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Understanding Knowledge Sharing and Hiding Through Hofstede's Cultural Taxonomy

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Abstract

The study tends to comprehend the cross-cultural differences in knowledge sharing and hiding, considering Hofstede's cultural taxonomy. Effective knowledge management has emerged as a compelling resource, leading toward the survival of organizations in today's competitive globalized world. Understanding the subtleties of intra or inter-organizational knowledge sharing, including the phenomenon of knowledge hiding, can guide business executives and practitioners in identifying, acquiring, and diffusing information to improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness. That is why most Fortune 500 companies have added knowledge management activities to their strategic corporate planning. Researchers have been posting that fostering knowledge sharing and inhibiting knowledge hiding are prerequisites for achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Although a plethora of research has been conducted to study the nature and scope of the difficulties involved in transferring organizational knowledge within and outside the organizations, little research has been conducted on understanding the cross-cultural influences, complexities, and challenges of knowledge sharing and hiding. This paper is an effort to combine the literature and empirical evidence on the cross-cultural effects of knowledge sharing and hiding in the light of Hofstede's cultural taxonomy.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing, national culture, Hofstede's taxonomy.

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Introduction

Knowledge management has been one of the most strategically essential priorities of today's organizations due to its central role in firms' enhanced performance in terms of achieving organizational goals of efficiency and effectiveness, solutions to business problems, improving work systems, speeding up of new product development systems and higher levels of customer service (Castaneda & Cuellar, 2020; Mustika et al., 2022). The progress of organizations is directly linked with the exploitation and exchange of knowledge within and outside the firms and then utilizing the same for improving the functionality of the organizations, solving routine as well as novel business problems by successfully responding to the challenges of the business environment. Fresh knowledge offers a foundation for the robust design of management systems and a sustainable competitive edge (Farooq, 2018). Many individuals, organizational, technological, and cultural factors directly influence creating and exchanging organizational knowledge (Li, 2010; Zhang et al., 2014). Of these multiple factors, culture is crucial to organizations' knowledge management initiatives (Gooderham et al., 2022; Siau et al., 2010).

As business has globalized, so has cross-cultural interaction and collaboration among firms in different countries. That is why Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) posit international firms as networks of connections and transactions, busy with global knowledge flows. Teece (1998) notes that firms always look for external "wellsprings of knowledge" (Leonard, 1995), which tend to be crucial for the achievement of strategic goals. On the other hand, workforce diversity has escalated like never before, paving the way for excessive cross-cultural negotiations and conversations between individuals and organizations. Based on this idea, knowledge management tends to be highly impacted by the varying cultural backgrounds of the people working within the organizations or interacting with the people of other organizations. This is because knowledge management is a multifarious socio-technical phenomenon that incorporates multiple processes, including knowledge creation, storage, and sharing (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Nonaka, 1994).

Most organizations' knowledge management systems are designed based on their creators' and operators' specific features and cultural backgrounds, functioning effectively when people from those cultures use them. However, when individuals from different cultural or professional backgrounds use these systems to facilitate knowledge sharing and discourage knowledge hiding, the systems may inhibit knowledge creation and dissemination. Extant research on learning and organizational knowledge sharing reveals that these processes are deeply influenced by individual workers' cultural norms and backgrounds (Hofstede, 2001; Hutchings & Michailova, 2004; Li, 2010).

Moreover, research on the learning properties of individuals and their cognitive strategies suggests that individuals from different cultural backgrounds tend to possess different styles of thinking, receiving, processing, and disseminating knowledge. Additionally, these differences can also influence tendencies toward knowledge hiding. Therefore, proper knowledge of the similarities and dissimilarities in knowledge sharing strategies, values, and behaviors of the organizational members representing different ethnic or cultural backgrounds, as well as their potential for knowledge hiding, should be one of the most critical preconditions for the development of effective and flexible knowledge management systems. These systems should be compatible with the preferences, approaches, and styles of the members of globally functioning transnational corporations (Ardichvili et al., 2006).

Hence, this kind of research is precious for organizations as it assists them in determining if their knowledge system design aligns with organizational members' perceptions, cultural norms, and preferred communication, thinking, and learning styles shaped by their respective cultural backgrounds (Woodrow & Tamulionyte-Lentz, 2000). This is why researchers worldwide increasingly call for more studies in this area, so firms can develop knowledge management systems that align with the cultural values and patterns of their employees (Jasimuddin & Saci, 2022; Jiacheng et al., 2010; Matzler & Mueller, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014). Despite these calls, research in this area is still in its early stages. Therefore, this paper aims to better understand and comprehend this topic through the lens of Hofstede's cultural taxonomy (1980, 1991).

Literature Review

Knowledge

Extant literature presents several definitions of knowledge based on different viewpoints, highlighting different dimensions of this important construct. Davenport and Prusak (1998) believe organizational 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." These organizational experiences and insights are "absorbed" by organizations and later seen through various practices and processes. While defining knowledge management, most researchers have used the word "process," the process of identifying, capturing, storing, and disseminating a company's collective expertise to fully capitalize on it when or wherever it is available or can be accessed (Blake, 1998).

The overwhelming significance of knowledge management intensifies the challenge to organizations in acquiring and leveraging knowledge, especially tacit knowledge, which tends to remain in employees' brains and is owned by them

(Dulaimi, 2007). If not used, this knowledge will either be outdated or lost if those employees leave the organization. Therefore, sharing knowledge among individuals from various backgrounds, viewpoints, and perspectives is critical for creating new knowledge. Meso and Smith (2000) have emphasized the development of a learning organization that may promote a culture of collaboration and sharing of knowledge. Furthering this idea, Davenport and Prusak (1998) have urged knowledge managers and officers to possess the necessary human and technological talents to excel in their relevant roles.

Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Hiding

Organizational knowledge sharing has been crucial for organizations and individuals to survive and thrive. Hence, it should not be surprising that knowledge sharing has emerged as a vital constituent of organizations' knowledge management initiatives (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Knowledge sharing refers to individuals' behavior of disseminating personal know-how to others (Ryu et al., 2003) and hence "is the act of making knowledge available to others within the organization" (Ipe, 2003, p. 341) according to Cummings (2004) it is "the provision or receipt of task information, know-how, and feedback regarding a product or procedure." The process of sharing includes an individual's readiness to donate knowledge (Osterloh & Frey, 2000) and mindful efforts to make that knowledge correctly decoded, understood, and applied by the recipient (Ipe, 2003).

Knowledge has been increasingly documented as a cardinal aspect of achieving competitive advantage (Meso & Smith, 2000; Grant, 1997). Researchers and scholars are converging on the point that creation and knowledge sharing, no doubt, can help achieve a competitive lead in today's competitive environment (Drucker, 1994; McCampbell et al., 1999). On the other hand, knowledge is the only resource that resides in employees' minds and is not consumed by using it. Instead, the more it is used, the more its value is enhanced and can enhance the worth of other capital resources, and the disuse of the same may lead to loss due to forgetfulness (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Ford & Chan, 2003). Wenger and Synder (2000) have posited how firms exploit the power of information with the help of cross-functional, cross-hierarchical, and cross-cultural teams to generate new ideas and create new knowledge.

Moreover, effective knowledge sharing is the prerequisite for organizational learning (Senge, 2006) and the firm's innovativeness (Leonard, 1995). However, the new knowledge must be integrated with their prevailing knowledge base to capitalize on organizational knowledge fully. Organizational knowledge integration is essential since knowledge sharing occurs at different times, venues, and levels among individuals, teams, and firms (Foss, 2009; Ipe, 2003). According to Argote and Ingram

(2000), individual knowledge sharing is also essential since individuals are the primary players in organizational knowledge transfer.

However, another side of the coin, i.e., knowledge hiding conceptualized by Connelly et al. (2012) as an intentional attempt to withhold and conceal knowledge when requested by another person, is a negative workplace behavior that disrupts the flow of knowledge in organizations. This behavior can take many forms, such as playing dumb, hiding evasively, or hiding behind justifications. This behavior is deemed harmful in the workplace since it impedes the open exchange of knowledge and information inside the business. Employee knowledge hiding damages relationships prevents teamwork and can create a toxic work atmosphere. Lack of information-sharing results can hinder decision-making, stifle creativity, and eventually impair organizational performance.

Culture

Culture originates from the Latin word “colere”, which means to develop, cultivate, or prosper. Scholars and philosophers like Voltaire, Hegel, Kant, Freud, and Marcuse have mirrored the word “culture” connotation differently when relating to its use. Owing to this, different perspectives and paradigms have emerged regarding the term “culture.” Due to these different schools of thought, culture has been an elusive concept when it comes to defining it since there are nearly one hundred different definitions of culture, such as “culture is a shared system of perceptions and values or a group who share a certain system of perceptions and values.” Kahal (1994) argued, "In international business dealings, ignorance of cultural differences is not just unfortunate, it is bad business.” This leads to asking a simple question: How knowledgeable is one about culture? However, several firms fail to recognize this.

Culture has created opportunities and challenges for firms due to the general lack of understanding about its effects on knowledge sharing, which has brought culture under the spotlight (Soley & Pandya, 2003). Hofstede (1991) defined culture as the “collective programming of the mind.” Scholars concur that all civilizations possess similar fundamental assumptions. However, how a particular group of people (society) addresses those assumptions tends to vary among cultures (King, 2007).

Social anthropologists have classified these issues as individuals’ relation with society, authority, masculinity, and femininity, how individuals address uncertainty and ambiguity, and how they narrate their feelings (Inkeles & Levinson, 1969). Individuals are taught ways of cognition, feeling, and behaving, starting from childhood and enduring throughout life. These foundations of cognitive programming, according to Hofstede (1991), “lie within the social environments in which one grew up and collected one’s life experiences” (p. 4). This development of thoughts, values, and

habits begins at home and develops under the influences of the immediate neighborhood, educational institutes, community, and overall society (Laurent, 1983).

National Culture's Effect on Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Hiding

Increasing globalization, international alliances, mergers, and acquisitions pave the way for project teams to consist of members belonging to differing national and cultural backgrounds (Phillips & Sackmann, 2002), thus increasing the possibility of heterogeneity inside project teams and the same might hinder knowledge sharing or boost knowledge hiding. That is why cross-cultural knowledge sharing has been one of the most widely explored research areas in knowledge management. Several researchers have documented the importance of studying national culture's impact on sharing and hiding knowledge, especially in a cross-cultural setting (Chow et al., 2000; Weir & Hutchings, 2005; Xiao, 2024; Zhang et al., 2014).

Many researchers have suggested that individuals' fundamental beliefs and values tend to be influenced by the social circumstances in which they breathe (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). National culture affects how people think and behave, talk and respond to others, gather knowledge, and express feelings. Based on this, it is logical to presume that culture should affect how knowledge is collected, processed, disseminated, or often hidden among individuals and organizations. It is imaginable that if the cultural patterns of a nation are dissimilar to organizational values in a multi-cultural or international firm, the organizational cultural patterns might dominate, at least from an organizational point of view, but this is yet to be proved and seems unlikely to happen since national culture tends to be more powerful and pervasive.

Regardless of other organizational factors, nationwide culture is more likely to influence individual knowledge behaviors (King, 2007). The ways nationwide culture can impact individual attitudes are visible; for instance, societal trends profoundly impact individuals' disposition to risk aversion. This may, for example, apply to individuals' knowledge-sharing behaviors of "sharing" and "hiding." Barton (1995) condenses this by noting, "Values serve as a knowledge-screening and control mechanism." The influence of national culture has been documented in the discussion of organizational innovation also, wherein it is revealed that individualism, lower power distance, higher tolerance for risk, and masculine values can improve innovation within organizations (Couto & Vieira, 2004; Nakata & Sivakumar, 1996).

Another study conducted by Khalil and Selim (2010) to analyze the cultural differences of the countries concerning information dissemination capacity found that the countries keeping high scores in uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, collectivism, and gender egalitarianism were found to be better in knowledge dissemination capacity, compared to those having a low score on these dimensions.

Hence, the attributes, approaches, and motivations regarding knowledge sharing of the members of a particular society might be relevant only to the cultural roots of that society, and the application of the same may be questionable in other cultural settings (Hofstede, 1984; Weir & Hutchings, 2005). Consequently, research on problems and challenges of cross-cultural knowledge sharing and hiding should be vital and crucial in the wake of the exceeding globalization of economies (Jasimuddin & Saci, 2022; Jiacheng et al., 2010).

Cultural Influences on Knowledge Sharing and Hiding per Hofstede's Taxonomy

To understand the cultural influences on knowledge sharing and hiding, we can seek guidance from the studies of Hofstede (2001), Trompenaars (1994), and Triandis (1995). Hofstede's work on intercultural interaction is undoubtedly among the most popular. In the 1980s, he analyzed thousands of IBM employees and, based on that, developed five dimensions for the study and comparison of various cultures, including individualism/collectivism, power distance, masculinity versus family, and uncertainty avoidance. With little difference, Trompenaars (1994) and Turner (1997) have also followed Hofstede's taxonomy in analyzing the cultural patterns of different societies throughout the globe. Many scholars criticized the work of Hofstede (Hanges & Marcus, 2004; Wilkesmann et al., 2009), and others have questioned its use due to its being presented about 35 years ago and based on only one organization, i.e., IBM. However, despite being aware of the criticism of Hofstede, the researcher considers Hofstede's suggested dimensions relevant for analyzing the effect of culture on knowledge sharing and hiding (Jasimuddin & Saci, 2022; Li, 2010; Siau et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2014).

GLOBE is another widely used model for cultural analysis. Conducted in 1990, GLOBE is based on the cultural study/analysis of 62 countries. Unlike Hofstede's model, which is based on a single company analysis, GLOBE is based on the analysis/study of 951 organizations (House et al., 2004). Like Trompenaar's and Hampden-Turner's models, some parameters of the GLOBE model are almost similar to Hofstede's suggested dimensions/parameters. Some scholars prefer the GLOBE model for cross-cultural analysis due to being relatively newer than those of Hofstede, Hampden-Turner, and Trompenaar (Wilkesmann et al., 2009). However, most cross-cultural studies in knowledge management have adopted Hofsted's taxonomy (Li, 2010; Möller & Svahn, 2004; Zhang et al., 2014). The researcher has selected four dimensions of Hofstede's cultural taxonomy: individualism/collectivism, power distance, masculinity versus femineity, and uncertainty avoidance, which can be relevant to knowledge sharing. Interestingly, GLOBE and other researchers have suggested all four dimensions. GLOBE developed another five dimensions, including

assertiveness, future orientation, institutional collectivism, human orientation, and gender Egalitarianism, which are excluded from this study (House et al., 2004).

Individualism and Collectivism

Undoubtedly, individualism and collectivism are some of the most significant criteria for cross-cultural studies and comparisons. After Hofstede's (1980) ground-breaking contribution, the individualism versus collectivism dimension has gained popularity in organizational sciences studies. Many researchers (Earley & Gibson, 1998; Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 1994; Triandis, 1989) have noted that the individualism vs. collectivism facet of cultural comparison is one of the most significant items to be used for analyzing and comparing the different cultures and societies of the world to understand the behavioral trends of their people and patterns of information processing (Bhagat et al., 2002). Individualism refers to the tendency of the members of a society to perceive their personal goals and well-being as superior to the goals and benefits of a more prominent social institution, e.g., a firm, family, or community.

On the other hand, collectivism emphasizes the goals and expectations of a larger group of society, e.g., a family, community, or organization, ahead of individuals' benefits or expectations. In other words, in individualism, individuals' rights are perceived to be more critical; in collectivism, society is perceived to be more important than the rights of individuals (Hofstede, 2001). This often directs the actions of individuals towards the service and well-being of the larger community or society (Trompenaars, 1994). USA, Canada, Australia, and most of the Western nations are perceived to be highly individualized nations. In contrast, most Eastern nations, including China, Japan, India, and South American nations, including Brazil, Argentina, etc., are perceived to be collectivist countries.

Concerning knowledge sharing behaviors in the context of individualism and collectivism, Fong et al. (2013) note that a society keeping a higher score on individualism might be less favorable to stimulate knowledge sharing; since individualists mostly tend to believe in self-being and depend on themselves instead of others, hence, they usually do not feel inclined to receive or share knowledge with others. Bhagat et al. (2002) note that individualistic and collectivist stances strongly impact thinking patterns, particularly concerning processing, interpreting, and using the body of knowledge. This carries evidence that in processing information, individualists generally adopt an "objective" approach by treating "themselves" as "independent" of immediate surroundings and perceiving each piece of information as being separate from its context (Markus et al., 1996; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

On the other hand, people in collectivist societies try to adopt a "subjective" stance when they receive information. They try to find context-oriented signs from the

given information and see “themselves” as “interdependent” with others within their immediate social atmosphere (Kagitcibasi, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Additionally, when the knowledge relates to organizational history, norms and values, work rules, patterns of obligations, and in-group and out-group issues, collectivists tend to be very interested and pay attention to it. They tend to be sensitive to attaining, comprehending, disseminating, and applying this knowledge. On the contrary, individualists tend to be more likely to be attentive and enthusiastic in attaining and retaining such type of knowledge, which relates to individual personality characteristics, such as feelings, attitudes, actions, and reactions toward an event, person, or object (Bhagat et al., 2002). Individualists tend to show rationality in receiving and sharing knowledge compared to collectivists (Triandis, 1998).

Regarding knowledge hiding, the focus on autonomy and personal achievement in individualist cultures frequently results in knowledge hiding. People could see knowledge as a personal advantage that gives them a competitive edge and raises their organizational status. Sharing information might lessen their worth, which would affect job security. Systems of rewards and recognition that place a premium on individual achievement further incentivize this behavior as workers compete to be the only ones recognized for their achievements. Furthermore, people with transactional relationships and low levels of trust are unwilling to give knowledge because they worry about it being misused or not reciprocated (Boz Semerci, 2019). Conversely, individuals are more inclined to share information for the good of the group in collectivist cultures (Ma et al., 2022).

Power Distance

Another important dimension of culture, according to Hofstede (1980), is power distance (House et al., 2004). In a high power-distance society, inequalities are generally seen and expected, whereas, in a low-power-distance society, power and position-based inequalities tend to be minimized. A high-power distance-oriented society tends to accept the differences in power positions between seniors and juniors, elders and youngsters, and employers and employees (Siau et al., 2010). People in power-distant societies perceive their “being” to be distinctive or superior to others regarding social class, social status, and social identity. In contrast, in low power-distant cultures, people perceive their own "being" almost the same as others (Triandis, 1995, 1998). Most Asian and African societies tend to be characterized by high power distance, and most European and North American nations tend to be characterized by low power orientation.

In high-power distant cultures, the flow of information follows a top-to-bottom pattern within the firms, so seniors or people on the top tend to have the first right or access to any significant information from within or outside the organization. Top-level

managers may also be able to decide the time and place for disseminating that knowledge. They might even withhold some part or whole of that information. It is also worth mentioning that the superiors may not even have the technical abilities and relevant expertise to make important decisions about distributing that knowledge. However, because of their higher position or status in the organization, they tend to enjoy such powers and privileges. Moreover, the use of language may change for differing situations in power-distant cultures, wherein contents and forms of greetings, meetings, and communication styles tend to vary, keeping in view the position and status of the sender and receiver of knowledge (Bhagat et al., 2002).

Prior research has produced mixed results regarding the impact of power distance on knowledge exchange concerning the combined working of the organizational members belonging to high and low power distance cultures, has mixed findings. Researchers argue that if the knowledge sharer belongs to a low-power culture and the receiver belongs to a high-power culture, then knowledge sharing will be at ease, and the sharing will occur smoothly with minimum bottlenecks. In this situation, the accommodating and facilitating role of the sharer of knowledge will make the whole knowledge-sharing process conducive and trouble-free.

On the other hand, cultural mismatches can negatively influence the process of knowledge sharing. For instance, if the knowledge sharer belongs to a high-power distance culture and the receiver belongs to a lower-power-distance culture. The process of sharing will not be that easy and conducive because of the autocratic attitude of the sharer. US-Japanese joint ventures demonstrate that knowledge sharing and learning are often hampered and fail when knowledge providers, instead of respecting them, try to enact norms and rules against their foreign partners (Inkpen, 1996). Ardichvili et al., 2006 conducted their study in three high-power distance countries: Russia, China, and Brazil. They assumed high power as a barrier restricting knowledge sharing, but their results did not support their hypothesis. They found that differences in power position and hierarchical variations could not hamper knowledge sharing.

Alternatively, when it comes to knowledge hiding, in high power distance cultures, subordinates may do so out of fear of consequences or to preserve their position in the hierarchy. The motivation behind this behavior is a desire to stay out of trouble with the status quo and avoid questioning authority. Furthermore, sharing knowledge could be interpreted as going too far, resulting in confrontations with superiors. As a result, workers would instead withhold vital information from others to maintain their standing in the company and avoid inadvertently upsetting the status quo. This may result in a knowledge bottleneck that impedes the general innovation and growth of the organization (Jahanzeb et al., 2019).

Masculinity and Femininity

Another of Hofstede's dimensions is masculinity versus femininity. Masculinity and its opposite, femininity, illuminate the gender-based roles and values in each society. Hofstede's study (1991, 2001) found that the roles and values of women differ from those of men. Men tend to be assertive, competitive, and dominant, and women tend to be concerned about quality of life, equality, care, and societal well-being. These values tend to be observed in the national cultures of the countries. Countries keeping high scores on masculinity (e.g., Japan, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and China) tend to be characterized by the values of assertiveness, achievement, and competitiveness, and countries keeping low scores on masculinity (e.g., Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Netherland and Australia) tend to be possessing the values of quality of life, care and social wellbeing.

Masculinity has been defined in the GLOBE project as "performance orientation." The research suggests that members of high-performance-oriented cultures may hide their knowledge to become more competitive and retain their organizational power position. The available empirical evidence demonstrates this fact. For example, researchers (Chow et al., 2000; Li, 2010; Wilkesman et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2014;) found in their research that in many cases, organizational members of high-performance-oriented countries like China, Japan, and Hong Kong tried to hide their knowledge keeping in view that knowledge is power, so why should they lose their power and position. Wilkesman et al. (2009) after their research recommended some financial incentives for people of high performance-oriented or masculine values possessing societies like China, Japan, and Hong Kong to discourage their trends of hiding and apprehensiveness regarding knowledge sharing since the respondents had endorsed the same in the interviews. The study of Dulaimi (2007) also corroborated the idea that the members of masculine society tend to hide their knowledge or at least not be open and flexible in sharing their knowledge. In the study of Rivera et al. (2009), knowledge sharing seemed better due to the feminine values of the organizations operating in Puerto Rico.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Another essential element of cultural manifestation mentioned in Hofstede's taxonomy and GLOBE is tolerance for uncertainty or risk (House et al., 2004). Uncertainty avoidance defines how individuals of a given society can tolerate uncertainty, ambiguity, and lack of structured rules and safety measures. The members of a society keeping high scores on uncertainty avoidance (Italy, Korea, Mexico, Belgium, Russia, and Japan) can be easily endangered by risky and uncertain situations. They want to avoid uncertainty with proper measures, rules, and initiatives. That is why uncertainty-avoiding cultures, or, in other words, low-risk-

oriented cultures, adopt strict rules and well-defined systems for most life affairs. Conversely, countries with low scores on uncertainty avoidance, such as the United States, England, India, China, and Singapore, can avoid strict rules and structured systems (Usoro & Kuoifie, 2006).

Considering the influence of culture on individuals' behaviors, it is logical to expect that individuals' tendencies and attitudes toward risk-taking should be heavily impacted by national culture and, as a result, affect the knowledge-sharing behaviors of the individuals. The members of societies with high scores on uncertainty avoidance would like to avoid ambiguity in receiving knowledge. They, hence, will prefer to receive explicit or codified information rather than tacit knowledge. Moreover, this may result in "knowledge-sharing" versus "knowledge-hiding" behavior (King, 2007) since high uncertainty-avoiding individuals tend to have lots of risks in their minds regarding the sharing of knowledge (Patrick et al., 2000). Therefore, it reflects in their attitude towards sharing knowledge. Barton (1995) portrays the above idea best by emphasizing the values of uncertainty avoidance, and the members of these societies provide knowledge screening and control mechanisms.

According to Wilkesmann et al. (2009), in cultures having high scores on uncertainty avoidance, like Japan, Belgium, and Russia, etc. knowledge sharing might be seen as a very formal process, following strict rules, and as a result, it may require a relatively long time to develop a system of knowledge management to facilitate knowledge exchange. Whereas in cultures with low scores on uncertainty aversion, knowledge sharing may be more informal and unorganized, characterized by less restrictive rules and regulations, and the people of these cultures might be more open and flexible in sharing their knowledge with anyone regardless of cultural similarity or other factors. People may be less concerned about testing the shared information's validity, reliability, and quality (Wilkesman et al., 2009).

Hofstede argues that since the Chinese come from a culture with high uncertainty avoidance, they prefer to look for a proper match or commanding answers in the sharing process. In contrast, since they come from a low uncertainty avoidance society, Americans generally look for various types of explicit information and integrate them to create new knowledge. Japan is a high-risk avoiding country, and research studies (Dulaimi, 2007; Peltokorpi, 2006) have found that Japanese tend to avoid the risk of sharing their knowledge, being very careful and selective in sharing their knowledge with others, even with their colleagues, and business partners. This, as mentioned before, results in the Japanese hiding of knowledge. On the other hand, Americans and Germans (low uncertainty avoidance oriented) proved to be less formal, more open, and flexible in sharing their knowledge with their colleagues regardless of

ethnicity or cultural homogeneity (Chow et al., 2000; Jiacheng et al., 2010; Li, 2010; Zhang et al., 2014;).

Managerial Implications

The research offers important implications for managers and practitioners. Considering the existing literature and empirical findings, this study establishes the critical impact of culture on knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding in a cross-cultural working environment. It further calls upon the organizations to understand the issues and challenges of cross-cultural knowledge dynamics and plan accordingly to mitigate the challenges of cultural influences on knowledge sharing and hiding.

First, the role of human resource managers and knowledge officers tends to be critical in this context. Human resource managers and knowledge systems designers need to develop and incorporate important aspects of cultural values into the working systems of organizations (Ryan et al., 2010). Knowledge managers need to minimize the cultural differences among the workers and take all necessary initiatives to reduce cultural misunderstandings and biases. Providing proper training and orientation to employees about the various cultures in a localized or international context can be very practical and helpful.

Second, for in-group and out-group trends of knowledge sharing, as mostly seen among collectivists, is the creation and promotion of informal channels of knowledge sharing. Since knowledge sharing among employees of similar cultural groups tends to travel through informal channels and among employees of dissimilar cultural groups tends to travel through formal channels, research suggests that informal communication channels reduce the strange feelings from the organizational members, bringing them closer to other groups (Voelpel & Han, 2005). Moreover, research has also proved that knowledge transmitted through informal channels tends to be more creative and personalized, resulting in a sense of belongingness among the sharers (Ford & Chan, 2002). Informal cross-cultural meetings and mixing can also be constructive in discouraging the grouping of employees on an ethnic basis.

Third, empirical research suggests that emotional intelligence can significantly facilitate employee knowledge transfer. Based on this, knowledge managers should use emotional intelligence-related practices to encourage employees of dissimilar cultures to share knowledge. Fourth, organizational culture's role can be critical in minimizing the cultural barriers to knowledge sharing. The organization's culture should be developed and modified to encourage knowledge sharing among the employees regardless of caste, color, or creed (Sánchez et al., 2012). For this purpose, cultivating trust among the employees is essential since trust reduces strange feelings, leads to

mutual and collaborative work, and facilitates sharing knowledge within diversified groups (Voelpel & Han, 2005).

Fifth, managers of individualistic cultures should foster a sense of community and collective goals to mitigate the negative impacts of knowledge hiding on organizational performance. Organizations need to focus on building trust among employees to reduce the incidence of knowledge hiding. In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, providing clear guidelines and support can help reduce anxiety and promote a more open sharing environment. Lastly, managers should implement training programs that address cultural differences in knowledge hiding behaviors. In masculine cultures, training on the benefits of collaboration over competition can help shift the focus toward collective success.

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