlier on, this justifies, in part, the use of the exploratory approach in this study. Furthermore, Saunders et al. (2012: 171) also emphasizes that exploratory approach is a valuable means of asking open-ended questions to determine what is happing within a certain context and to clarify the problem at hand. Accordingly, the chosen approach is also justifiable on the grounds that the research questions are seeking to analyze and or understand the mechanisms that motivate employee knowledge sharing. Finally, Robson (2002:59) states that the purpose of descriptive research is 'to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations'. Therefore, Saunders et al. (2012: 172) also stipulated that a descriptive research "may be an extension of, or a forerunner to, a piece of exploratory research […]".

According to Saunders et al. (2012: 143), research approach is concerned with the way in which theory has been used in a research project. Research is usually designed around a deductive or an inductive theoretical approach. Following the purpose of this study, an inductive approach has been used. An inductive approach involves the development of theory or a conceptual framework or results through empirical data rather than testing theory (Saunders et al. 2012: 672). In this thesis, relevant theories have been presented in a theoretical framework, which is used to formulate the research question, develop the interview questions, as well as provide a broad explanation (Creswell 2003: 131). Therefore, it can be assumed that the constructed theoretical framework is the position that this study takes on the investigated topic (Creswell 2003: 131; Wolcott 2001: 76) Accordingly, the theoretical framework not only helps to collect information and interpret the results, but has also been used to make presumptions on motivational factors on employee knowledge sharing. Moreover, the chosen literature helped to build on the research question and refine it all along the research work. Because of its subjective and intangible nature, this thesis uses qualitative data collection methods through semi-structured interviews with one knowledge intensive

company. The following section discusses the methodological choice taken by this study.

3.2. Methodological Choice

This research has adopted a qualitative methodology to analyze the mechanisms that motivate employees to share knowledge with others. According to Silverman (2006: 34), the choice of methods depends upon the aims of the research. Therefore, the adoption of a qualitative method has allowed this research, using open-ended questions with the main individuals in the selected company, to be able to explore new issues. Similarly, qualitative research typically emphasizes the words rather than quantifications, whereas quantitative research conversely adopts a numeric approach to data collection and analysis (Bryman & Bell 2007: 731). Furthermore, qualitative methods are often related to case studies, whose aim is to gather thorough information and thereby acquire a deep understanding of the research problem (Yin 1994: 6). The case study method has been followed by this study and will be explained in the following section.

The researcher needs to consider some steps to conduct a qualitative research. This thesis follows Morse's (1994: 27-34) steps. The first step being comprehension, which is the literature review in order to understand the topic and recognize new areas of study. The second step, synthesizing, is when the researcher will gather the answers from the employees to determine and outline some patterns and behaviors. The third step concerns theorizing, where the researchers have to draw conclusions from the behaviors and patterns identified and develop themes. Lastly recognizing, which suggest making a theory emerging from those themes. The following section further explains the choice of case studies.

3.3. Case study and selection procedure

The strategy to use in the research can be determined, according to Yin (1994), by looking at three different conditions: (1) the type of research question posed; (2) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events and; (3) the degree of

focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events. This study employs a case study as the strategy for the research. Robson (2002: 178) define a case study as "strategy for doing research that involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence". Furthermore, Yin (2009: 18) also highlights the importance of context, adding that, within a case study, the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context within which it is being studied are not clearly evident. The justification for applying the case study approach is because of the current nature of this research, in which individual level knowledge sharing remain under-investigated (Foss et al. 2010), and where the subject of measurement commands a research design able to cope with complex and ambiguous phenomena. In this regard, the use of the case study method for analyzing individual behaviors has been strongly suggested (e.g., Eskerod & Skriver 2007; Alavi et al. 2006).

Furthermore, in line with Yin's (1994) relevant situations for different research strategies, the research objectives of this study have been formulated in such a way that the interview questions are as open-ended as possible. This approach is to avoid the questions that would not cover as broader the understanding to fulfill the study purpose as possible. As a result, all the research questions have been stated in the form of the "how, and what" question. Thus, this also justifies this research as an exploratory study. Consequently, the case study has been applied to use and triangulate multiple sources of data (Saunders et. al. 2009: 146).

According to Yin (2009: 19), "case study research includes both a single- and multiple-case studies". This study adopts a single case study technic in order, according to Morris and Wood (1991), to gain a rich understanding of the context and the processes involved. The chosen research strategy is justifiable because this thesis desires to analyze the mechanisms that motivate employee knowledge sharing within a multinational context and to gain rich, profound and contextual insight.

The choice of the case companies was based on the criteria set by the study. The purpose of this research is to analyze the mechanisms that motivate employee knowledge sharing. Therefore, the company chosen needed to be a knowledge-intensive

firm. The term "knowledge-intensive firm" has been diversely defined, and it is also necessary to acknowledge that no consensus on how to define a knowledge-intensive firm has been reached. Thus, some types of organizations labeled as knowledge-intensive include IT service companies (Grimshaw & Miozzo 2009), law firms (Malhotra, Mossis & Smets 2010), biotechnology companies (Luo & Deng 2009), and business consulting and engineering services (He & Wong 2009).

In terms of the diversity of definitions, they vary from those which are relatively broad, such as Alvesson (2000: 1101) who defines them as "companies where most work can be said to be of an intellectual nature, and where well-qualified employees form the major part of the workforce", to Swart et al. (2003) who define them in terms of a broad range of features, which distinguish them from more traditional, hierarchical organizations, including the way they are structured, the character of their workforce, the nature of work processes within them, and the nature of their products and services.

In discussing the nature of knowledge-intensive firms, the taxonomy of knowledge-intensive firms developed by Von Nordenflycht (2010) is utilized. Von Nordenflycht developed taxonomy with three dimensions. The three dimensions of knowledge-intensive firms are the knowledge intensity of work carried out within them, their level of capital intensity, and the extent to which the workforce is professionalized (see Table 7 below). The knowledge intensity of a firm is defined in terms of the degree to which the development and use of complex knowledge are involved in the creation of its outputs (products/services). In terms of capital intensity, von Nordenflycht argues that knowledge-intensive firms have a low capital intensity. This view means that their output is not dependent upon significant amounts of non-human assets such as factories, equipment, patents, copyrights, and so on and so forth (ibid). The third dimension is the extent to which a firm employs a professionalized workforce. This workforce is defined not only by the possession of specialized knowledge, but also where this knowledge is institutionally regulated (such as by a professional body/association), and where a code of ethics governs behavior.

Therefore, having analyzed the selection criteria of the case company, the single case study was conducted within a multi-sector training, consultancy and planning company, headquartered in Finland. The company facts are presented in the next chapter.

Table 7. Taxonomy of Knowledge-Intensive Firms.

Category	Knowledge intensity	Low Capital intensity	Professionalized workforce	Examples
Technology developers	X			Biotechnology firms and R&D laboratories
Neo-professional service firms	X	X		Consultants and advertising agencies
Professional campuses	X		X	Hospitals
Classic professional service firms	X	X	X	Accountants and architects

Source: Adapted from von Nordenflycht (2010: 166)

3.4. Time Horizon

This thesis follows a cross-sectional design, as the time horizon. According to Saunders et al. (2012: 190), cross-sectional is the study of a "particular phenomenon (or phenomena) at a particular time". This design choice is due to time constraint imposed upon this project. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the mechanisms that motivate employee knowledge sharing. Consequently, this research is a 'snapshot' of research for academic purpose, which is Master's Degree program (ibid). Moreover, a cross-sectional design was ideal due to the time frame given by the case company to collect data for the research. The interviews were carried out in the period from May to June 2015. Therefore, getting access to the case company, as well as the limited time in which to complete the Master's Degree made it not possible for a longitudinal study.

3.5. Data Collection

According to Quinlan (2011: 479) data collection methods can be defined as "the means by which data is gathered for a research project, e.g. observation, interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires". Adequate triangulation of data was ensured using three primary lines of evidence: 1) interviews, 2) company website and 3) review of organization's documents such as annual reports. Similarly, multiple sources of evidence to collect empirical data was used to build a degree of confidence around the same phenomenon, and thus, achieving a better perception of reality and increased the research validity (Saunders et. al. 2009: 146).

Furthermore, data for the study was gathered between May and June 2015. Based on the literature review, potential factors motivating employee knowledge sharing were acknowledged. Regarding these factors, a semi-structured interview based on open-ended questions was formulated to explore the current status and issues of knowledge sharing in the organization. A semi-structured interview was used to explore the perceptions and opinions about complex and sensitive issues such as the interviewee's personal experience and objective perspective, which is hard to structure into a formatted questionnaire (Barriball 1994). Accordingly, semi-structured interviews are ideal for detecting ideas and general topics allowing for future investigation (Macpherson et al. 2004). Moreover, the open-ended nature of the question helped provide an environment that allowed for detailed discussion between the researcher and participants concerning the subject.

The interviews were conducted with four training managers within FCG Training (a part of a multi-sector training, consultancy and planning group of companies). Since the company does not have a human resource department of its own, a representative from FCG GROUP's HR, which coordinates HR activities at the group level, was also interviewed. Before the interview, an email was sent to the head of the business unit at the case company explaining the aim of the study, as well as allocating time for the interview. The questions (Appendix 1) were used to maintain the focus during the interview, and some questions were modified according to the position, and working role of the interviewees. Furthermore, a brief guide (Appendix 1) was developed to

assist the researcher cover key issues for discussion. This guide was not given to participants and was only roughly referred to by the researcher once interviews began. Interviews were conducted at the participant's company premises and each interview lasted approximately one hour. These sessions (see Table 8 for an overview of the interview schedule) were recorded in accordance to Yin (1994) who states that the use of a tape recorder during the interview is essential to register the empirical data with an absolute accuracy. Moreover, by registering the data, it was made possible to transcribe the interview word for word. The respondents were made aware of the tape recorder for the sake of transparency, and also a consent form signed prior to the interview to assure anonymity of the data.

Table 8: Interview Schedule.

Company Category	Interviewee	Time of Interview	Date of interview
Training	Participant 1	9.00 – 10.00	17.06.2015
Training	Participant 2	10.00 – 11.00	17.06.2015
Training	Participant 3	11.00 – 12.00	17.06.2015
	LUNCH BREAK	12.00 – 1300	17.06.2015
Training	Participant 4	13.00 – 14.00	17.06.2015
Multi-sector training, consultancy and Planning	Participant 5	10.00 – 11.00	23.06.2015

Additionally, for the purpose of providing background information on the case company, secondary data were utilized. Consequently, secondary data were collected through the company website, annual report and also other relevant documented materials to the company. Primary and secondary data sources were used to provide triangulation into the study. According to Yin (1994), an excellent case study should include as many sources as possible. Triangulation gives the researcher an opportunity to obtain multiple measures of the phenomenon (ibid). This approach is further explained in section 3.7 below. However, the following section examines sample characteristics.

3.5.1. Sample Characteristics

After having determined the appropriate sources of evidence, it is essential to find relevant and manageable samples from which to collect the empirical data. The choice of sampling technique is dependent on the feasibility and sensibility of collecting data to

answer the research questions and to address the objectives (Saunders et al. 2003). According to Saunders et al. (2012: 752), qualitative research is less structured and uses smaller samples, which are chosen with particular care to explore the topic in greater detail. Because of the qualitative nature of this study, the sample size is appropriately small. The sample frame used for the research was FCG Group Director of HR and communications, and four Training Managers from FCG Training. This sample frame was chosen for three reasons. Firstly, they are persons who possess the most knowledge and experience of the research area to fulfill the purpose of the study. This process was done through an email sent to the Head of Business Manager explaining the intention of the study. The Head of Business Manager then recommended the Four Training Managers and the Director of Human Resources, and Communications at FCG Group. Secondly, the selected sample was considered ideal for the study so as to get access to the company and also for the individual's willingness to participate in the study. Lastly, the time factor for the study was also taken into consideration when choosing the sample size (see section 3.4).

However, the weakness of this sample is that the selected company does not have a Human Resource unit of its own, and thus depends on the Group Company level human resource activities. This is a weakness in that there are mixed results based on the parent company and those of the subsidiary when it comes to HRM practices. Nonetheless, this weakness is somewhat manageable by the participation of the HR representative at the Group level, who handles HRM practices for the group as a whole. The selected company will be presented in the next chapter. However, the next section covers the data collection technics used by this study.

3.6. Data Analysis

According to Yin (1994), research studies should begin with a general analytical strategy providing the researcher with a system by which he or she can set priorities for what to study and why. That includes examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the data used for the study. Two general analytical strategies are available when performing a case study; (1) relying on theoretical propositions - the results from previous studies is compared to the researchers' findings from the case study. This

strategy is the most preferred strategy and also the strategy used in this study, (2) developing a case description - a descriptive framework is developed for organizing the case study. This strategy is used when there is previous research on the subject. According to Yin (1994) specific techniques can be used to analyze the data; within case analysis compares the collected data with the applied theory whereas cross case analysis compares data from one case with another. In this study, a within-case analysis will be used since the study is analyzing only one case.

According to Miles & Huberman (1994), qualitative data analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activities: 1) Data reduction: this stage of qualitative data analysis selects, abstracts, simplifies, focuses, and transforms the collected data. The purpose is to organize the data to draw and verify conclusions. 2) Data display: after having reduced the data, it should be displayed in an organized and compressed way to enable natural conclusion drawing. 3) Conclusion drawing and verification: In the last stage the researcher decides the meaning of occurrences, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configuration, causal flows and propositions.

The propositions presented by Miles & Huberman (1994) concerning how the analysis-activity should flow, will be followed when analyzing the empirical data of this study. As stated before, this thesis is taking an inductive approach; the analysis of data is, therefore, crucial for generating theory from the collected data. Moreover, considering an interpretive viewpoint taken by this thesis, arguments and conclusions will be developed from the perceptions of the participants. The analysis will rely on the researcher's ability to understand and draw conclusions based on own social backgrounds, empirical findings, and scientific articles to establish new insights. Therefore, a theoretical framework has been developed from the literature review to provide necessary concepts and definitions and also to develop an interview guideline.

3.7. Research Ethics

In this section, ethical considerations relating to this study will be discussed, including quality criteria for the study.

According to Saunders et al. (2012: 680), research ethics can be defined as "the standards of the researcher's behavior in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of a research project, or who are affected by it". Diener and Crandall (1978, cited in Bryman & Bell 2011: 128) introduced four main areas of ethical principles that were considered in this study; harm to participants, informed consent, privacy and deception. For example, the use of a recorder and the reason for recording the interview was explained to avoid deception (see Appendix 2). According to Bryman and Bell (2011: 137), the Respondents should be informed beforehand if observation techniques or recording equipment are used. Thus making the respondents feel secure and thereby decrease the risk of dropouts from the interview. In other words, ethics is concerned with the right thing to do (Quinlan 2011: 69). This notion thus leads to the discussion in the subsequent paragraphs of quality criteria considered for this study.

There are two ways in which qualitative research can be evaluated: one can either adapt reliability and validity (which is most common with quantitative studies), or an alternative criterion for assessing trustworthiness and authenticity. This thesis focuses on the criteria of trustworthiness. Following this approach, there are four matters to be considered: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. (Bryman & Bell 2011: 395)

According to Bryman and Bell (2011: 397), **credibility** deals with whether or not the conducted research is done and presented in a credible way, meaning that the interpretation that has been done by the researchers is sincere and logical in accordance with the collected data. As stated earlier, this thesis considered articles in top-tier management journals. This choice was in consideration of the journal lists compiled by Foss et al. (2010) and Van Wijk et al. (2008). The review work also included Journal of Applied Psychology and Journal of Organizational Behavior

Moreover, the interview guide was developed in line with the literature and also, will be the basis for the conclusion. This means that the theoretical framework developed from prior studies will be compared and contrasted with the empirical work of the respondents' answers. The theoretical framework will help create boundaries to a great extent of not only what is considered as relevant data, but also how the data will be

analyzed and interpreted in this thesis. Thus, this will ensure logically and credibility through citation of empirical studies to align or distance the researcher concerning paradigms, theories, approaches, or procedures.

Additionally, construct validity, which is comparable to credibility in qualitative research, establishes correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Yin 1994). Accordingly, Patton (2001: 247) advocates the use of triangulation and states "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data". As discussed in section 3.5, to ensure adequate triangulation of data, three primary data sources were utilized through 1) interviews, 2) company website and 3) review of organizational documentation. Similarly, multiple sources of evidence to collect empirical data was used to build a degree of confidence around the phenomenon, and thus, achieving a better perspective on what happens in reality and increasing the validity of the research (Saunders et. al. 2009: 146)

As stated by Bryman and Bell (2011: 398) **transferability** deals with the question of whether the findings in one research can be transferred to some other context or to the same context at another point in time. The results in this thesis may apply to another unit at FCG. However, results cannot be generalized due to the company operational structure, which allows different businesses or units under its umbrella to operate independently of each other. Therefore, it would be ideal to conduct separate research on various units. However, to ensure that the respondents understood the interview questions in the way this study intended, a pilot study was carried out another consulting firm in the Vaasa area in Finland. The pilot questions were tested on three consultants at Merinova Technology Centre. First, respondents were asked to describe key concepts relating to employee knowledge sharing. Second, using their answers, an interview guide was constructed. The interview questions were paraphrased and made simple for easy understanding of the research. The data obtained from the pilot study revealed various aspects to be revised, for instance, question order, wording, as well as substantial information about the topic with regard to respondents' assumptions about what was known or was to be known about the research.

Dependability relates to how stable or consistency the inquiry processes used by the research has been. In other words, it ensures accessibility to the materials used in the thesis by the reader, including the articles, the theories used, and the way the interviews have been processed. According to Bryman and Bell (2011: 409), it is what the researchers do and how they come to their conclusion. Dependability can be likened to reliability in quantitative research (ibid 2011: 395). Moreover, Saunders et al. (2012: 192) argues that there are four major threats to the reliability of a study. These are the participant error, participant bias, researcher error, and researcher bias.

In order to minimize participant error, prior to the interview, the following steps were taken by the researcher: firstly, an interview schedule created with the help of the respondents, to ensure what time was best for them (see Table 8). Secondly, the aim of the study was explained to the participant, and key terms defined to ensure understanding of the topic. Thirdly, the importance of the interviewee's contribution to the research was underlined to create confidence during the interview. The respondents were asked to fill in and sign the consent form (Appendix 2) for anonymity. It was explained that the interviewee's answers would be kept anonymous to allow for the confidentiality and protect the respondent's identity. Therefore, the respondent's names will be coded as Participant 1, through to 5 in the order of the interview. Moreover, the respondents were also given an opportunity to refuse to participate in the study via email, to ensure that the interview involved only those that are genuinely willing to support the project.

Confirmability concerns the objectivity of the researcher. According to Bryman & Bell (2011: 398), the researcher should strive to avoid personal values that could bias the research. Moreover, to ensure researcher bias free, respondents for this study were sampled using the head of the unit (Head of Business Manager) who recommended the best possible respondents for the study. This approach is also likened to random sampling, which, As Preece (1994) notes; random sampling helps to ensure that any "unknown influences" are spread evenly within the sample. Similarly, the role of triangulation in ensuring such confirmability cannot be over emphasized.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Following the empirical objectives formulated in section 1.3 as a basis for the empirical research to the study, the findings from the semi-structured interviews will be presented in this chapter. The first section will present the facts about the case company. Secondly, the chapter will focus on the views and opinions of respondents on how the case company motivates employee knowledge sharing. Thirdly, the chapter will explore the company's culture and its effect on knowledge sharing from the perspective of the participants. Fourthly, the HRM practices motivating knowledge sharing at the case company will be presented. Fifthly, statements by the respondents on the company's social structures and their impact on employee knowledge sharing will be presented. Throughout this chapter, direct quotations from respondents will be used to emphasize their views and opinions on employee knowledge sharing.

4.1. Case Company

The single case study was conducted in a multi-sector training, consultancy, and planning company, the Finnish Consulting Group (FCG) whose headquarters is in Finland. The organization was established in 1949. Over the years, the Group's operations have expanded and become more international. As at 2014, the company had expanded in efficiency and increased volume, with a group turnover of 72.2 million euros. The case company provides services related to the development of public services, management consulting, multi-sector training and urban planning, as well as building and renovation construction. The company's clients represent a broad range of private and public sector organizations. In addition to Finland, the case company also has extensive international operations worldwide, with subsidiaries in Sweden, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria and New Zealand. The company has 451 employees in Finland. (FCG Annual Report 2014: 1-5)

The Group's business operations are divided into four business areas that support one another: consulting, training, design and engineering, and international. As stated in section 3.5 above, the focus of this study was in the training area of the business operations. FCG Training has 36 employees, consisting of training managers and assistants. The training and coaching services support the company's customers when

they develop their professional competence, management and working communities. FCG Training is the leading provider of training services in the Finnish municipal sector. (ibid: 21-34)

This company for this study was chosen because it meets most of the criteria of a knowledge intensive company given in section 3.3 above. Moreover, due to the time limit as stated in section 3.4, a single case study was seen fit to fulfill the purpose of this study. Some of the characteristics considered include education level of its employee, flat hierarchical organization, low capital intensity, and the nature of the work tasks carried out by employees. Table 9 bellow gives the figures of the level of education, based on the number of staff in the case company in Finland.

Table 9: Domestic staff education level.

Education breakdown	Total	2014	2013
Researcher training	16	4%	3%
Master's degree level	182	40%	40%
Bachelor's degree level	145	32%	32%
Lowest level of higher education	47	10%	11%
Studies incomplete	27	6%	6%
Secondary education	25	6%	5%
Basic education	9	2%	2%
Total	**451**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: FCG Annual Report (2014: 36)

Furthermore, as stipulated in section 3.5, the HR unit for the four business areas is at the group level. Consequently, all the four business areas have the same HR unit that coordinates all the activities that relates to HR and HRM practices of the company. Figure 8 bellow depicts the hierarchical organization of FCG Training.

Additionally, the company's resources consist of in-house experts and outsourced services and products. Networking and alliances are, therefore, vital modes of operating for FCG. The key theme of personnel development at FCG is high- quality supervisory work and leadership, which ensures that each FCG employee can succeed in their work. The Group provides its personnel with a wide range of opportunities for training, career development and leisure activities. (FCG Annual Report 2014: 36)

The development of personnel wellbeing is based on an annual plan, which is also reviewed with the Group's cooperation group. FCG's partners in implementing wellbeing at work are the occupational healthcare service provider Diacor, Varma insurance company, and the company conducts workplace surveys with the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. (ibid.)

At the same time, structural change and the public sector's productivity objectives require that the competence of the management level and personnel is developed systematically, and that wellbeing at work is secured, which can be seen in an increased demand for working community-specific training. (FCG Annual Report 2013)

Thus, the company is trusted by its clients on finding the right talented experts for most of its assignments in many sectors, which in turn increases its credibility in eyes of the experts. (ibid)
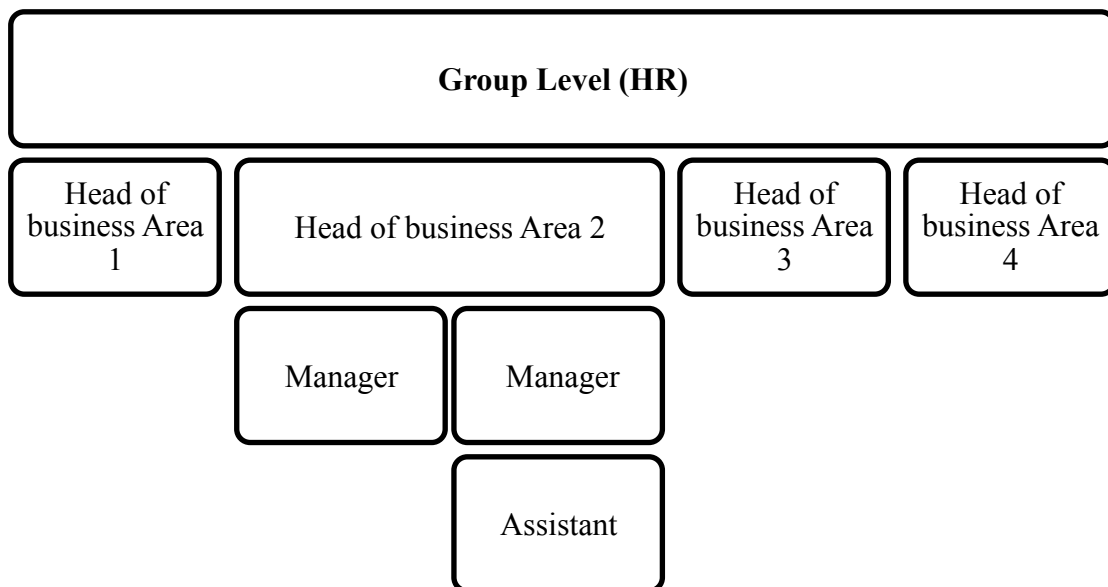

Figure 8. Hierarchical organization.

The section below will present the mechanisms used by the case company to motivate its employees to share knowledge with each other.

4.2. Organizational factors motivating employee knowledge sharing

This section will provide the findings to the first empirical objective set in the introductory chapter. The aim of the first objective was: *To find out how the organization motivates employees to share knowledge*. This section will explore the different mechanisms that are in place and how they motivate employees to share knowledge with each other.

According to the interviewees, knowledge sharing in the case company is viewed as the cornerstone to organizational performance. Those interviewed were of the opinion that it is crucial that knowledge be shared to have a performing organization. Accordingly, most the respondents pointed out that, organizational performance is measured on how pleased the customer is with the services provided by the case company. In other words, most respondents argued that being able to deliver on the organizational plans and goals resulted in good image to the customer, and to trust that the organization can deliver was said to be vital for continuous business. Knowledge sharing at the case company is perceived as the 'lifeblood' for the organization performance, because it helps keep the organization innovative and thus stay competitive. One manager expressed these views as follows:

> "Because we are an educational organization, I mean in my social health care part, what we are mostly doing is knowledge or information sharing. That means that in this whole picture of the company, that is in our health sector section of course, it is very important because it helps create an image of what the outsiders (clients) think about us. Because, if they do not think that we are experts or that we do not trust that we know what we are doing, then they do not come to our courses. So, in that way it is very relevant." (Participant 1)

Another manager further pointed out that knowledge sharing is "crucial because if you do not share the information, no organization can work." Moreover, "we have to have the latest knowledge about the things we teach; otherwise we cannot make any business", another one mentioned. Furthermore, Participant 5 also pointed out that since the business environment is constantly evolving, it is essential that individual knowledge be shared for best practices and solutions that would create customer satisfaction. These views were expressed as follows:

> "It is extremely important, because we are leaving in a changing world and because we are a process organization, of which we have to find the best solution for our clients. To do this,

knowledge sharing within our organization is really important. Because if there is no shared information and shared practices, I think we would not please our customer." (Participant 5)

However, even though knowledge sharing was recognized as an important element of organization performance, to one manager it was not viewed as an inactive avenue in the case company. The manager highlighted some issues, not least the problem of not potentially utilizing the Group network.

"I have mostly worked here for my working life, and I think we have not used the potential quite very well. We are quite ok in our company, as we are just a small amount of people, and, in that case, we can share quite easily via emailing, e-meetings. But knowledge sharing has been quite inexistence in the organization, and when you think about the whole Group, there is no knowledge sharing! Even though there could be potential of working things better, if there were just a good way to share knowledge." (Participant 3)

The question, "what do you consider to be knowledge sharing in your organization?" was asked to access the understanding of knowledge sharing by the respondents. Respondents were requested to talk openly about what they feel knowledge sharing means in the organization. Consequently, there was a diversity of views as to what knowledge sharing is. For example, one manager defined it as "talking with colleagues, having meetings, sharing information, documents, contacts, emails." Similarly, another manager stated:

"The easiest one is the common knowledge that is written down and the common guides and advises that we share. For instance, we have a Facebook group at the moment that we can post things that we think might be important somehow. People can comment if they have something and ask questions for clarifications." (Participant 3)

Additionally, as Participant 5 commented, knowledge sharing was also defined as a form of employee responsibility. Meaning that, every employee had the responsibility to share as well as acquire new knowledge. In her own words it was mentioned as follows:

"I think knowledge sharing could also be called responsibility so that somehow every individual can be able to see their responsibility for getting the information and processing the information and also for sharing the information." (Participant 5)

Most of the answers obtained were inclined towards the tools that facilitate knowledge sharing. This question also helped in identifying different scenarios in which knowledge sharing between employees is enabled within the organization. Some of the practices that imaged as facilitating knowledge sharing include monthly meetings, social media (e.g. Facebook), and emails.

Furthermore, most respondents commented that knowledge sharing takes place between individuals via both formal as well as informal meetings. However, formal meetings were mostly described as informational rather than knowledge sharing. It was mostly informal meetings that created an impression of effective knowledge sharing platform.

> "Of course we have formal meetings, which is connected to a practical way of doing things mostly. But, it is more of informational kind of meetings and not knowledge. If you are talking about knowledge sharing, it happens just in discussion between colleagues." (Participant 1)

According to one respondent, a training manager in environmental engineering, mostly knowledge sharing takes place between colleagues through informal discussions.

> "We have meetings where we share knowledge. Mostly of the sharing is between colleagues, sort of unofficial discussions and you just go to somebody and ask if he or she knows what you wish to know." (Participant 4)

4.2.1. Monthly meetings

Meetings and discussions were viewed as vital avenues for information and knowledge sharing within teams as well as among individuals. Most respondents motioned that it was every employee's responsibility to share knowledge with others. It was viewed that meetings and discussions create a favorable environment for knowledge sharing among individuals. Participant 5, for example, mentioned this that:

> "There should also be some formal arenas for information sharing and I think that purpose is different kind of meetings between process teams. I think that it is quite a lot about communication, which comes back to the responsibilities that people know that they have to make the information visible for the others to see in the team somehow." (Participant 5)

When asked about how the case company arranges for learning and knowledge sharing, it was viewed that meetings are commonly used as a platform for learning and knowledge sharing. For instance, one training manager commented that meetings help bring people together to discuss issues of common interests, as well as a platform for idea generation.

> "Well, we have meetings where we discuss mostly about practical issues. But also, we discuss some structural issues pertaining to creation of new things, what kind of new topics, and in those meetings we can make small groups that we can continue with this or that." (Participant 1)

Also, the representative from HR added that there are different other tools used for knowledge sharing.

"We do have some minor applications for knowledge sharing though they are not used at the organizational level or group level. It may be that some teams use different types of applications for their internal communication and training. We have, for example, video conferencing systems so that people from different offices can join these meetings when they are provided via video meetings. This is something that the employer supports. But, most important are the personal meetings and those areas where people can gather to discuss and share information." (Participant 5)

Besides normal meetings, such as the ones stipulated above, another manager commented that a joint training day is organized for everybody in the unit.

"There are times when we have a common training day when we have everybody together. For example, we have the speakers that are experts and make sure everyone knows the basics of what is happening in the municipal sector." (Participant 3)

On the other hand, the interviews also revealed that learning is mostly dependent on the individual. For example, one manager commented that time is of the essence when it comes to learning as an individual. "We all know that we can get training when we have time, and we want." Another manager added that "it is quite individual based, and then I spend 60-70 days of my working days in training that I have planned myself."

Furthermore, meetings were also said to take place in the form of team meetings. Most of the respondents pointed out that

"Then we have meetings when we need them, for example for brainstorming. A lot of it is done, because we sit in these rooms that teams usually are, for instance, I have two teams, the one that I manage and the one that I am just a member of. So, I have two rooms that I spend my time between, and we tend to have team meetings all the time." (Participant 3)

4.2.2. Management support

When asked on what motivates them to share knowledge with their work colleagues, respondents gave some reasons. Firstly, management support was seen as an influencing factor in employee knowledge sharing. Most commented that leadership has created a trusting and respectful work environment, which allows them to perform their tasks professionally. Thus, it was viewed that this type of leadership leads to increased employee's level of intrinsic motivation to work. As pointed out by one manager:

"The most motivating thing is the leadership. They create the feeling that they trust in what we are doing and us, and we get the feeling that we are important to this organization and trusted. If you feel trusted, you want be worth that and you want to do your job as well as you can, and because our main job is connected to knowledge sharing." (Participant 1)

Additionally, when asked as to what extent seniority help facilitate knowledge sharing at the company, one manager commented that leaders contribute to creating conditions favorable for them to work. These views were expressed as follows:

> "Your boss does not know the field you know. Of course it is not necessary because the role is different. His work is to put us to work and give the conditions for us to work, and say that this is the field you have to work in, and that is it." (Participant 1)

However, others still felt that the support given by management is not enough and more support, and guidance towards knowledge management efforts is needed. It was viewed that it is difficult to share knowledge because most employees do not find time to interact with work colleagues. As one manager commented:

> "We do not work here most of the time; we do not see each other that often, and we are quite busy in our separate areas. Also then of course there are still people who think that it is   not necessary to share knowledge, some personal attitudes." (Participant 4)

4.2.3. Information Systems

It was mentioned in the interviews how important technology is in a company like the focal company, whose way of working does not require one to be in one place. Most of the respondents stated that the role of IT in the organization was rapidly growing. More specifically, it was observed that most of the work by the respondents is done outside the case company premises. For example, one manager expressed these views as follows:

> "It is growing, because, even though we are a small company everyone is very rarely there because we are training outside our company. So, of course, it is growing more and more, and people are on some social media platform. Of course, that is because people are all over the place, I mean not in one place. But, I view the most important is the face-to-face communication. But, when that is not possible, we try to use every possible form of IT tools we have available." (Participant 2)

Another respondent added that IT helps with storage of information needed by employees in carrying out their day-to-day work, regardless of where they may be. It was viewed that because of physical distance created by the work methods, sharing such information is mostly done via IT facilitated tools, such as the intranet and email.

> "In a way it is quite big because I am not here most of the time, I travel a lot. Especially, I   see that we use a lot just plain email, and there is a place where we download our things. We also have Training Management Systems, where people sign in when they want to come to our trainings. This helps us see how many people are in a training happening in a month's time, and

we follow the numbers. Also if we want to know the situation money wise, we have a system that helps us to know that. Thus, it is vital for us to have those all the time, unlike coming back here once or twice a week." (Participant 3)

Similarly, information system was viewed as a basis for actions. The HR representative added that information systems are used as storage for information that is made available for all to access.

"There have to be some information systems. There are some formal information systems like the process management system, where the information about different perspectives of projects and the information that is processed and delivered within the process. That is really important because it is the basis for the actions." (Participant 5)

It was also mentioned that because of the work schedules, such as movements from place to place, most respondents commented that IT facilitates communication between employees, and thus enhancing interactions over time. However, despite the usefulness of IT in communication, the respondent in the social services unit emphasized the importance of creating a face-to-face platform for knowledge sharing.

"Nowadays it is important of course, just like anywhere, and its more and more important if you are talking about these courses, for example, you can do them on the web, and its going more and more in that direction. But, then, of course, the other way, is that when we are talking about social health care education, which means that there is always people needed, you cannot separate those things." (Participant 1)

Additionally, Participant 5 also stated that even though IT facilitates the collection and organization of knowledge, there is always need for a face-to-face meeting.

"The role of communication and meeting people I think is the most important. Information systems somehow make it simple for people to share information via business tools. It is some information storage more, some platform for communication. But, it's never enough; you always need to have some social application or social meetings and personal meetings to somehow accomplish the purposes of involving people in mutual processes." (Participant 5)

Moreover, within the discussions with respondents, examples of other information systems used to facilitate knowledge sharing within the case company, such as email, telephone, Skype business, and other social media platforms, were mentioned. Furthermore, intranet and mailing lists were other tools identified as facilitating knowledge management initiatives. However, most respondents mentioned that there is a need to upgrade the intranet, as it was old and thus not a favorable option for knowledge sharing. For example one manager mentioned that:

"We have mailing lists or one intranet, which is not good for knowledge sharing and inspiring to do that. So, I think we have quite much work to do there." (Participant 3)

4.2.4. Informal meetings

When asked about informal activities that respondents see as means for knowledge sharing, it was viewed that daily social interactions with colleagues, such as during lunch, in the corridors, and social media, are the commonly used means for knowledge sharing. Most mentioned that general hangouts are also used depending on the atmosphere at the point in time.   For example, one manager gave a scenario of everyday knowledge sharing activities with colleagues.

"Well, a simple example, before I came here one of our secretaries came to me and asked about one technical issue. She is learning to use Twitter and how to twit, and she wanted to know how she could have the twits go straight to her Facebook. It is her personal account, but she is learning to use it also for professional purposes. So, we looked at it together. We always help each other and, of course, we get along with some people than others, but then we talk. I think that's the best thing, we talk; sometimes write emails, LinkedIn, quick messenger, and chatting, very simple." (Participant 2)

Another manager added, "well, this Facebook thing, and at work, just discussions with each other, say over lunch." Moreover it was viewed that a valuable possibility for knowledge sharing occurs during occasional hangouts with colleagues.

"We used to have these monthly hangouts in a bar, but not anymore for half a year, but I guess they come and go and depending on who wants to organize them. We also have these yearly meetings, like I said, and there we hang out afterward." (Participant 3)

Social events were viewed to be other important informal gatherings where knowledge sharing takes place. It was mentioned that social activities are organized depending on the season or time of the year. For example, an expert in the social health care unit pointed out that social events are mostly held for all employees, and not as individuals.

"We have formal things for all the workers, like summer celebrations or ways to remember us before Christmas, things like that. But, not necessarily those kinds of things that comes to you as an individual, it is more of a group thing, because we such a small group." (Participant 1)

Furthermore, the HR representative also mentioned that the company also organizes events, such as sporting events at a Group level. It was pointed out that during such events; for instance, management provides information related to the well-being of its employees, as well as organizational goals. Participant 5 stated that:

"For example if we have an event for sports, we start it by some introductory speech provided by the manager or me. This is so that people can know that these kinds of things are always related to our actions, and we arrange, for example, this kind of social events for our personnel, it is related to the objective that we really want people to know somehow that we promote their well being, to be active, be healthy and so forth." (Participant 5)

However, formal as well as informal meetings were said to be of vital importance in information sharing. For example, one manager stated that there is no particular order in which communication takes place within the unit, but can happen in any setup.

"I always say just communication, I mean, there is no systematic gathering. For example, during lunch, it is a good half an hour or 45 minutes that we sit. We talk about personal and   also professional stuff. So, some people write it down, and some people just listen, try to remember and after a week may ask again." (Participant 2)

4.3. Organizational culture and its affect on knowledge sharing

In this section, findings to the second empirical objective set in the introductory chapter will be presented. The purpose of the second objective was: *To investigate how the organizational culture affects employee knowledge sharing*. The views included the organization's work atmosphere, the effects of organizational hierarchy on individual knowledge sharing, and the impact of work tasks arrangements on employee knowledge sharing.

The respondents described the culture of the company as that of openness and freeness, enhanced by supportive management. The organizational hierarchy was described as flat and flexible. Most respondents mentioned that they have autonomy over their work tasks and that there is equality and fairness at the workplace. However, although the culture was viewed as constituting a flat and flexible structure, one manager commented that because the organization has undergone several organizational changes, adaptation takes long, and that there are still aspects of the old ways of doing things. As another manager pointed out:

"We have a hierarchy, though in real life do not. Well, I sit in a room with two of our board members, and we have four board members, and one of them is my boss, and it is very informal with everyone. But, then when we get down to business, there are left overs from the 80s, so it is a mix." (Participant 2)

4.3.1. Equal and fair treatment at workplace

When asked about relationships employees have with each other, most of the respondents commented that individuals are free to relate and work as they see it fit, as long as they get to meet their goals. Like one training manager mentioned, "It is quite free in the sense that I feel that I can quite create or do whatever I want as long as I reach my goal money-wise." Also, Participant 5 pointed out that the organizational culture is quite open, and it gives an opportunity for employees to discuss with each other, as well as make initiatives where necessary. The company encourages its managers to discuss with their teams on different issues. Moreover, it was also mentioned by the representative from HR that:

> "I think it depends pretty much on the manager in different kind of things. But, what I somehow hear when I am walking around our organization; I think people are treated well in our organization, and they are quite satisfied with the work environment. They are satisfied with the FCG as an employer." (Participant 5)

> "At FCG we have wide training programs for managers especially, because I think that it is important that people can rely on equal treatment and transparency in the management. With this, we have put so much effort in training our managers so that they know the different kind of perspectives of employment chip. They treat their people well, so that they know the kind of basic legal things are there, the kind of benefits, and also the kind of procedures X has." (Participant 5)

> "I think it is the same as the cultural thing that everybody should feel that he or she is treated equally in our organization. Equally and well, and I think that is the basic thing that everybody handles the well-being of his or her team as well." (Participant 5)

Additionally, respondents were of the view that the work environment at the case company allows for creativity and independent thinking. Most commented that it gives them the opportunity to enrich their knowledge and pursue their goals. Moreover, comments within the interview also highlighted the physical environment and working conditions as encouraging. Most respondents mentioned autonomy of work, as well as the flexibility to communicate with others, that it makes easy for one to pass their ideas through. Another manager added that having a free and open atmosphere creates a favorable environment for interactions and also fulfillment in carrying out one's tasks.

> "We have great autonomy. We have written down job descriptions, and the process, but it varies. Each one of us has autonomy regarding our tasks. So, there are very different ways to perform them. There is much to be developed but we are in a very good position in our company that to a quite extent we have the possibility to mold our jobs and the managers are not on our

> necks. For example, I as a training organizer, I have a budget, deadlines and set goals to achieve. But, between that, it is up to me how I execute the tasks." (Participant 2)

> "But, also I think it is a question of the atmosphere. I think that if we have a very good atmosphere, it motivates all of us. It is nice to come for work in the mornings and to see your colleagues, and it is nice to do your work, and I think that that is the most important thing. If you do not have a good atmosphere, you might not want to tell anything to your colleague, and probably you just work because of money." (Participant 1)

Moreover, an expert in social health care unit also stated that the trusting environment at the company makes it easier for employees to share their knowledge.

> "I think mainly it is connected to that trust that is there. We are very free to do our job, and can work in our way that we see that it is well done. What I mean is that, of course the thing we are selling is knowledge, and that means that, well, when we have the freedom to create our jobs or doing it in our way, we also have the freedom to discuss with our colleagues or and share what we think is important." (Participant 1)

However, like in every other organization, some respondents had mixed views of the working atmosphere. For instance one training manager mentioned, "I love it every other day, and every other day I do not. I love the people in my team, so I love to work here every day I get to work with them."

On the other hand, it was viewed that relationships are also based on the principal of work. A manager in the field of Finance commented that relationships are good, based on the purpose one was hired for.

In the same vain, another manager commented that there are also groups of people that do not like helping each other, just like in every other organization.

> "I see different types of groups. Mostly people are difficult to help and do not want everybody to succeed. But, obviously in every organization there are these clicks and there are some groups that do not get along well. So, I see that between those groups there is not so much of helping or knowledge sharing or it is done when you ask for help at the very last moment." (Participant 3)

4.3.2. Flat and flexible organizational hierarchy

As earlier stated, most of the interviewees mentioned that the organization has a more flexible and informal structure. It was viewed that as experts in their fields, it is more about professional knowledge and does not have much to do with status and positions. The case company was likened to a university in which it is important that one is an expert in their field, and that there is a special space for them. As one manager pointed

out, structure and hierarchy is important for every organization, but it was viewed that the company has a flat organizational hierarchy. Most respondents mentioned that employees share the same room and interact freely with their bosses. Another manager commented, "You can meet your boss in the corridor and say that I have something to discuss with you, and continue with that."

Still another manager mentioned that seniority is not so much stressed and that the work environment is that of an open workspace. Most commented that employees interact freely in conducting organizational tasks.

> "I think it is quite open in such a way that if you want to know more about something, you can just ask your colleague about it, or you can just walk into someone's office and ask. I mean, you do not need to get permission to see someone, and in that way, it is very flexible." (Participant 1)

Still another manager commented:

> "I sit with half of the board members in my room, and we are also in the same smaller groups organizing trainings in the area of finance. So, we share knowledge more freely than may be some other managers. But, of course, there is a difference; coz managers have to deal also with HR questions and decisions that they do not have to share and cannot share. So, of course, there is a small gap, but it is a very tiny gap compared to other organizations I have worked in before." (Participant 2)

Moreover, the interviews revealed that senior managers or employees in higher authority are supportive when it comes to knowledge sharing. However, it was mentioned that knowledge sharing is most effective with employees of the same level than across levels.

> "I think the most senior colleagues do help us and share their knowledge quite well. But, I think knowledge sharing works well among colleagues who are at the same level, even though we are quite a flat organization. We have management, then the Training managers, and then the supporting staff, and I think the secretaries talk to each other quite a lot. Maybe not enough between levels." (Participant 4)

Similarly, another manager added:

> "Well, there is a clear difference looking at our board members or managers sharing information downwards, compared to, for example, us whose primary job is organizing training. Because we see each other more, we share more information and more freely." (Participant 2)

Furthermore, most of the respondents also mentioned the size of the company as a motivating factor to knowledge sharing. It was viewed that the smallness of the case company makes it possible for employees to share knowledge with each other despite having no strategic HR at the company level. For example, one manager mentioned "we have such a small organization, with only 36 employees, and we have a very low hierarchy."

4.3.3. Team based work tasks

Another aspect that most respondents alluded to was the organization of work tasks. Most mentioned that work is primarily organized in expertise-based teams, even though tasks to be performed are mostly allocated based on clearly defined individual tasks.

> "Well the secretaries do their supportive things like practical arrangements for the training and we do the programming. So, it is quite clear. If you think about the employees at the organizational level, it is quite clear and is similar in each group or sector. Mostly I work as an individual though I work with secretaries and not just one." (Participant 4)

Moreover, another manager commented that budgets for the work to be done are also allocated based on individual work tasks as well as team or group tasks.

> "Since our business is European based, we have individual budgets for the planners, and we have for teams as well. Then we have these sectors that teams take care of, for example, I am taking care of the Administrational Law sector. So, I have a lot of chores and training to that sector and not any other. But then, we have this grey line where we need to coordinate between teams. In that way, we have the sector, and we have the budgets that we need to reach. So, it is allocated to teams and then to individuals. In every training session, we have one person who handles the planning part and then we have one person taking care of the organization part sector wise." (Participant 3)

Another respondent added that interaction tend to be restricted to teams at times.

> "Well, I think in general it is quite safe and supportive. But, of course, there are always some complaints going on somewhere. But, I think its pretty good. I have a particular situation in a way that in the team we are only two persons, and we have quite a clear area. So, we do not interact too much with others, like social or healthy services. So, we are quite independent." (Participant 4)

Time was another very crucial aspect to the working environment. It was of the view that most training managers do not find time to be in one place. Most commented that they are rarely at the company premises. For example, it was viewed that time was an issue when it cames to interacting with work colleagues. "If you have time, it is quite

straightforward, and it is very easy to find that kind of space to discuss with your colleagues about something or topics that are interesting." (Participant 1)

4.4. HRM practices motivating knowledge sharing

This section aims: *To identify HRM practices that motivate employee knowledge sharing in the case company*, which is the third empirical objective. Specifically, the comments from respondents on HRM practices supporting knowledge-sharing efforts in the case company will be given.

When asked about HRM practices supporting knowledge sharing efforts, most of the respondents had little or no knowledge about such practices being in place. For example, it was mentioned that the company has no HR unit of its own and thus, rely on the Group Company HR unit for its HRM practices. Thus, the activities presented below were mostly viewed according to one respondent as some "guidance for knowledge sharing behavior that would probably come or originate from HR."

> "We have a very tiny HR. We have many companies, so practically FCG training does not have its HR. We have one HR secretary and our HR head, which is also our peer head. But, of course, they encourage knowledge sharing." (Participant 2)

4.4.1. Recruiting, training, and retaining policy

When asked about recruiting, training, and retaining policy of the case company, the HR director stated that in recruiting people, it is very crucial that the candidate be well acquainted to the operations and ways of the company before they are actually recruited. It was mentioned that those with potential are given opportunities to develop their skills so that they can utilize them for their day-to-day work routines. Participant 5 also pointed out that a tutor is always assigned to a recruit for the purpose of awareness of house rules and sharing of information or knowledge needed to get started on a job.

> "Actually, every time when we recruit people, the employment chip starts before the people come to FCG, so that they have the basic knowledge about the firm on the first day when they come to our organization. When they come, there is always a tutor who takes care of him or her and gives advice on different types of activities and the house rules. Then we have done mutual events for those newcomers so that they can somehow get introduced to the company and organizations in its different levels. Moreover, we also have to train depending on the needs of the employees. Because some of them require training, for example, in the office programs so that they can process information. Some may need some skills in languages, etc. These kinds of

> things are always that the employee [...] if they are not in our normal work plans; they can always negotiate with the employer about those skills that they should need to be trained in." (Participant 5)

Furthermore, the case company has a yearly plan as the basis for training. Participant 5 mentioned that the state also encourages employers to provide such training programs to their employees, and in return, companies get benefits related to taxation and the like. Training for employees is organized within the company, but some skills are outsourced elsewhere. As stated by Participant 3, the procedure for training is that, an employee applies for a supervisor or manager, and when the training program is accepted, and the supervisor also accepts the responsibility, and then training goes on. Participant 5 also pointed out that:

> "The managers somehow are in a key position to keep the motivation up. When they do their work well, then people have all the possibilities to succeed in their daily routines and tasks." (Participant 5)

Additionally, an expert in social services mentioned that the company is just working on a strategic plan on how to maintain its knowledge base, as the number or retirees with valuable knowledge are increasing. However, it was viewed that training opportunities given by the company make it possible for employees to develop their skills, a form of retention. Most respondents described training and development at the case company as an individual decision that has to be agreed upon with management. For example, the manager as mentioned earlier pointed out that were a need for training or development arises, it was upon the individual, whose decision depended on personal interest, time and work schedule.

> "It all depends on the individual, for example, personally if I see that I want to develop myself professionally in this direction, I check first with my manager to see if we are going in the same direction, and if we see that it is ok and good for X, then I would just ask that I want to go to these training, and I want these skills. Then I can easily go there because we pretty much in the same line. But, it is very much individual based, and free in that way, as long as it is in line with FCG's strategy." (Participant 3)

In the next subsection, compensation policy as viewed by respondents is presented.

4.4.2. Compensation and reward system

When asked about the compensation policy of the company, most respondents mentioned the basic pay, which includes negotiated salaries and other social security

benefits. As explained by Participant 5, a compensation policy is a plan that is accepted by the board of directors of the whole Group and is based on individual performance. It was mentioned "there are somehow objectives and they are measured by the finance and measures mostly." Participant 5 further explained:

> "But we also have this kind of acute compensation policy, meaning, if someone succeeds in his or her efforts, the employer may give some extra salary to the individual. But, our normal salaries are based on the employment agreements and we follow those policies that are negotiated at the state level." (Participant 5)

Moreover, to ensure employee commitment, Participant 5 stated that it is important that employees have decent salaries, and that they are satisfied with the benefits provided by the employer. These views were expressed as follows:

> "In our organization we have different kinds of social benefits for the employees, like social security and some recreational or free time activities that we can provide for the employees. I think those are important. Also, one important perspective is that they know that the employer supports their efforts in developing their skills and capabilities. Also, we provide quite much training to our employees so that if they are interested in developing, and the employer supports those efforts." (Participant 5)

However, one manager commented that the company does not have a reward or promotion system for all employees. It was viewed that only top management at the Group level has a reward system. These opinions were expressed as follows:

> "We do not have a reward system, a promotion system; we do not have kind of those systems in FCG Training. In the whole company, there is a reward system for top management. So, it does not include me, for example. So, it is only unofficial, and it is voluntary to share information." (Participant 2)

The next subsection presents respondent's views on job design and how it facilitates interactions between employees.

4.4.3. Job design

Based on the interviewees' comments (see subsections 4.3.1. and 4.3.3.), jobs at the case company are structured in such a way that employees have the freedom to design and plan their work. For example, the training managers plan their training courses, and they are free to choose the means of executing their training (either online or select the municipality of their choice) depending on the client's needs. Moreover, the managers

also have the freedom to discuss the courses with colleagues and share what they think is important. One manager expressed these views as follows:

> "We have a very open atmosphere, and we are allowed to speak freely, also quite freely express our emotions, which is rare in this kind of organization. In IT and start-ups, ok with young people. I think our age range is from 29 to 65, and most are women. I like it here. I find it easy to communicate, and get my ideas through, and I have autonomy in my work." (Participant 2)

When asked about how much they are involved in decision-making involving work tasks, most respondents were of the view that autonomy of work (see section 4.3.1.) is a great motivating factor to fulfilling their career goals. Respondents were in agreement that job design gives the freedom to own their work. For example, these views were expressed as follows:

> "It depends, if you are talking about decision-making in my field, I do all the decision-making. I making courses, thinking who would be the best person to speak or where it would be, what would be the bets place for that? So, I make all the decisions in that field. But when it comes to FCG as an organization, our directors carry out the main decisions, we discuss quite a lot on those things that affect our working field." (Participant 1)

Additionally, work at the case company is viewed as quite interesting and challenging at the same time. For example, most respondents commented that coming up with training courses interesting enough for the client can be such a daunting task at times, and it requires one to be creative and innovative. As one manager mentioned:

> "Well, as I am working with environmental and municipal engineering things, we have this company here under FCG umbrella. So I am very much encouraged or pressured to work with them also. So, I am currently finding out what they are actually doing and how we could use them in our training courses. So, I guess that is support because management on top is saying that we should collaborate more." (Participant 4)

Moreover, as it has been presented in subsection 4.3.3 above, tasks to be performed are allocated in teams. One manager mentioned that there was much coordination needed between teams as well. The subsequent section will present the company's social structure and their impact on employee knowledge sharing.

4.5. Company Social structures, and their impact on employee knowledge sharing

This section will provide the findings to the fourth empirical objective set in the introductory chapter of this thesis. The aim of this section is: *To identify the different social structures embedded at the firm, and their impact on employee knowledge*

sharing. Responses from interviewees will be presented following the themes identified from their views: employment relationship, the role of trust, personality, and national culture.

4.5.1. Employment relationship

When asked about how compatible employee's interest and that of the company concerning the use of tacit knowledge, there was consensus among respondents that harmony has been maintained. As one manager commented, job applicants do not just have to look at the job that is being advertised, but they also have to make sure that their values are compatible with those of the company they are applying to. Most of the respondents were of the view that there has always been harmony between their interests and the company. Just as one manager mentioned, "I have always had the privilege to work or have work that I am interested in, that I believe in, that I love, and always a good working environment regarding colleagues and also the general work infrastructure. So, in my view there is no conflict."

However, it was regarded that despite the harmony between employees and their employers, some employees regarded tacit knowledge as their own and not the company's own. For instance, most respondents commented that management always encourages them to share their knowledge with others, even though some employees are reluctant to do so in the fear that they will lose out. One manager expressed these concerns as follows:

> "Generally I think that we are sharing, and the attitude is more and more going to that direction that we are a group or team, and we are working as a team, we need to share our knowledge with each other. But, its very human that you have some education or some part of your filed that you feel that they are your children, and that means that sometimes it is very difficult to share that kind of things, you can't even realize that you are not sharing, because you are so in that thing." (Participant 1)

Consequently, one manager pointed out that it becomes a problem, for example, when people leave and they have the knowledge, which is not easy to retrieve from them. It was viewed that such employees take their networks, contacts and everything with them. These feelings were expressed as follows:

> "I always tell everything to everybody because I know that I am irreplaceable, and this is not my show, this is X's. So, I think I do not have the ownership of the knowledge, and I do not get jealous if someone else benefits from something that I cannot use in my work." (Participant 2)

On the contrary, the interviewees also revealed that they find it comfortable to express their views to their senior managers. Most mentioned that having an open and honest atmosphere, as alluded to in section 4.4.1, creates an environment in which one can express their opinions freely without fear. One manager expressed these feelings as follows:

> "Well, I think that trust is a very simple thing in work places. We had our unit meeting on Monday, and people were complaining about things. No one is unhappy, but I think there is a high level of trust when an employee says, "I think this does not work!" and offer a solution, even though it sounds like complaining, but I think there is much trust when people are bold enough to express their feelings. Because when there is not trust, no one says anything." (Participant 2)

The subsequent section presents respondent's views on the role of interpersonal trust and how it helps facilitate knowledge sharing among employees.

4.5.2. The role of trust

As seen in the previous section and in section 4.4.1, it was viewed that having a free and open work environment creates a responsible employee, who is aware of what they have, their environment and that they have to share what they have with others. Moreover, Participant 5 commented (see Section 4.4.2) that it matters more with how much an employee trusts the employer. It was viewed that when there is trust between the employee and the employer concerning basic employee benefits, employees are motivated to do what they were hired to do even better, as perceived by the customer.

Moreover, it was viewed that the relationship that employees have at the case company is that of trust and respect for each other. Most interviewees commented that since work is done to fulfill a common goal with their work colleagues, sharing is based on trusting that whatever one gives out will not be used against the other or in a harmful way. Furthermore, trust at the case company, according to most respondents, is a critical aspect to information sharing. Vice versa, it was viewed that sharing of knowledge makes relationships better and makes people trust each other even more. For example, one manager pointed out that, "if I did not trust somebody, I might not tell or give any

information. But, still I trust my colleagues even though I do not know them all very well."

However, another manager commented that sharing knowledge on the basis of trust can be time consuming and not without uncertainty. It was viewed that lack of time is the biggest barrier, because of tight individual work schedules that employees have. One manager conveyed this view as follows:

> "We organize our own days, and sometimes when we are very busy, it means that it is very difficult to find common time, and that I think is the biggest barrier. And if we do not have a common time, then we probably will not discuss those things that we should." (Participant 3)

Furthermore, respondents spoke of trust based on the experience and expertise that a work colleague has at the company. Most commented that it was probable that one would trust a colleague for their expertise in a certain field. It was viewed that because employees at the case company are mostly experts in their fields, it makes it easy to trust each other, as not everyone is well acquainted with the areas of others. For instance, the managers pointed out that:

> "We first trust each other because really trust that we are all specialists in our field, as I said. That is one kind of trust. I trust that my colleague knows what he or she is doing and vice versa." (Participant 1)

> "I trust if I have somebody whom I am working with, who has a long working career experience, and whose opinions make sense. It depends on the expertise of an individual, as well as work experience." (Participant 4)

Also another commented that sometimes information or knowledge is shared based on the task one has been given. These views were expressed as follows:

> "I feel that, I was hired here to work and because I am an adult, I have to get along with everyone during work. I do not have to spend my free time with my colleagues, but I have to act professionally and I was not hired to make friends. It sounds bad, but I mean mostly we have a warm and accepting and very development minded atmosphere, and relations. Of course, because we work so closely together, and we are a small company, sometimes we share more personal information and with some people it is mostly professional. But, in my opinion I like to come here every day when I come to the office and do not have to train outside." (Participant 2)

From this perspective of trust, one would say that trust also depends on an individual's perception of different situations. Based on this statement, the next subsection will introduce findings as they relate to personality traits.

4.5.3. Personality traits

As already seen from the previous sections, the interview also revealed that the personality traits of an individual play a bigger role in determine the decision to share or not to share knowledge. For instance, when asked what motivates them as individuals to share knowledge with others, respondents brought out diverse views that revealed the influence personality has on the willingness for one to share knowledge with another. Most commented that they share their knowledge because they love people, the job and just love to share. One manager pointed out that:

> "I love people, I love my work, I see that sharing knowledge is always beneficial, and you can never loose. Sometimes there is no instant reward in, I mean that maybe there is no instant corporation, but, you have to look further, not just today or tomorrow, or next year, but just to network, get to know other people, how they work. But, the first of course is building trust so people will open up and share knowledge. I firmly believe that if I get some new information, or I acquire some knowledge, my colleagues will benefit when I share it with them. This way everyone does not need to do the same thing over again because then it would be easier for them to do some process if I know something." (Participant 2)

Still others commented that they intrinsically get the motivation from helping others. It was mentioned for example that there is fulfillment in sharing one's knowledge with others. Moreover, others also felt that when they share their knowledge, they also hope that others will share theirs back. For example, one manager mentioned that sharing one's knowledge opens up an avenue to acquiring more knowledge. This was expressed as follows:

> "First of all, I do not have all the knowledge in the world, and if I am not sharing what I know, then I do not get anything that my colleagues know. Also, it is not like selling or buying, or things like that, but what I mean is that […], when we discuss about that, we create more knowledge for all of us, and so the information shared is more than the information I keep for myself. Otherwise, So, it is interesting!" (Participant 1)

Additionally, it was felt that to share knowledge; one has to separate personal feelings from work. For example, one manager commented that knowledge should be shared regardless unless the person with whom such knowledge is shared means harm to the company in some ways. Below are some of the statements respondents used as reasons for sharing:

"I talk a lot with people because I love my job."

"I think I have been quite active in sharing if I tend to see something that might be useful I usually share it more than not just in case."

"I share just to get something back or give something. "

"If someone asks, but I also think it is the responsibility of an employee."

"If I am not sharing what I know, then I do not get anything that my colleagues know."

4.5.4. National culture

When asked about how information is defused within the firm and within the networks, Participant 5 expressed that more could be done to improve communication between companies in the Group. It was viewed that each company in the Group has its clients, and also that operations differ widely. However, it was argued that there are general policies that are mutual for all the companies within national borders, such as legislations. Participant 5 explained that different countries have different rules and regulations that make it difficult for companies outside Finland, for example, to communicate effectively with those within. It was mentioned that:

> "It is easier to get somehow the policies aligned in Finland, because the companies have the same rule and regulations, same legislation, and can be provided with some instructions for their daily purposes. But, when it comes to our subsidiaries abroad, they are quite separate to our operations and procedure because they operate based on the local regulations, and so they need to be separated from the Finnish group level practices in some instances." (Participant 5)

Regarding employee relationships and communication, for example, two of the respondents related the Finnish culture to one that is systematic and one that requires individual to be given cause to a certain action. Accordingly, this view was expressed as follow:

> "Personally I feel they could have a big impact if we had them. Because if you don't have any HRM systems written down and explained, and people don't perceive them the same way, because we are people, and we are faulty, we start to compete with and against each other. So, I see that those HRM practices and systems would have a real and big impact. And then of course as Finnish and we are so systematic, I also see that there would also be a kind of impact that you have to share even though you don't want to share, because the person would have an explanation that it benefits a greater good. So, I see that it would have a significant impact." (Participant 2)

The findings presented in this chapter will now be discussed the literature review in the next chapter.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The central focus of this thesis has been on analyzing the mechanisms that motivate employees to share knowledge with others. This was done in response to prior studies' emphasis on the growing importance of knowledge as a strategic source of superior performance and competitive advantage in the business world (e.g. spencer & Grant 1996; Liu & Phillips 2011), and that studies conducted on this subject have mostly been on a macro level, leaving little work rooted in micro foundation at an individual level (Foss et al. 2010), of which this study was based. Therefore, in order to achieve this purpose, two research questions were asked: RQ1: What mechanisms motivate employees to share knowledge with others? RQ2: How do these factors help facilitate knowledge sharing among employees? To answer these questions, the following empirical objectives were formulated: 1) To find out how the organization motivates employees to share knowledge; 2) To investigate how the organization's culture affects employee knowledge sharing; 3) To identify HRM practices that motivate employee knowledge sharing, and 4) To identify the different social structures embedded in the firm, and their impact on employee knowledge sharing.

Based on the literature review, empirical data for a single case study and a within-case analysis, the main findings of this study are presented in this chapter. First, a discussion of the findings will be given, which will highlight the value and meaning to the findings in line with the literature review. The discussion flow from the main objective, through each of the empirical objectives set to fulfill the purpose of this study. Second, the theoretical contribution of this study to the existing literature on knowledge sharing is given based on these findings. Also, the managerial implications of the findings are explained. Finally, limitations and directions for further research are presented.

5.1. Discussion of the findings

In this section, the main findings will be discussed following the research purpose and objectives as stipulated in section 1.3 of the introduction chapter. Similarly, empirical objectives were formulated to aid with data collection and will be used as the basis for discussing the findings presented in the previous chapter.

5.1.1. Organizational factors motivating employee knowledge sharing

This empirical objective only considered mechanisms that were seen as falling outside the HRM practices of the firm. Accordingly, based on the shared views from respondents, this study identified four factors that facilitate employee knowledge sharing: monthly meetings; management support; information systems and informal meetings. These are discussed below.

The findings show that *regular meetings* aimed at discussing work related issues creates an environment that generates a collaborative atmosphere and one through which everyone benefits. Employees with ideas and knowledge come together and can share those ideas with each other. Moreover, employees are motivated by the idea of generating new knowledge as well as passing their ideas on to others. Additionally, it is in such an atmosphere of social interactions, for example, in team meetings that social ties among employees are created. As respondents commented, meetings were found to establish a culture of group identity. Like one manager put it, "It is nice to come for work in the mornings and to see your colleagues, and it is nice to do your work, and I think that that is the most important thing." Hislop (2013: 148) asserts that, "the extent to which people feel a part of and identify with their organization, a project team, a work group, or a community of practice can significantly shape their willingness to participate in knowledge processes." The findings show that employees not only have a stock of common knowledge, but also have a shared sense of identity, and also overlapping shared values. Moreover, these elements enable knowledge sharing, as they simplify the communication of knowledge that is inherently sticky: tacit knowledge. (ibid: 159.)

Furthermore, from the findings, it can be seen that meetings created a platform for learning among employees. It is in this atmosphere of learning that individuals were found to be motivated to give and receive from others. It was viewed that the sense of being heard gives individuals the drive to offer an opinion on an issue, and thus creating an open environment for new knowledge. Thus, meetings were found to be important and created an opportunity for employees to share their knowledge with each other. This finding imply that the company can exploit the diversity of its expertise to access

and create new knowledge through a culture of collaboration and trust among individual employees.

Regarding *management support*, management was found to play a bigger role in facilitating knowledge sharing behavior among employees. Moreover, the findings show that management has a role in facilitating sharing of knowledge by encouraging and enabling the type of communication and social interactions that will result in an enabling environment for employees (e.g. Hislop 2013: 43). This is also in line with Wang and Noe (2010) who argue that organizations should create opportunities for employee interactions to occur and employees' rank, position in the organizational hierarchy, and seniority should be deemphasized to facilitate knowledge sharing.

Additionally, in line with findings on the role of *information systems*, Hislop (2013: 202) asserts that IT retains a 'high profile role' in knowledge sharing due to two factors: first, that development in IT has facilitated collaboration among individuals as well as teams that are geographically dispersed, and when opportunities for meetings are limited; secondly, that IT can facilitate knowledge sharing, not just through the storage of knowledge, but via facilitating "rich and interactive forms of communication. It is worth noting however that IT is limited in facilitating rich interactions because, according to Hislop (2013: 213), social cues that facilitate face-to-face communication (tone and pace of voice, gesture, facial expression) are lost or become degraded when people communicate via IT. For example, email communication is text only, which means that factors such as voice tone or facial expression cannot be utilized to support communication (ibid).

Based on respondent's views, information systems at the case company were found to be wanting. It was seen that IT would be considered as a facilitating factor to employee knowledge sharing considering that most employees work remotely, IT infrastructure required upgrading and also include more tools that would enable effective collaboration among employees. Therefore, this finding implies that employees will have opportunities to collaborate and communicate with work colleagues using IT. Moreover, with an upgraded IT system, the company can benefit more by increasing the motivation of employees to share their knowledge with others, and also enhancing

interaction between individual employees. Similarly, providing advanced information systems tools, such video conferencing, will increase information richness.

Finally, ***informal meetings*** were found to be the most effective and motivating factor to employee knowledge sharing in the case company. It was seen that the environment with which an organization creates for its employees would determine their willingness to share knowledge with others. This notion was linked however to the cultural factors of the company, as well as individual social psychological factors (see Figure 6). An enabling environment for informal interactions such as partaking in team activities, working together with others, working with clients were identified as encouraging knowledge sharing.

Also, knowledge sharing through informal meetings at the case company takes place during lunch hour. Fey and Furu (2008: 1314), asserts that the transfer of tacit knowledge, which is also critical to MNCs, is especially problematic and often dependent on informal interactions among individuals and organizations. Based on the participants' views, this study found that such communication channels help build trust and strengthens relationships between individuals. People are much more likely to turn to someone down the hall or at least to someone they have met previously in person if they need some information rather than asking a stranger about it. A lack of time for social interactions among employees was however found to be the hindering factor to knowledge sharing in the case company.

The central idea stemming from the findings is that it is important for an organization to manage its workforce's knowledge to stay competitive. This is in line with Leif Edvinsson and associates (2004, as cited in Chowdhury 2005: 312), who suggest that a company needs to develop its organization-wide system of knowledge base and manage it by effective utilizing and creating new knowledge in order to be innovative and perform accordingly. It is worth noting however from the representatives' point of view that, even though meetings, discussions, and electronic interactions were identified as facilitating sharing of knowledge among employees, it does not guarantee motivation to do so due to time constraints, old IT infrastructure, and the inactiveness of the knowledge sharing as a practice. Therefore, more effort by leadership in the

implementation of knowledge management initiative is required to motivate knowledge sharing. For example, this implies that forums creating opportunities for social interaction between employees should be provided. These could be in an electronic form as well as face-to-face.

The above analysis corresponds to Hoops and Postrel (1999: 838), whose findings have shown that individual knowledge is an important organizational resource, but it the collaborative knowledge that determines the organization's sustainable competitive. Accordingly, Hislop (2013: 42) also suggest that knowledge sharing requires a comprehensive amount of social interaction and face-to-face communication. Moreover, an employee needs to develop, share and communicate knowledge by working on a task or closely observing a work colleague carrying out a particular task.

In summary, formal and informal gatherings were found to be key facilitating factors to employee knowledge sharing in the case company. Moreover, it is worth stating here however the difference between monthly meeting and informal meetings as viewed by respondents. Monthly meetings were found to be more of an informational and formal nature while informal meetings were said to be of unstructured nature and could happen anywhere and at any time within the company premises. Informal meetings were also meant to create a richer enabling environment for knowledge sharing. The subsequent subsection discusses findings on cultural factors influencing knowledge sharing.

5.1.2. Organization culture and its effect on knowledge sharing

The findings revealed that organizational culture is very significant in shaping and enhancing employee knowledge sharing efforts at FCG Training. Based on the respondent's views, three cultural factors influencing employee knowledge sharing were identified, and are in line with the theoretical findings (see Figure 6). These will be discussed in line with the literature review in the following order: equal and fair treatment at the workplace; flat and flexible organizational hierarchy and team-based work tasks.

It is evident from the findings that an ***equal and fair treatment at workplace*** creates an avenue for freedom of expression, trust, and also organizational commitment among

employees. The findings compare with Cabrera and Cabrera (2002) who states that the social environment may encourage or inhibit successful knowledge sharing. Reward and development policies have to be adapted accordingly to overcome individuals' reluctance to share knowledge. Such activities may include creating a trustworthy atmosphere or, even more comprehensively, a knowledge-friendly culture, establishing a climate of openness, demonstrating commitment to education and development, showing involved leadership, enlarging organizational commitment, showing the benefits of knowledge sharing, rewarding participation, and aligning work processes and tasks accordingly. (ibid). Based on the respondent's views, the findings show that the company has provided a broad range of opportunities to its employees, such as training and development, a friendly work environment, autonomy of work, to mention but a few.

Moreover, in line with Kim and Mauborgne (1998: 332), the findings revealed that where there is a fair decision-making process, clarity of communication regarding why decisions are made, and clarity of expectations, employees will feel valued for their intellectual capabilities and skills and that, experiencing such feelings can impact on workers' attitudes towards knowledge sharing. Similarly, the findings are empirically supported by Han et al. (2010), whose study show that employee participating in decision-making process provided them with a sense of psychological ownership over the decisions. Further, this sense of psychological ownership was positively linked to employee levels of organizational commitment, which was in turn positively related to levels of knowledge sharing. For example, autonomy of work was found to be important to most respondents, and extended to the projects they worked on (the managers had the autonomy to plan freely and design their job so long as they reached their revenue targets), the selection of the training and development activities they undertook (managers identified their development needs, with funding being available for virtually all training requests), and work patterns. Therefore, the extent to which an employee has autonomy of work increased their effort to share and learn.

The findings also indicated that a *flat and flexible organizational hierarchy* allowed contact with experienced and senior employees, leading to interactions, idea exchange, and knowledge sharing. Moreover, flexible working relations with senior managers

(such as having a shared room, a common cafeteria, and also working in same teams) created and enhanced innovation and creativity among employees. This is consistent with the findings by Sanz-Valle et al. (2011) who, using Cameron and Quinn's (2002) organizational culture typology to examine the impact that different types of culture have on levels of organizational learning and technical innovation within organizations, found that a culture of adhocracy best facilitate organizational learning. This is where the culture is externally focused on business environment, where the culture of flexible and adaptable is emphasized, and where value of creativity and innovation are encouraged and rewarded (Hislop (2013: 237).

Furthermore, it is also evident from the findings that knowledge sharing is effective vertically, as well as horizontally, even though it works best with employees of the same hierarchy. Although the case company had undergone several structural changes over the years, there are still elements of hierarchical structure in the organization. However, the company work structures are arranged in such ways that employees and senior managers are found in the same rooms, as discussed above, and are also involved in the same teams. Consequently, such arrangements were found to deemphasize seniority boundaries, and thus encouraging interactions and sharing of knowledge that goes beyond hierarchical levels. This is in line with Wang and Noe (2010) who suggest that organizations should create opportunities for employee interactions to occur. Moreover, that employees' rank, position in the organizational hierarchy, and seniority should be deemphasized to facilitate knowledge sharing.

Additionally, results showed that ***team-based work tasks*** are critical to employees' willingness to share knowledge with others. It was of the view that employees in the same field or work teams had many things in common, and this made it easy for them to trust one another. Rosendaal (2009) notes that the more people identify with the teams they work in, the more likely they are willing to share with other team members. Thus, the practical implications of this finding are that employees can adapt and work efficiently with different work colleagues, and thus enhancing collaboration and rich interactions among them. Moreover, as Hislop (2013: 148) asserts, when people feel a sense of identity with a community, this facilitates the development of trust with other community members.

Overall, the findings show that organizational culture facilitates knowledge sharing by shaping employee behavior. The theoretical framework formulated in chapter 2 identifies four cultural factors influencing individuals to share knowledge with each other (see Figure 6): cultural values; organizational structure; typologies of organizational culture; and organizational culture characteristics facilitating knowledge sharing. These were found to be in line with the findings of the current study. The findings show that equal and fair treatment at workplace relates to how an organization does things (organizational values), and these are imprinted within the organizational structures. Moreover, equality and fair treatment is a characteristic of a culture of adhocracy. Similarly, a flat and flexible organizational hierarchy was found to relate to an organizational culture of adhocracy, where flexibility and adaptability are encouraged and with which its values are rooted in creativity and innovation. Accordingly, team-based work tasks were found to relate to a clan organizational culture, which according to Cameron and Quinn (2006) facilitate collaboration among employees and the development of a strong sense of group identity among employees. Finally, all these findings can be argued as organizational culture characteristics facilitating knowledge sharing among employees.

However, one unexpected finding that was common among respondents was the *size of the company*. Most respondents alluded to the fact that the size of the company motivates them to share knowledge with each other. This is because, a company of 36 employees: it has a flat organizational hierarchy; management can reach every employee on a one-to-one basis, as seen from the job design; employees are found with each most of the time, as they work in teams, and also via meetings and informal discussions during lunch. An attempt to find prior research in this regard proved futile. Therefore, future research should consider this topic (how the size of an organization affects employee knowledge sharing).

5.1.3. HRM practices motivating knowledge sharing

The findings revealed that HRM practices play a strategic role in influencing employees to share knowledge with others through reducing obstacles and enhancing individual as well as organizational potential. Based on the respondent's views, the following

practices were identified as facilitating employee knowledge sharing: recruitment, training and retaining policy; compensation policy and job design. It is worth noting however that despite the findings, almost all the respondents were ignorant of the existence of HRM practices in the company structures. This finding can be attributed to the lack of awareness from the HR unit and also the inactiveness of knowledge management initiatives. Hislop (2013: 220) asserts that:

> "HRM practices can be seen to be concerned not only with attempting to create a positive attitude towards, and a willingness to participate in organizational knowledge management activities, but also with making workers committed and loyal to their employer. This is fundamentally because, if workers are not committed and loyal to their organizations, there is a risk that organizations will lose any tacit knowledge those workers possess through staff turnover. Therefore, HRM practices concerned with supporting organizational knowledge management efforts should be concerned as much with developing the commitment and loyalty of workers as they are with persuading workers to share, codify, or create knowledge."

Regarding *recruitment*, the findings compare with Robertson and Swan's (2003) findings that recruitment and selection can be used to recruit people whose values are compatible with the existing organizational culture. As noted by Respondent 5, the findings showed that, before people are recruited, they have to be introduced to the 'ways' of the company first. This way, new recruits can identify themselves with the organization, and those that are successful in the process are given an opportunity to improve their skills in line with the company's way of working. Moreover, this also compare well with Hislop's (2013: 224) assertion that recruiting people whose values and norms are compatible with those that exist in an organization, new recruits can develop a sense of identity with their employer and work colleagues, and that a good foundation for the development of strong trust-based relations between new recruits and their colleagues should exist.

The findings also showed that though no specific policies are in place at the case company regarding coaching and mentoring, this element exist at the recruitment level in which a new recruit is guided through the company processes as noted by Respondent 5. This is in line with Wilson and Ellman (1990) who asserts that coaching and mentoring are both concerned with the sharing of knowledge between a relatively experienced person, the mentor or coach, and someone less experienced, the mentee.

Regarding *training and development,* the findings revealed that education and development of employees helps enhance the skills level of individual employees involved, as well as collectively increasing the intellectual capital of the company. It was viewed that FCG provides opportunities for individual employee development, and by doing so employees are encouraged and motivated to share and learn more. Moreover, this helps create organizational commitment of workers. This finding collaborates with Hislop (2013: 225) who notes that self-development should not only be integrated into the way people's activities are organized, but also providing appropriate opportunities to undertake formal training. Additionally, Garvey and Williamson (2002) also suggest that the most useful sort of training to support a culture of learning and knowledge development is not investing in 'narrow' skills-based training, but training with broader purpose to encourage reflexivity, learning through experimentation, and how to conduct critical dialogues with others. Hansen et al. (1999a) also notes that the type of training provided should reflect the particular approach to KM an organization adopts. For example, in relation to their distinction between codification and personalization-based approaches to knowledge management, they argue that the provision of IT-based training is relevant for organizations pursuing a codification-based strategy, whereas training to develop interpersonal skills and team working is most appropriate for organizations pursuing a personalization-based knowledge management strategy. It is important that, the current study did not take into consideration a particular approach to KM but investigated the sharing of tacit knowledge at an individual level.

Furthermore, evidence from this study also show that with the increasing rate of employees in their retirement age, the training of workers help fill the gap by increasing the knowledge base of the company. It can, therefore, be argued that training and development help build trust between employees and the employer, which in turn lead to employee knowledge sharing. This finding is in line with Molm (2003) who asserts that individuals develop their trust for another only when they are guaranteed that their dealings with the person will not cost them. When there is the existence of trust between two people they turn to cooperate easily among each other. On the other hand, despite the growing number of employees who are either leaving or are bound to leave, evidence from this study has shown that no strategic measures have been put in place to

retain the existing workforce. Thus, this study suggests that by encouraging employee knowledge sharing through recruitment, training, reward systems, as discussed next, and job design, the company would be able to maintain its knowledge base.

On the basis of ***compensation and reward systems***, the findings show that reward systems for FCG are based on the employment agreement. Employees, however, are rewarded based on an individual effort, and an extra salary is given to a deserving employee. Based on the respondent's views, rewarding employees did not show any positive influence on employee knowledge sharing behavior. This finding can be attributed to the lack of management support with regards to HRM practices to motivate employees to share knowledge with others. From a social dilemma point of view, this finding is in line with Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) whose findings suggest that rewarding people for appropriate knowledge-related behaviors and embedding knowledge-related attitudes and behaviors in performance appraisal processes represent a potentially significant way to use HRM practices to underpin organizational knowledge management efforts.

On the contrary, Fahey et al. (2007) and Milne (2007) both found that directly linking individual rewards to knowledge sharing may mean people develop instrumental attitudes to such processes whereby they only participate in knowledge processes when they derive some form of financial reward from doing so, which may inhibit knowledge sharing when such rewards are not available. However, Hislop (2013: 227) asserts that rewards systems should reflect the particular knowledge management strategy adopted by an organization and the type of knowledge processes associated with it. This study, however, found knowledge management activities at the case company to be inactive, if not inexistence, and only relied on respondent's assumptions of what would seem to be knowledge management activities.

Regarding ***job design***, the findings revealed that employees have autonomy of work, which gives them the freedom to design their jobs, as discussed in subsection 6.1.2. The findings show that autonomy of work encourages employees to collaborate with work colleagues on work issues, and also share ideas with each other. Moreover, employees are encouraged to participate in decision-making, as most of their work tasks (such as

course design, looking for clients and location for the training) is planned and executed individually and within the team. The findings are in line with Kuo and Lee's (2011) study into empowering leadership concluding that providing workers with high levels of autonomy is likely to help with the development of knowledge sharing culture. Accordingly Hislop (2013: 224) asserts that work should have three key features: it should be interesting and challenging, secondly, workers should have high levels of autonomy concerning decision-making and problem-solving, and finally, it should encourage and require interpersonal collaboration.

Based on the respondent's views, the findings also showed that coordination between teams encouraged employees to interact with each other often. This corresponds with Holste & Fields (2010), whose finding argue that collaborative working make knowledge sharing a central feature of work activities, and it is likely to facilitate the development of the type of strong interpersonal relations, which are conducive to interpersonal knowledge sharing. Moreover, the team based work tasks in the case company also help influence group identity in employees, and thus agreeing with the theoretical framework results. Also in line with Moran (2010) and McLeod et al (2011), the findings revealed that team based work tasks result in a community of practice in that the common knowledge possessed by team, combined with their sense of collective identity, and system of shared values, means they have the potential to facilitate individual and group learning, and the sharing of knowledge within the team.

Overall the findings show that HRM practices create an atmosphere that is conducive to knowledge sharing. Recruitment was strategically tailored to hire employees that are homogeneous and are in line with the company's values. Similarly, the training of workers helped improve the company's knowledge base, at the same time creating employee organizational commitment, thus motivating employee knowledge sharing. Furthermore, compensation and reward systems depended on individual performance and did not yield positive results in facilitating knowledge sharing among employees. Finally, job design was found to encourage knowledge sharing among employees through autonomy of work (creates a sense of ownership), challenging and interesting work tasks, and collaboration between teams and individuals. Therefore, results from the theoretical findings on HRM practices were found to be in agreement with this

study's findings, except for coaching and mentoring, and communities of practice, whose elements were found to only exist in practices such as recruitment, and team based work tasks but not independently.

5.1.4. Company social structures, and their impact on employee knowledge sharing

Prior studies have noted the importance of knowledge sharing as a social process of interpersonal interaction in which knowledge is exchanged (e.g., Cabrera & Cabrera 2005). Based on the respondent's views, and in line with the three social psychological theories of SCT, SDT, SET, four categories of factors influencing knowledge sharing among employees were identified, namely, employment relationship, the role of trust, personality traits and national culture. These are now discussed below.

Regarding *employment relationship*, the findings revealed that the relationship employees have with their employers play a central role in encouraging knowledge sharing among employees. It was found that when hiring staff, the company capitalizes on people that have the same values as that of the company and thus minimizing conflict of interests between them. This corresponds with Hislop's (2013: 224) assertion that by recruiting people whose values and norms are compatible with those that exist in an organization, new recruits can develop a strong sense of identity with their employer and work colleagues and that a good foundation for the development of strong trust-based relations between new recruits and their colleagues should exist.

However, the findings also show that conflicts about ownership and use of employee knowledge are inevitable, and that it is the initiatives management put in place that matters the most. Schultze and Stabell (2004) note that potential conflict between management and employees is an inevitable part of the employment relationship. For example, one manager argued that knowledge need to be shared, because when an employee leaves the company, they carry with them valuable knowledge that cannot be replaced. This finding is in line with Hislop (2013) who asserts that this tension relates not only to who 'owns' an employee's knowledge, but how and for what purposed such knowledge is used. For example, while management may perceive that it is in the interest of the organization to encourage workers to share their knowledge, workers may

be reluctant to do so if they feel that such efforts will negatively affect them through diminishing their power and/or status. Similarly, Liao (2008) found that, firstly, in terms of the direct effect, only reward and expert power had a direct influence on employees' knowledge sharing. Secondly, in terms of the indirect relationship between power and knowledge sharing, the importance of reference and expert power in the development of trust suggests that managers should develop both types of power, through managing employees so that they respect both the expert knowledge of managers and them as individuals.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that having an open and honest atmosphere between employees and senior managers help create a collaborative environment, where employees are free to express their opinions. This finding compare well with Kim and Mauborgne's (1998) suggestion that, when all these factors are in place, workers will feel valued for their intellectual capabilities and skills and that, experiencing such feelings can impact on employees' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, when they feel that their ideas and person are recognized through fair process, they are willing to share their knowledge and give their all.

On the basis of *trust*, the findings have confirmed with prior studies that trust play a crucial role in an individual's willingness to share knowledge with others. The findings show that relationships among employees are based on trust and respect for each other. It was viewed that the more employees worked or were found with each other, the more they built bonds of trust with each other. This finding compares well with the assumptions by Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998) that if the environment is rich in social capital, as identified by the existence of a strong network, trust, shared behavioral norms, reciprocity, and respect, the environment significantly contributes to the creation and sharing of knowledge.

Additionally, the findings also show that trust based on an individual expertise exhibit positive effects on an individual's willingness to share or use knowledge from another. Employees at FCG trust one another because of their expertise, knowing that each one is an expert in their field, and thus are competent to do a certain task well or could offer better advice. This finding is consistent with Hislop (2013: 145) who states that a

trusting relationship is based on an expectation of reciprocity, or mutual benefit. Similarly, Holste and Fields (2010) notes that trust in the relationship with others plays a key role in the sharing of tacit knowledge, but when it came to using tacit knowledge that had been provided by others, people's trust in the competence of others is more fundamentally important. Moreover, this finding compares well with Newell and Swan's (2000) study on three typologies of trust.

Following Newell and Swan's (2000) findings, Hislop (2013: 147) asserts that interpersonal relations at work with colleagues will involve elements of all three forms of trust. Thus, if two colleagues who have known each other for a number of years have to collaborate in a particular project there may be an element of companion and competence-based trust due to the personal relationship that may exist between them and their confidence in each other's ability from knowing how they have performed on previous projects. Moreover, the network of expert teams at the case company created rich social ties among employees. The findings show that different teams coordinate with each other to fulfill their set goals. Therefore, it is in this set up of collaborations and networking between teams that knowledge was shared. Further, there may be an element of commitment-based trust due to promises that may have been made to particular tasks within particular timescales. It is also worth noting however that respondents were only asked to describe the types of trust that exist at the company, and not at any point did the author mention or explain any particular trust. Thus, this comparison is the author's interpretation of the respondent's views.

However, the study also found that time and space can be a hindrance to the flow of information or knowledge. This finding is confirmed by Davenport & Prusak's (1998) findings that people suffer from the limited time, energy and knowledge, and thus are usually unwilling to share scarce resources unless it is profitable for them. Additionally, from the perspective of a social dilemma, Molm (2003) also found that individuals develop their trust for another only when they are guaranteed that their dealings with the person will not cost them. When there is the existence of trust between two people they turn to cooperate easily among each other. This finding implies that employees need to have enough time and space to develop trust with each other, which also leads to rich interaction and thus knowledge sharing.

Regarding *personality traits*, the findings revealed that the effect of personality traits on knowledge sharing behavior varies. This finding is comparable to prior studies suggesting that people with certain personality traits may have a more positive attitude to knowledge sharing than others (Mooradian et al. 2006; Cabrera & Cabrera 2005). The personality model suggests that "human personality can be understood to be made up of five broad traits: conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Hislop 2013: 150). Based on the respondent's views, this study's findings identified personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion as associated with knowledge sharing. For example, when asked about what motivates them to share knowledge, respondents were found to use consistently statements like 'I talk a lot', 'I love people', 'I love my work', 'I look for people who are open-minded', 'I want to help', 'I am irreplaceable', 'if I share something, I can also get something back'. Accordingly Hislop (2013: 150) defines extraversion as the extent to which someone is sociable, talkative, enthusiastic, and assertive. Similarly, conscientiousness is the degree to which someone is careful, self-disciplined, hard working, dependable, and reliable. Furthermore, agreeableness is the extent to which someone is generous, trustful, cooperative, and forgiving. Therefore, the statements were found to fit these descriptions.

Previous studies on the topic have shown no consensus as to which personality trait relates to knowledge sharing. For example, Cabrera and Cabrera's (2005) research, which is based on a survey of a single Spanish organization, show that 'openness to change' personality variable is related to a positive knowledge-sharing attitude. By contrast, Mooradian et al.'s (2006) study, which was also based on a survey of a single organization, found a link between 'agreeableness' and positive knowledge-sharing attitudes. Finally, Matzler et al.'s (2011) study, which is based on a survey conducted within a single Australian company, found that both agreeableness and conscientiousness were positively related to knowledge-sharing attitudes. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be regarded as generalizable. In general, this is a very under-explored topic and is inconclusive regarding exactly how personality relates to a person's tendency to share knowledge or their willingness to participate in any organizational knowledge processes (Hislop 2013: 150).

Based on the respondent's perspective, ***national culture*** has been found to have an influence on an individual's attitude to sharing knowledge with others. This is in line with McAdam et al. 2012 (cited in Hislop 2013: 149) who suggests that people's knowledge and understanding, and also what counts as valid types of knowledge, will be shaped by cultural factors, including national cultural characteristics. For example, Kanzler (2010) on Germany and Chinese scientists found that concerns about a loss of power were negatively related to the intention to share knowledge of the German, but not the Chinese scientists. Kanzler argued that this was because Germany society is more individualistic than Chinese society, and so, concerns about a loss of power due to sharing and 'giving up' knowledge were greater for the Germany scientists.

Paramount to note, however, is that these studies were carried out on two different national cultures. However, the current study is limited to individuals of the same Finnish culture, and thus on a an individual basis of the same culture, the findings show that the culture of an individual will have an influence on how willing one is to share their knowledge with the other. For example, one manager had stated that "I think it is a cultural thing also, you know Finns are very straightforward, and we rarely sit and talk." Additionally, from a cognitive social capital point of view, findings show that language can have an impact on the motivation of employees to share with others. The findings corroborate with Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998: 252-253) assumption that having a common perception or understanding enables communicating meaning, enabling access to information, as well as enhancing understanding among employees.

5.1.5. Summary of the findings

In this section, the findings and discussion are summarized following the empirical objectives formulated at the beginning of the study, as well as the structure of this chapter. Specifically, this section summarizes the answers to the research questions. RQ1: What mechanisms motivate employees to share knowledge with others? RQ2: How do these factors help facilitate knowledge sharing among employees? Table 10 below gives a summary and answers to the research question following the empirical objectives and the thesis findings.

Table 10. Summary of the findings

1. To find out how the organization motivate employees to share knowledge.
Monthly meetings: • Create an environment that generates a collaborative atmosphere and one through which knowledge is shared. **Management support:** • Facilitate sharing of knowledge by encouraging and enabling the type of communication and social interactions that will allow create an enabling environment for employees. **Information systems:** • Facilitate communication between individuals as well as teams that are geographically dispersed, and when opportunities for meetings are limited. • IT can facilitate knowledge sharing, not just through the storage of knowledge, but via facilitating "rich and interactive forms of communication. **Informal meetings:** • An enabling environment for discussion such as participating in team undertakings, working together with others, working with clients, lunch and coffee breaks were identified as fostering knowledge sharing.
2. To investigate how the organization's culture affect knowledge sharing.
Equal and fair treatment at workplace: • Creates an avenue for freedom of expression, trust, and organizational commitment among employees. **Flat and flexible organizational hierarchy:** • Create opportunities for employee interactions to occur and employees' rank, position in the organizational hierarchy, and seniority is deemphasized to facilitate knowledge sharing. • A culture of adhocracy (flexible and adaptable, and where value of creativity and innovation are encouraged and rewarded) best facilitates organizational learning. **Team based work tasks:** • Creates a sense of identity among employees, and thus facilitating the development of trust with other team members. **Size of an organization:**   • Knowledge sharing efforts increases, as an organization gets bigger.
3. To identify HRM practices that motivates knowledge sharing.
Recruitment policy: • Recruiting people with values compatible to those of the company develop new recruits' sense of identity with employer and work colleagues. • Helps create an environment of strong trust-based interactions between new recruits and work colleagues. **Training and development:** • Enhance individual skills level and collectively increase intellectual capital of the organization. • Employees are motivated to share and learn more. **Compensation and reward system:** • Based on employment agreement and individual effort.

- However, it did not exhibit positive influence towards knowledge sharing for the reason attributed to lack of management support and inexistence of KM initiatives at the company.

Job design:

- Autonomy of work and decision-making encourages employee collaborations leading to knowledge sharing.

4. *To identify the different social structures embedded at the firm, and their impact on employee knowledge sharing.*

Employment relationships:

- Respectfully recognizing of both the person and the knowledge they possess by the employer through fair process, creates a willingness to share

The role of trust:

- Based on an expectation of reciprocity, or mutual benefit.
- However, it also depends on the type of trust involved, such as companion and competence-based trust (due to the personal relationship that may exist between them and their confidence in each other's ability from knowing how they have performed on previous projects), and commitment based trust (Task related).

Personality traits:

- Personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion were found to be associated with knowledge sharing.
- However, results cannot be generalized due to lack of conclusiveness on the topic regarding which personality trait exactly supports knowledge sharing.

National culture:

- The culture of an individual is critical to an individual's attitude towards knowledge sharing
- 'Small talk' helps facilitate knowledge sharing among employee.

5.2. Theoretical contribution

The study's theoretical contribution is based on the empirical findings of the qualitative case study on employee knowledge sharing. The overall contribution of this study is the formulation of a theoretical framework for understanding the mechanisms motivating employees to share knowledge with each other (see Figure 6), by integrating three study constructs: HRM practices, social psychological factors, and organizational cultural factors. The Inclusion of organizational specific factors has led to a modified framework (see Figure 9 below).

Specifically, this thesis contributes to the understanding that human, social psychology, and cultural factors are fundamental to the success of knowledge sharing among

employees (e.g. Hislop 2013; Renzl 2008; Cabrera & Cabrera 2005). This is because they are an important influence on the willingness of individual employees to share knowledge with others, and that without such willingness; it makes it difficult to share. Additionally, this helps increase to the knowledge base of the company and its use. Moreover, the study has shown that human and social psychological factors could be enhanced through implementing HRM practices that promote both the capabilities of individual employees and their willingness to collaborate through work related tasks, and also knowledge sharing. (e.g., Hislop 2013: 220.)

Furthermore, previous research already concluded that these factors (see Table 9) have significance influence on employee knowledge sharing. However, this study extends the current literature by examining the mechanisms that motivate employees to share knowledge with others based on a single case study in a Finnish context. Therefore, this study also contributes to the knowledge sharing body of knowledge at a micro-level, the area claimed under researched according to Foss et al. (2010). For example, prior studies on personality traits reviewed in this study were mostly survey based, and therefore, from this study's point of view, a different perspective to the findings has been added by utilizing a case study.

Additionally, this study also contributes to the literature that culture is central towards knowledge sharing effectiveness. This is because an organization embracing a knowledge sharing culture gives freedom to its employees to share knowledge with each other. Accordingly, the study has shown that the identified factors are interlinked and embedded in the values of the company, thus ensuring the well being of employees. This collaborates with Ajmal and Koskinen's (2008) findings that Culture establishes an organizational context for social interaction and creates norms regarding what is 'right' and 'wrong'.

From the theoretical perspective, the study has shown that there is a link between HRM practices, Organizational culture and the socio-psychological theories used in this study. The study has shown that the theories of social capital, social dilemma, and social exchange play a crucial role in the behavior of employees towards knowledge sharing. As shown in Figure 9 below, HRM practices, and organizational culture facilitate

knowledge sharing among employees by creating a favorable atmosphere in the organization as earlier stated. However, the study has also shown that it is the socio-psychological factors that determine the willingness to share knowledge. The theories mediate between HRM practices/organizational cultural factors by influencing employee behavior. For example, in line with Wang and Noe (2010: 122), "employees do not work, learn or share knowledge in isolation, but are embedded in social networks." In line with He et al. (2009), this study has revealed that social capital enhances interaction among employees through social trust, social ties (interactions), and shared goals (such as expertise and language or national culture) representing structural, cognitive and relational dimensions of social capital. Specifically, the findings have shown that social capital affects recruitment and learning of employees in the organization. Moreover, the study has shown that social capital is key to retention of employees through training and development, and recruitment.

Additionally, the study revealed that social exchange theory plays a vital role in understanding how employees interact with each other. Most importantly, how employees respond to knowledge sharing based on trust, the environment, and perceived benefits and cost. This finding confirms with Krok (2012) who asserts that knowledge sharing can be beneficial by reciprocity, intrinsic motivation (one feels it is right to share with others), and recognition (monetary or none monetary).

From a social dilemma point of view, the theoretical framework has shown that having a social environment may encourage or hinder successful knowledge sharing (Cabrera & Cabrera 2002). This is in line with the empirical findings that when the recruitment has been done right (that is, in line with the company values and goals), there is harmony in the employment relationship. This notion, therefore, leads to a trustworthy relationship between the employees and the employer. Additionally, in line with Kim and Mauborgne (1998), such an atmosphere is conducive to knowledge sharing. Moreover, not only is the employment relationship in harmony employees are empowered to make decisions and are willing to participate in knowledge sharing initiatives with others. This notion is more so because the relationship positively influences them to share (organizational commitment).

To sum up, the theoretical framework below shows that HRM practices can influence and help shape an organizational culture and vice versa. Similarly, socio-psychological factors influence the behaviour of employees and thus, contribute to creating a knowledge sharing culture. Additionally, organizational cultural factors indirectly have an impact on the attitude of workers. According to the framework, cultural factors also affect the day-to-day activities of an organisation such as through meetings, management support, and the provision of communication tools via information systems. These activities in turn have an influence on employee behaviours by creating a trustworthy environment and enhancing employment relationships. Moreover, interactions among employees are enriched leading to knowledge exchange. Therefore, this study has shown that a combination of these factors facilitates employee motivation to share knowledge with others.
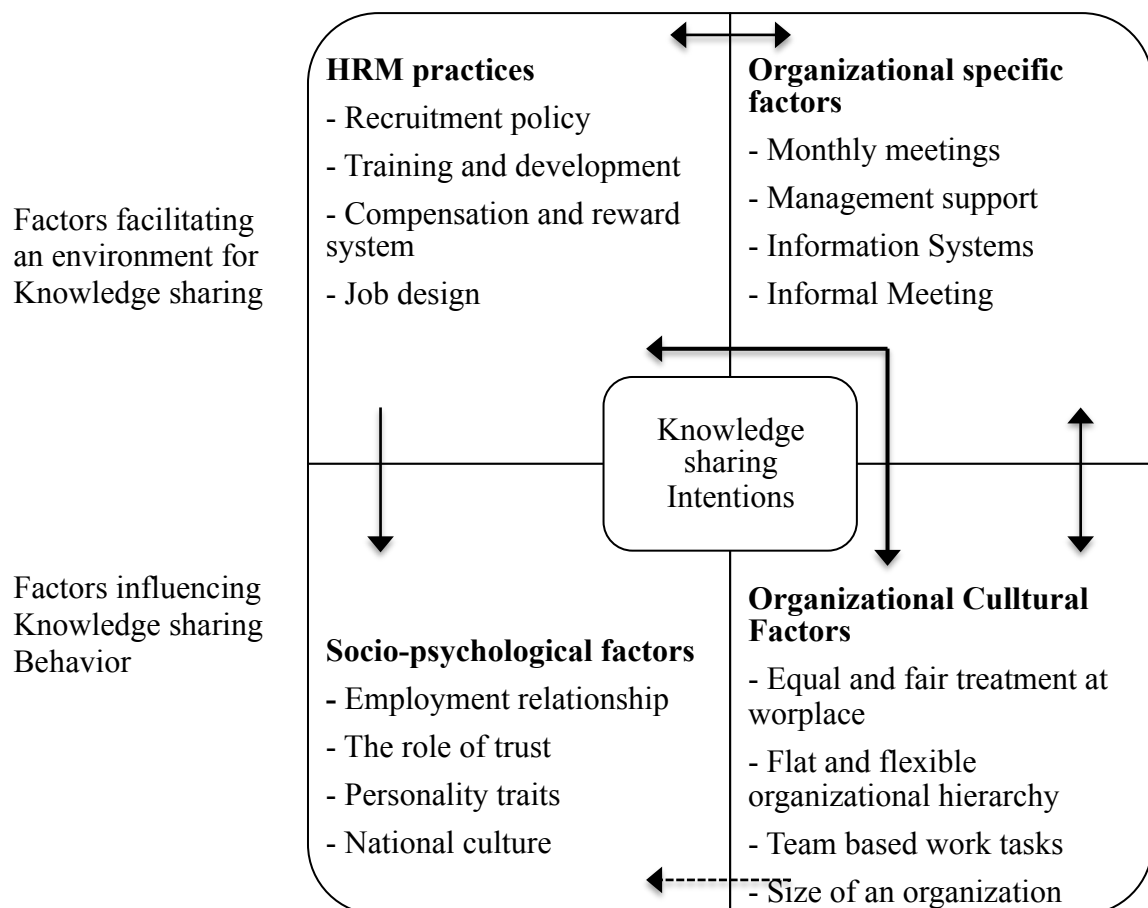
Factors facilitating an environment for Knowledge sharing

HRM practices

- Recruitment policy
- Training and development
- Compensation and reward system
- Job design

Organizational specific factors

- Monthly meetings
- Management support
- Information Systems
- Informal Meeting

Knowledge sharing Intentions

Factors influencing Knowledge sharing Behavior

Socio-psychological factors

- Employment relationship
- The role of trust
- Personality traits
- National culture

Organizational Culltural Factors

- Equal and fair treatment at worplace
- Flat and flexible organizational hierarchy
- Team based work tasks
- Size of an organization

Figure 9. Modified Theoretical Framework

5.4. Managerial Implications

Based on the findings, this study has some managerial implications. The first implication is that management should pay particular attention to employees by constantly communicating with them and finding a way in which to motivate them when knowledge is shared. This is specifically important in that, individuals possess valuable knowledge that is critical to the organization, and when such knowledge is lost, it has major implications to the survival of the company. This leads to the second implication that, it is important for management to consider the role of HRM practices in facilitating the employees' knowledge sharing behavior. In today's changing business world, simply putting in place HRM practices will not necessarily encourage knowledge sharing. However, management may strategically select and train managers to promote an understanding and appreciation of employee knowledge sharing.

Thirdly, managers should create more opportunities for informal collaborations and discussions aimed at generating rich interactions and social ties among employees. For example, the use of open spaces as they guarantee an audience, even though just passing through. The possibility for conversation and spontaneous gathering on staircase landings, extended corridors and cafeterias, where informal meetings obviously occur shows the significance of architectural design in workplaces.

Fourthly, managers could also endeavor to cultivate employees' high commitment towards the organization so as to encourage employees to contribute their knowledge as a form of organizational citizenship behavior. Based on this study's findings, the strategy used in recruitment determines the cultural values a company creates, which has greater effect on attitude than expected extrinsic reward, it can be suggested that management should primarily rely on non-material rewards to motivate employee knowledge sharing.

Fifthly, management should also put an effort on creating and maintaining a harmonious atmosphere in the workplace. This is because, encouraging a knowledge sharing culture based on good relationships would be useful. Similarly, in the light of geographically

dispersed work tasks, managers should ensure that IT infrastructure is improved and made available for enhanced communication and knowledge sharing among employees.

5.5. Limitations and future studies

Like any other study there are certain important limitation to this study that needs acknowledgement. These will be presented alongside the study's suggestion for future research. First, although this study concentrated on individual level motivations as a major antecedent to employee knowledge sharing intentions, there are many other factors to be considered. For example, this study did not take into consideration the type of industry or sector (e.g., Manufacturing versus management consulting sector) or knowledge sharing context of the focal company (whether they are online system-driven or off-line community-driven, etc.). Secondly, since this study adopted a case study method of data collection, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole Group or other companies. This is because of the specific organizational policies regarding operations, which allows different companies or units to operate independent of each other. Therefore, in order to gain useful and in-depth knowledge on the study variables, a multiple case study method may also be used.

Similarly, a small sample size limited the study in that it may lead to inability to quantify the firm's employee knowledge behavior. Therefore, future research should consider a larger sample size to provide more stable findings and increase the credibility of conclusions. Including other companies within the FCG Group may alter the outcome of the study. Thirdly, this study's findings represent only a snapshot, thus, future research may consider adopting a longitudinal data collection method, which will enable researchers to investigate the mechanisms motivating employee knowledge sharing from a dynamic perspective. Lastly, this study did not take into consideration how strategic knowledge management practice is at the organization in order to assess individual knowledge sharing intentions closely. Therefore, this may be interesting to consider in the future.

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APENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Interview guide

Interview guide questionnaire
Analysis of mechanisms that motivate employee knowledge sharing
University of Vaasa
Clement Kasongo

PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

- Presentation of the researcher, the research itself and practical information.

- Time allocated for the interview.

- Explain that the aim of the interview is to analyze mechanisms that motivate employee knowledge sharing.

- Underline the importance of the interviewee's contribution to the research (create confidence).

- Explain the recorder and the reason for recording the interview.

- Explain that the interviewee's answers will be kept anonymous.

I.   COMPANY FACTS

Company	
Category/ Line of business	
Year of establishment	
Number of employees	
Turnover	

II.   Nature of knowledge

1. How would you describe knowledge in FCG? What is knowledge?

2. What is valuable? (*Tacit expert knowledge*?)

3. What do you consider to be knowledge sharing in FCG?

4. How would you describe knowledge in FCG in relation to organizational performance? (How valuable is knowledge sharing to the overall organizational performance in FCG)

III.   The role of HRM practices in knowledge sharing

1. What would you say are the motivating factors for employee knowledge sharing in FCG?

2. What are some of the HRM Practices that you have in place to support KM efforts in FCG?

3. How does FCG promote the sharing of knowledge?

4. How would you say HRM Practices help facilitate Ks among employees in FCG?

5. What motivates you to share/or not share your knowledge with others?

6. To what extent do you perceive HRM practices as shaping employees behavior in knowledge sharing in your organization? (*How does the organization develop communicate and reinforce shared goals between employees?*)

7. How do you ensure organization commitment of employees?

8. What policies do you have in recruiting, training and retaining employees, e.g. experts?

9. How is training and development organized? (*E.g. do you carry out formal systematic training?*)

10. How would you describe FCG's compensation policies?

IV.   The role of organizational culture in knowledge sharing

1. How would you describe the culture of FCG generally? (*Vertical/horizontal relationship, what is the management structure of the firm?*)

2. How would you describe the working atmosphere at FCG?

3. How does FCG arrange for learning and KS?

4. What informal activities are pursued as means for knowledge sharing in the organization? (Such as *Social networks, how are official boundaries between departments*)

5. How is knowledge shared within your unit?

4. To what extent does employee rank or position in the organizational hierarchy, and seniority facilitate knowledge sharing at FCG?

5. How are tasks to be performed by employees in achieving the organization's objectives organized and executed? (e.g. *allocated based on clearly defined individual tasks, or to sections, teams, or divisions*)

6. How would you describe the relationship among employees at FCG? (*Trust based on deep psychological ties, or on one' s organizational position*)

7. What is the role of information technology in knowledge sharing in FCG? (*Do you rely more on technology, or interpersonal relationship for knowledge sharing?*)

8. How is information defused in the network? (*Knowledge sharing practices*)

- *Internal (within the firm) - Externally (within the networks) formal and informal*

V. Social psychological factors

1. Based on your own experience, what has been the attitude of work colleagues to sharing their knowledge?

2. How do you share your Knowledge and why?

3. How much are you involved in decision-making?

4. How compatible have your interest and your FCG's interests been, with regard to how you have used your knowledge? (Have FCG's goals and your own always been harmonious, or has there been any conflict and tension over how you use your knowledge?)

5. How much does trust affect the extent to which you share tacit knowledge with others?

6. How would you describe the type of trust that exists among employees in your unit?

7. How does group/team identity help facilitate knowledge sharing in FCG?

8. What are some of the barriers to knowledge sharing in FCG?

9. What can be done in order to improve Ks in FCG?

10. Would you like to add something else we may have missed in this discussion?

APENDIX 2: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Title of research project:
Analysis of mechanisms that motivate employee knowledge sharing

Name and position of Researcher:
Clement Kasongo, Final Year Master's student, Faculty of Business Studies, University of Vaasa

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I agree to take part in the study.

Please tick box

	Yes	No
4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.		
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.		

Name of participant: Date: Signature:

Clement Kasongo (researcher)   Date: Signature: