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RESEARCH ARTICLE

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT– AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH

***Ms. Lisa Elango and Dr. Clayton Michael Fonceca**

P.G. & Research Department of Social Work, Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur – 635601

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge Management is considered to be the most important aspect for a company to gain a competitive advantage in today's global scenario. Most IT companies in India provide solutions to companies all over the world for their work-related problems (Kumaraswamy, 2005). While knowledge management has become an apparent factor in companies, implementing knowledge management, its sustainability, process and initiatives are yet to be critically analyzed within context of the Indian IT firms. The study was undertaken to analyze the effectiveness of Knowledge Management practices in one of the Top IT Organizations of Tamil Nadu, India. The present study consisted of 102 employees as Team Leads across various departments in the Organization. The census method was applied and all the 102 respondents were selected for the study. The researcher adopted the descriptive design to describe the degree of importance given by the organization towards the practice of Knowledge Management, its implementation of elements and the Initiatives taken by the Human Recourses towards Knowledge Management. Standardized tools were adopted and the reliability was reestablished to fit the organization. The results of the study demonstrate that Knowledge though depicted at only a moderate level is still a key resource in today's market. Many researchers argue that it is the key resource to create a competitive advantage. Still it differs itself from ordinary resources.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized economy knowledge has gained great importance. Current economy is more knowledge intensive than of the past. Knowledge Management has become as an asset to be maximized, managed and developed for achieving competitive advantage. Due to global competition and the advancement in information technology (Tamana Anand, 2014). Knowledge Management is considered to be the most important aspect for a company to gain a competitive advantage in today's global scenario. But talking about it is one thing. Managing and controlling it, is another. Most managers today recognize knowledge management (as they interpret it) as something vital for the company. Still, majority of the projects concerning the topic fail. This is evident from the complexity of the term knowledge management. Ahmed Kok and Loh, (2002), state that, "Knowledge management is the coming together of organizational processes, information technology, organizational strategies and culture". Drucker (1993), states that knowledge management leverages organizations competitive advantage. It can help improve matters such as employee development, customer focus, training and creating business opportunities. Organizations often rely upon employee's willingness to co-operate and share their knowledge freely with other co-workers in order to sustain an effective knowledge sharing. (Riege, 2005) discusses that companies have to identify and recognize barriers in knowledge management sharing which affects their success in the implementation of a knowledge management strategy. The purpose of knowledge management is to enable an organization to leverage the knowledge and in turn improve productivity.

Corresponding author:* **Ms. Lisa Elango,
P.G. & Research Department of Social Work, Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur – 635601

Review of Literature

Bader Yousef Obeidat (2010), conducted a study on "The impact of knowledge management on innovation: An empirical study on Jordanian consultancy firms". The study aimed to examine the effect of knowledge management processes (knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization) and knowledge management approaches (social network, codification and personalization) on innovation in Jordanian consultancy firms. The analysis showed that there is a significant and positive impact of knowledge management processes on innovation in Jordanian consulting firms, as well as a significant and positive effect of codification and personalization approaches on innovation, while the social

network approach has a significant negative impact with innovation.

Mishra Bijaya & UdayBhaskar (2011), in their research on "Knowledge management process in two learning organizations", stated how knowledge management (KM) practices are carried out in learning organizations. It sought to find out; how learning organizations carry out KM practices and whether there are any specific KM attributes that differentiate high learning organizations from low learning organizations.Four themes of KM process emerged after the data were subjected to grounded theory analysis. These are: knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge up-gradation, and knowledge retention. The two sample organizations were compared on these dimensions. Two concepts emerged from this comparison, namely, knowledge enablers and knowledge inhibitors.

Binoy Joseph & Merin Jacob (2012), in a study on "Knowledge Sharing Intentions among IT Professionals in India" stated that; an organization's ability to strategically leverage knowledge has become a crucial factor for global competitiveness. Knowledge is considered an important source of establishing and maintaining competitive advantage. Specifically, knowledge sharing and resultant knowledge creation are crucial for organizations to gain and sustain competitiveness. The aim of this study was to develop an understanding of the factors supporting or inhibiting individuals' knowledge-sharing intentions. Theory of Reasoned Action was employed and augmented with extrinsic motivators, social-psychological forces and organizational climate factors that were believed to influence individuals' knowledge sharing intentions. The study proved that organizational climates and social-psychological factors have a positive effect on the intension for knowledge sharing. Additionally it was found that the attitude towards knowledge sharing and subjective norm affects individual's intension to share knowledge. Contrary to the common belief, it was found that anticipated extrinsic rewards exert a negative effect on individuals' knowledge-sharing attitudes.

Blaize Horner Reich (2014), in an article on "How knowledge management impacts performance in projects: An empirical study", examined the relationships between knowledge management and various aspects of performance in IT-enabled business projects. The proposed theory posits that knowledge management is instrumental to Project Performance when mediated by a new concept, Knowledge Alignment. The research model is tested on survey data from 212 IT-enabled business projects. Findings show that project managers who achieve Knowledge Alignment among the people and the artefacts from three parts of the project – the IT team, the business change team, and the governance team – can have a significant positive impact on the achievement of business value from the project.

Ajay K. Jain (2015), carried out a study on "Organizational learning, knowledge management practices and firm's performance: An empirical study of a heavy engineering firm in India". The study investigated the impact of organizational learning (OL) on the firm's performance and knowledge management (KM) practices in a heavy engineering organization in India.The data were collected from 205 middle and senior executives working in the project engineering management division of a heavy engineering public sector organization. The findings showed that all the factors of OL, i.e. collaboration and team working, performance management, autonomy and freedom, reward and recognition and achievement orientation were found to be the positive predictors of different dimensions of firm's performance and KM practices.

Significance of the Study

The World Bank report (2005) titled 'India and the Knowledge Economy: Leveraging Strengths and Opportunities' argues that when supported by the right kind of government policy incentives, the country can increase its economic productivity and the well-being of its population by making more effective use of knowledge. The Indian economy has undergone a structural change has been led by the IT–ITES sector, contributing substantially to increase in GDP, employment, and exports. The sector has increased its contribution to India's GDP from 1.2% in FY1998 to 7.5% in FY2013. According to 'The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM)', the IT/ITES sector in India aggregated revenues of US$108 billion in FY2013. Most IT companies in India provide solutions tocompanies all over the world for their work-relatedproblems (Kumaraswamy, 2005).While knowledge management has become an apparent factor in companies, implementing knowledge management, its sustainability, process and initiatives are yet to be critically analyzed within context of the Indian IT firms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Aim

The study was undertaken to analyze the effectiveness of Knowledge Management practices in one of the Top IT Organizations of Tamil Nadu, India.

Objectives

- To highlight the importance given to knowledge management by various departments of the organization.
- To analysis the existing elements of knowledge managementas applied by various departments.
- To understand how HR Initiatives affect knowledge management practices.
- To understand the impact of Knowledge Management with regard to the importance given by the organization, the implementation of knowledge management elements and the HR initiatives.

Universe & Sampling

The study was conducted in one of the top Multinational IT Sectors in Tamil Nadu. The name of the organization was asked not to be disclosed for the want of confidentiality and the conventional applicability of adhering to the research ethics and norms. The present study consists of 102 employees as Team Leads across various departments in the Organization. The census method was applied and all the 102 respondents were selected for the study.

Research Design

The research design used in this study is descriptive. The researcher adopted the descriptive design to describe the

degree of importance given by the organization towards the practice of Knowledge Management, its implementation of elements and the Initiatives taken by the Human Recourses towards Knowledge Management.

Tools of Data Collection

Name of the Instrument	Reliability	Rating Scale	Data Collection Method
Importance given to Knowledge Management Standardized Scale Markand Tare (2003) Cronbach's Alpha (.983)	*Re-established .987Cronbach's Alpha*	Likert 5 Point Rating Scale	Questionnaire Method was adopted
Knowledge Management Elements Standardized Scale Markand Tare (2003) Cronbach's Alpha (.910)	*Re-established .910Cronbach's Alpha*	Likert 5 Point Rating Scale	Questionnaire Method was adopted
Human Recourses Initiatives in Knowledge Management Standardized Scale Markand Tare (2003) Cronbach's Alpha (.898)	*Re-established .901Cronbach's Alpha*	Likert 5 Point Rating Scale	Questionnaire Method was adopted

Analysis of Data

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents and Importance given to Knowledge Management

Designation	Degree of Importance given to Knowledge Management						Total Sum
	Low	%	Moderate	%	High	%	
Program Analyst Dept.	16	29.1	29	52.7	10	18.2	55
Web Development	6	54.5	4	36.4	1	9.1	11
Software Eng. Dept.	3	18.8	7	43.8	6	37.5	16
Test Eng. Dept.	0	0.0	8	47.1	9	52.9	17
Graphic Design Dept.	0	0.0	3	100.0	0	0.0	3

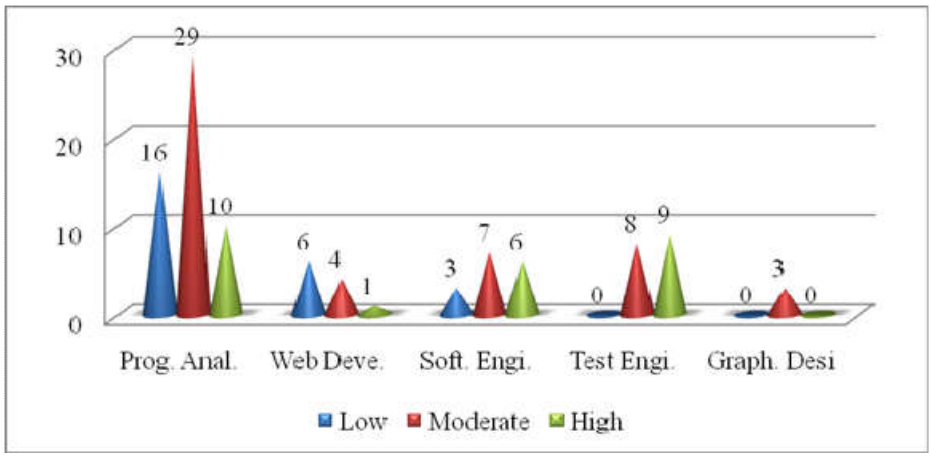

Figure 1. Importance given to Knowledge Management

From the above table& figure it is inferred that more than half of the Program Analysts (52.7%) feel that a moderate degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management in the organization, a little more than one forth (29.1%) of the respondents feel that a low degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management, and a little more than one tenth (18.2%) of them feel that a high degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management. More than half of the Web Developers (54.5%) feel that a low degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management, more than one forth (36.4%) of the respondents feel that a moderate degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management and the only few (9.1%) feel that a high degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management. A little less than half of the Software Engineers (43.8%) feel that a moderate degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management, more than one forth (37.5%) of them feel that a high degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management and the little less than one forth (18.8%) of the respondents feel that a low degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management. More than half of the Test Engineers (52.9%) feel that a high degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management and less than half (47.1%) of them feel that a moderate degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management. All the Graphic Designers (100%) feel that a moderate degree of importance is given to Knowledge Management. This further explains that all the employees irrespective of their departments feel that there is a moderate to high level of importance given to Knowledge Management in the organization.

The table& figure depicts that, a little less than half of the Program Analysts (45.5%) feel that there is a moderate degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements in the organization, more than one forth (34.5%) of them feel that there is a low degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements, and a little less than one forth (20%) of

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents and Implementation of Knowledge Management Elements

Designation	Degree of Implementation of Knowledge Management Elements						Total Sum
	Low	%	Moderate	%	High	%	
Program Analyst Dept.	19	34.5	25	45.5	11	20.0	55
Web Development	4	36.4	5	45.5	2	18.2	11
Software Eng. Dept.	3	18.8	7	43.8	6	37.5	16
Test Eng. Dept.	1	5.9	9	52.9	7	41.2	17
Graphic Design Dept.	1	33.3	2	66.7	0	0.0	3

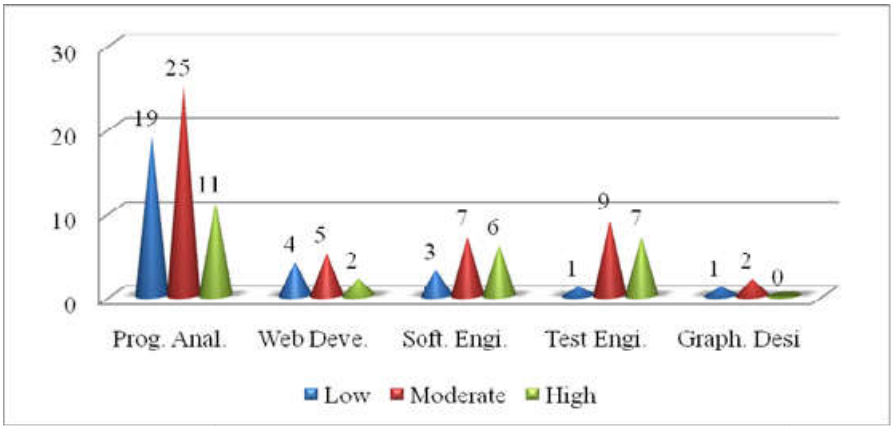

Figure 2. Implementation of Knowledge Management Elements

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents and Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management

Designation	Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management						Total Sum
	Low	%	Moderate	%	High	%	
Program Analyst Dept.	18	32.7	27	49.1	10	18.2	55
Web Development	5	45.5	4	36.4	2	18.2	11
Software Eng. Dept.	2	12.5	8	50.0	6	37.5	16
Test Eng. Dept.	0	0.0	9	52.9	8	47.1	17
Graphic Design Dept.	0	0.0	3	100.0	0	0.0	3

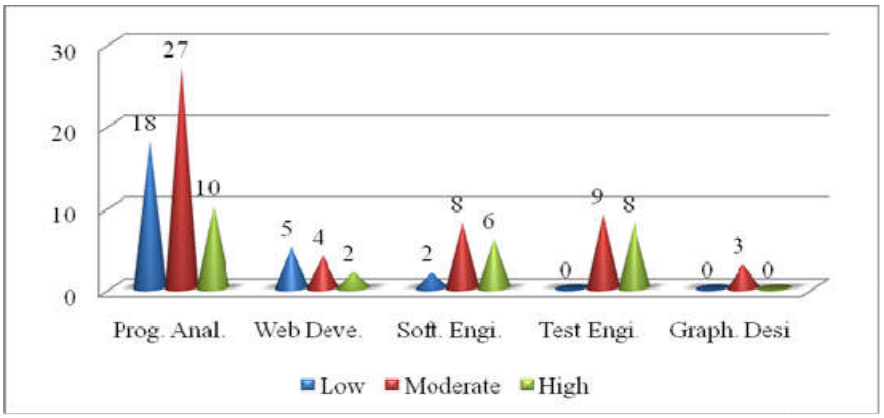

Figure 3. Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management

Table 4. Inter-correlation Matrix - Overall Knowledge Management

Dimensions	Importance on KM	Implementation of Elements	HR Initiatives in KM	Overall Knowledge Management
Importance on KM	1			
Implementation of Elements	0.943**	1		
HR Initiatives in KM	0.794**	0.833**	1	
Overall Knowledge Management	0.983**	0.986**	0.854**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

them feel that there is a high degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements. Less than half of the Web Developers (45.5%) feel that there is a moderate degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements in the organization, more than one forth (36.4%) of them feel that there is a low degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements and little more than one tenth (18.2%) feel that there is a high degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements. Less than half of the Software Engineers (43.8%) feel that there is a moderate degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements in the organization, more than one forth (37.5%) of

them feel that there is a high degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements and little more than one tenth (18.8%) feel that there is a low degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements. More than half of the Test Engineers (52.9%) feel that there is a moderate degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements in the organization, less than half (41.2%) of them feel that there is a high degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements and very few (5.9%) of them feel that there is a low degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements. Less than three forth of the Graphic Designers (66.7%) feel that there is a moderate degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements in the organization and more than one forth (33.3%) feel that there is a low degree of implementation of Knowledge Management elements. Hence it shows that all the employees irrespective of their departments feel that the implementation of Knowledge Management elements in the organization is done at a moderate level.

The above table & figure demonstrates that, a little less than half of the Program Analysts (49.1%) feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management in the organization are at a moderate level, more than one forth (32.7%) of them feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a low level, and little more than one tenth (18.2%) of them feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a high level. Less than half of the Web Developers (45.5%) feel that there the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a low level, little more than one forth (36.4%) of them feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a moderate level and the little more than one tenth (18.2%) feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a high level. Half of the Software Engineers (50%) feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a moderate level in the organization, little more than one forth (37.5%) of them feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a high level and little more than one tenth (12.5%) feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a low level. More than half of the Test Engineers (52.9%) feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a moderate level in the organization and little less than half (47.1%) of them feel that the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a high level. All the Graphic Designers (100%) feel the Human Resource Initiatives in Knowledge Management are at a moderate level in the organization. Hence all the employees in the organization irrespective of their departments feel that a moderate level of Human Resource Initiatives have been taken in order to encourage the practice of Knowledge Management. This shows that the management in turn is taking considerable effort to leverage the knowledge in the organization.

The table emphasizes that as the perception regarding the importance of Knowledge Management enhances the perception towards implementation of Knowledge Management elements and Human Resource initiatives also enhances. This further illustrates that employees perceive the level of Knowledge Management practices based on the importance the management given to Knowledge Management. The means in which these efforts are effectively implemented and the support and initiatives taken by the human resource department in sustaining these efforts play an important role in ensuring that they are beneficially used to leverage the knowledge present in the organization.

Conclusion

Knowledge Management is gaining importance in today's workplaces and helps the organization to gain an edge over the competition. Is serves a factor which differentiates a mediocre organization from one which is growth oriented and guided by a vision for excellence. Today, India is among the few Asian countries that have adopted a national knowledge management road map or policy towards a knowledge based economy. Though, the study highlights from the analysis of data that only a moderate level of importance was given by the organization towards knowledge management. Indian IT Giants are clearly restructuring new mechanisms to bring about effective knowledge leveraging strategies. This study also depicts a strong bound based on the inter-correlation matrix that each factor influences another with regard to the importance given to knowledge management, the applicability of knowledge management elements and the human resource initiatives taken with respect to the same. It is important to see how these strong relationships can increase the organizations economic productivity and the well-being of its population by making more effective use of knowledge management configurations. The findings pertaining to the objectives, state that there is only a moderate level of practices pertaining to the importance given to Knowledge Management, its implication and the role of the Human Recourses. The results of the study demonstrate that Knowledge though depicted at only a moderate level is still a key resource in today's market. Many researchers argue that it is the key resource to create a competitive advantage. Still, it differs itself from ordinary resources. Knowledge cannot be quantified and counted to see how much knowledge a company contains. Also, companies cannot have totally control over what kind of knowledge that will occur when trying to extract it from employees. Knowledge Management is the field which presents a way to manage the valuable resource of knowledge. By implement processes and actions in a company, it will obtain a control over the knowledge in the company.

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