CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUALIZATION OF STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the conceptualization and connection of two primary concepts—'Knowledge' and 'Culture', rationalizing a particular view of these concepts in this research and their relationship. The chapter further details the conceptualization of the study, a critical part of the exploratory stage. While dealing with these two constructs, I figured out that whenever we study 'knowledge' it is considered to be esoteric, and studying 'culture' is like dealing with the uncomplicated and obvious as everyone knows about it but hardly understands. I am not attempting to define any of the concepts but explaining its conceptualized for this study.

2.2 Knowledge: Moving beyond Dichotomies

"We cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant"

Sadler 1979 [1900]:49

Michael Sadler pointed out the jeopardy in decontextualizing knowledge without understanding its relevance to the other contexts, and how reckless borrowing leads to a devaluation of knowledge. Any researcher studying knowledge management can hardly get away with the temptation of defining the complex and multifaceted knowledge construct. Debates about knowledge and its nature appeared in philosophical literature since the classical Greek period, and the first definition of knowledge was given by the great philosopher Plato as “Justified true belief.” The criterion applied to the word 'true' is justification and justifications are always relative to an audience. The knowledge debate to date underscores its complexities, but so far, there is no universally agreed upon definition exhausting all-encompassing characteristics of knowledge. Jashapara (2004) grouped idealist philosophers like Plato, Kant, Hegel, Sartre, etc. who considered knowledge as an entity within human mind, and empirical Philosophers like Aristotle, Dewey, Hume, Locke, etc. who viewed knowledge as evolving from human senses. The scholars of the sociology of knowledge argue that all knowledge is subject to change and was pre-eminently shaped by their social conditions thus focus should be on the process
of change and relative character of knowledge. Some of the important, philosophically tricky questions are—Whether we can analyze knowledge? What qualifies to be knowledge and on what basis is the importance of knowledge examined? Discourse on knowledge captures knowledge in a particular context and despite a significant diversity in the approach to view knowledge, there are certain commonalities and keeping the concept expansive will be advantageous.

The conventional assumption about a unidirectional movement from data to wisdom on the continuum is not as neat as it appears to be. Contextualization forms the basis of categorization of these elements and the process of de-contextualization reduces the value of knowledge. Most of the models in the KM domain are grounded in the erroneous assumption that the movement is unidirectional.

Fig-2: Knowledge Continuum

Knowledge is a crucial driver of a firm’s value (Spender 1996a) and resides in people, the transformation of personal to organizational knowledge is a complicated process. The organizational knowledge is an outcome of the creative processes of intersubjective meaning making to gain a competitive advantage in the business and to innovate.

The dominant discourse in the lexicon of organizational KM revolves around

1. Typologies of knowledge:
   
   Clarity on typologies makes an analysis of knowledge comprehensive and meaningful. Thus, it guides its applicability at the workplace. The available literature on typologies trivializes the concept of knowledge and its instrumentality.
2. Ownership of knowledge

Discussion on the ownership of knowledge is imperative for both the parties (People and Management\(^9\)) to recalibrate their understanding of the ‘Superior Me’ & ‘Who Makes Whom’. As both the stakeholders work in tandem, but explicit agreement on this ensures constructive collaboration.

2.2.1 Knowledge Dichotomies:

Authors investigated knowledge in the organizational context by segregating it into different types based on the dominant typologies as given below:

Fernandez and Sabherwal (2014) differentiated corporate knowledge into three types:
- Intellectual capital— patents, expertise and other intellectual property.
- Human Capital— Knowledge of individual employees.
- Organizational Capital— Knowledge residing in manuals, procedures and rules in the form of codified knowledge.

Blacker (1995) differentiated organizational knowledge into five images of organizational culture:
- Embained Knowledge— Knowledge in the form of models and theories
- Embodied Knowledge— Knowledge intricately linked to physical skills
- Encultured Knowledge— Knowledge as shared sense-making
- Encoded Knowledge— Knowledge stored in documents
- Embedded Knowledge— Integrated knowledge that connects people and methods

Davenport and Prusak (1999) categorized knowledge as:
- Human Knowledge: It refers to individual know-how i.e. skill or expertise.
- Social Knowledge: It reflects relationship knowledge which exists in networks in the organization.
- Cultural Knowledge: It reflects a collective understanding of context.
- Structured knowledge: It indicates knowledge embedded in an organization’s systems, processes, tools and routines.

Spender (1996a) classified knowledge along two dimensions— 1. Knowledge held by an individual or by a collective, and 2. Knowledge articulated explicitly or manifested implicitly.

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\(^9\) While referring to two parties, Management refers to Organization as a separate entity
Most of the authors considered dichotomy or bifurcation as the best way to deal with the complexity of knowledge or handling the operational issues of knowledge in the organization. However, considering one basis or criterion for classification of knowledge, further creates confusion by focusing on a single perspective. Knowledge is a complex construct that does not fit in traditional binary perspective. Segregating knowledge into dichotomies does not add value to the quality of analysis or practical utility of knowledge at a workplace. Though the dichotomy of knowledge does not agree with one and refute the other, but it does not give a holistic view about knowledge.

2.2.2 Knowledge Defined:

Knowledge is like light, weightless and intangible, which can easily travel across the world, enlightening the lives of people everywhere (World Development Report, 1998: 99). Knowledge is dynamic, context-specific, inherently distributed, discursive, and created due to social interactions amongst individuals and organizations. Neoclassical economist Alfred Marshall (1891) analyzed knowledge as an important part of capital and the most powerful engine of productions but organizations lacked clarity on handling this element of production which cannot be viewed as is the case of physical activity (Zuboff, 1988). Authors working in the knowledge domain use the term 'knowledge' and 'information' interchangeably. One of the most accepted definitions of knowledge is the one proposed by Davenport and Prusak (1998: 5) “Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experiences, values, contextual information, expert insights that provide a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information.” Knowledge viewed as ‘encultured’, or an outcome of shared sense-making, is defined as “knowledge is a social construction that cannot be fully understood separate from the situation in which it comes about (Weisinger & Salipante, 2000). Based on the concept of shared sense making, Tsoukas and Vladimirou (2001: 979) defined knowledge as “the individual’s ability to draw distinctions within a collective domain of action, based on an appreciation of context or theory, or both.” This conceptualization considers the agency of human beings in making a distinction. And, organizational knowledge is the competence people in the organization have developed to draw distinctions while carrying out work in a particular context and collective understanding enhances the applicability of the knowledge to a specific context.

Most of the studies in the KM domain considered Nonaka and Takeuchi’s typology differentiating knowledge as tacit and explicit erroneously assuming Polanyi’s proposal “We can know more than we can tell.” The major criticism of this assumption was from Tsoukas (1996) for wrong interpretation of tacit knowledge based on Polanyi’s
conceptualization where he stated that Polanyi suggested that tacit and explicit are mutually constituted and not mutually exclusive since the explicit knowledge is always grounded in tacit understanding (Polanyi, 1966). Tsoukas explained, “tacit knowledge is the necessary component of all knowledge; it is not made up of discrete beans which can be grounded, lost or reconstituted” (1996:14). Researchers justify affiliation to this typology of explicit and tacit knowledge by area problematized for the study.

2.2.3 Explicit Knowledge and Tacit Knowledge:

Explicit knowledge can be easily codified, readily transferable and forms the basis for all planning in the organization. However, it is the tacit knowledge which is crucial at the time of emergency in the fast changing situations. Tacit knowledge, identified as ‘sticky’ knowledge or knowledge with stickiness, is hard to transfer, codify and imitate. Stickiness factor of knowledge refers to the way in which knowledge adheres to particular individuals or contexts making transfer tough (Dosi,1988; Polanyi 1966; Hippel.V 1994; Wright 1997). 50-90% of the knowledge in the organization is tacit, and it could be seen as one of the factors obstructing the successful implementation of KM (Horak,2001). Reed and Defilippi (1990:89) defined tacitness as the implicit and uncodifiable accumulation of skills that result from learning by doing. Wagner and Sternberg (1985) refer to tacit knowledge which is difficult to teach directly. Schulz and Jobe (2001: 142) assume that “all tacit knowledge can potentially be translated into explicit knowledge.” Polanyi (1966) stated that “we can know more than we can tell”, labelling this pre-logical phase of knowing as tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge entrenched in direct experience and actions forms a significant chunk of organizational knowledge and is difficult to articulate. Organizations encourage face to face interaction for sharing tacit knowledge, it being the most preferred and efficient method with a feedback loop. Capturing and applying tacit knowledge from employees, partners, vendors, external researchers, and retirees will help solve problems which occur in real time.

2.2.4 Knowledge Process or a Product:

A majority of KM literature, viewed knowledge as a product or a static object. Thus, technology based mechanistic KMS were easily accepted (Davenport &Prusak 1998) and human-oriented approach of KM was neglected(Sveiby 1997) since it did not fit in the established codification system. Organization’s perspective on knowledge decides the kind of KMS they implement and the way work is being structured in the organization. Some organizations settle for combination, buying or developing technology and design work processes keeping in mind importance of human factor and few firms design KMS
based on the dynamic nature of knowledge. They consider social networks as a base and how they align resources to achieve a common goal.

What gives dynamism to organizational knowledge is the dialect between general and particular. Without the general no action is possible. And without the particular no action may be effective (McCarthy, 1994: 68). Knowledge of IT industry is regarded as 'content' and, therefore, treated as 'Object' (Alavi&Leidner, 2001), knowledge is seldom seen as a human act, an event or a happening so it is void of agent and context. By not aligning with the position, most of the theorists take i.e. consider knowledge as a static object (which mostly leads to dichotomies), this research looks at Knowledge as more processual for the epistemic communities within the firm.

2.2.5 Individual Knowledge:

Human knowledge is subjective without any absolute meaning since a knower makes a sense of reality using apriori concepts which are archetypes to build new knowledge. Human knowledge cannot capture the essence of reality, so we characterize it for a particular purpose. In an organization, for task performance, integrating thinking and doing is essential thus, knowledge work is analyzed at two levels:

- Pragmatic level: Actual work practices to accomplish tasks and
- Conceptual level: Task expressed as overall objectives which guide association between performance and process.

![Diagram](image.png)

Fig 3: Individual level Knowledge (Lundvall& Johnson, 1994)
For understanding knowledge at an individual level, Lundvall and Johnson, (1994) divided knowledge into four types

1. Know-what: It refers to the knowledge about the content which is very near to facts and is easy to codify.

2. Know-why: It refers to principles and laws of motion in all the realms of society and a human mind. This type of knowledge cannot be codified to a greater extent due to relative interpretation.

3. Know-how refers to skills of artisans, workers, and advanced skills. The skills form a significant part of individual competence and are directly related to economic output. People combine expertise and personal knowledge i.e. explicit and tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1958, 1978) to be most effective on the job. The literature on KM domain analyzed know how to a greater extent due to its maximum utility value for an organization.

4. Know-who: refers to who knows what and who knows what needs to be done. The focus is more on the individual actor and his social ability to communicate, collaborate to work successfully in the group. Know-who is highly context dependent and refers to personal competence combining information and social relationships. The organizational context supports or hinders the formation of know-who and the form it takes. This study tries to investigate the context an organization offers to individuals to be more efficient.

2.2.6 Organizational Knowledge:

In the Knowledge Age, neither resources nor capital can create sustainable competitive advantage as much superior knowledge (Buckman 2004). Hence, ownership of knowledge and the ability to utilize that knowledge to improve goods and services determines wealth (Savage 1995). TAT &Hase (2007) argues that knowledge of the enterprise (the collective), and employee (individual), impacts productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness thus organizational knowledge needs to be garnered, retained, updated, disseminated, and applied to future organizational challenges (Malhotra, 2000). Research in the domain of KM has shown a close coupling between knowledge and actions people take at workplace(Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Choo 1998; Suchman 1987). Organizations are collections of knowledge assets (Wenger 1998: 46 ;Kay 1993:73) strategically configured and utilized to offer best products to the end-users (Penrose 1980; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995) by enhancing knowledge creating capacity. Firms employ their assets differently and put the configuration yielding the best output by
continuous experimentation and modification (Tsoukas, 1996). Organizational knowledge investigated by scholars viewed it as a collective, which is not just cumulative, but more than the total of individual expertise of people at the workplace. Wittgenstein (1958) proposed that all knowledge in a fundamental way is collective which is supported by Penrose’s (1959) work on the theory of the firm which investigates how organizational knowledge is achieved through collective shared understanding. Weick (1995) conceptualized organizational knowledge and collective knowledge as separate categories which combined gives strategic advantage to the organization. Collective knowledge is created through social interaction and bottom-up innovation whereas organizational knowledge is created due to norms and processes in the organization. Brown & Duguid (2001) suggest that knowledge flow in the organizations is best understood by investigating the workflow and related work processes. Alavi & Leidner (2001:108) claims that knowledge gets embedded in and flows through multiple entities including organizational culture and identity, routines, policies, systems, and documents, as well as individual employees.

To make the best use of Individual and organizational knowledge, firms implement KM and the rationality of the KM initiative and technique encourages people to participate actively in knowledge cycle by reinforcing the value of knowledge sharing in the organization. The organizations apart from technical platforms offer avenues for interaction and those offering fewer avenues eventually experience maximum knowledge leakage. The presence of best technological platforms and socialization initiatives does not reduce the difficulty of capturing or sharing knowledge. While illustrating the main obstacles in capturing knowledge Bhatt (2002) remarks that knowledge is harder to control compared to manufacturing activities as “only part of the knowledge is internalized by an organization, the other part is internalized by an individual.” This observation strengthens the argument, ‘Knowledge sharing is crucial’, since, if it is not shared, the knowledge internalized by an individual creator will stay with him. Technology, processes, and systems are enablers, but the value of knowledge enhances only when it is shared, developed, and applied to the radical innovation of which human beings are the principal actors to optimize it.

2.2.7 Transformation of Individual Knowledge to Organizational Knowledge:
Knowledge is an unfinished product in motion and is a most valuable asset (Winter 1987) and the only reliable source of competitive advantage (Drucker 1987). Organizations can exploit knowledge if they have a good understanding of how it is created, shared and used in the firm. The knowledge spiral explained by Nonaka and
Takeuchi explains the increased stock of knowledge as it moves from individual to group and finally to the organizational level. Knowledge-based theory of the firm could not sufficiently articulate the build-up from individual to organizational knowledge (Foss, 1999: 741) as the analyzability of knowledge remains a complex in the organization.

![Diagram of Individual to Organisational Knowledge Transformation]

**Fig – 4: Transformation of Individual to Organisational Knowledge**

### 2.2.8 Knowledge Codification and Technology:

As Kevin Kelly writes, ‘wealth flows directly from innovation, not an optimization; that is wealth is not gained by perfecting the known but by imperfectly seizing the unknown’... the future lies in connections, not computers.’ The uniqueness of an idea is relative to the time as a lapse in implementing an idea might kill the idea itself. Organizations consider indiscriminate information as knowledge but identifying knowledge which adds value is critical and organizations need to orient employees for information curation to avoid disorientation due to information overload. Simply capturing knowledge in a database is not effective as technologies only serve as passive infrastructure (Wiig2004:4) in an organization. Many organizations rely heavily on technology and codification process by investing significant amount but process of codification is not easy and amount of knowledge which can be codified is also relatively less. KMS, which helps to capture explicit knowledge, can be easily replicated. Thus, it barely has sustained competitive advantage (Jackson et al. 2003) but some authors counter argue that organizational learning theorist downplayed the value of explicit knowledge by focusing excessively on tacit knowledge (Brown &Duguid, 1998).

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10 Information curation refers to categorizing and selecting information as per business relevance.
A majority of KM literature, viewed knowledge as a product or a static object. Thus, technology based mechanistic KMS were easily accepted (Davenport 1997) and human-oriented approach of KM was neglected (Sveiby 1997) since it did not fit in the established codification system. Organization's perspective on knowledge decides the kind of KMS it implements and the way it structures its work. Some organizations settle for combination, buying or developing technology and design work processes keeping in mind the importance of human factor and few firms design KMS based on the dynamic nature of knowledge. They consider social networks as a base and how they align resources to achieve a common goal.

Controlling the nature of knowledge by codification impacts power structure within the organization. The close coupling between power and knowledge as emphasized by Foucault (Gordon, 1980) is important to understand subjugation of specific knowledge in the organization and why specific knowledge creation is possible in organizations. Codification, designing frameworks or analytics is not the best solution for every business but has certainly changed the discourse of KM literature. Shared code and language used in the codification technologies are in a way a strategy to exercise power through the exclusive & exclusion dilemma that Foucault (1972) has discussed in “The discourse on language.” It was made to appear that these are the best ways to share knowledge in the organization. Codifying human relations may have an adverse impact on their intrinsic value. In a sense, it is parallel to the observation that “you cannot buy trust and, if you could, it would have no value whatsoever” (Arrow, 1971). Some of the consequences of codification from organizations’ point of view have been summarized by Toulmin (1999-2000: 111-112) as

*When the tacit knowledge is articulated and data are created out of it, a lot of flexibility in interpretation is lost. This may lead to organizational rigidity. It may look attractive, for example, to create organization wide information system where the data repositories of data are used in all organizational processes. Underlying this view is sometimes an exceedingly empiricist and objectivist belief that when we get the “semantics” right the organization will be able to function as a perfect machine. …major challenge for designer of organizational memory is to understand, not only the relationships between the tacit and explicit stock of knowledge but also the cost of changing their relationships when the world changes.*

Knowledge creation and sharing processes include interactive learning and does not consider typologies of knowledge as a base since both the tacit and the explicit knowledge are complementary, and cannot substitute one another. The overwhelming variety and complexity of human societies require the localization of knowledge (Stiglitz 2000 [1999]:7). Even in the world development report 1998-99, the World Bank positioned itself as a ‘Knowledge Agency’ focusing on its crucial role in education, the
global-local knowledge tension, and bank’s role in knowledge management and sharing both internally and externally. Steve Denning (2001:135), the first director of knowledge management program of the World Bank, comments that "Ironically, at the very moment that it becomes technologically possible to move information instantaneously around the world, comes the recognition that the context in which knowledge arose is often crucial to understanding or exploiting it. Knowledge without context is not knowledge at all.

2.2.9 SUMMARY:

Knowledge is a fundamental part of human existence. In the landmark project, Working, Terkel(1972) observed that work is about the search for meaning in everyday life and knowledge helps to find that meaning. Knowledge is a fundamental resource for efficient execution of organizations’ mission. Duality\(^{11}\) of knowledge provides various ways in which the concept of knowledge is dealt with and also gives a feel about the complexity of the different perspectives. Categorizing, defining and measuring knowledge can lead to a philosophical morass. While at work, people cannot differentiate between tacit and explicit knowledge since these knowledge interact with each other forming a whole which makes them more effective at work. Knowledge accrues to people, teams and organizations. Knowledge will always remain a power hence the power of subject matter experts is increasing and irrespective of where in the hierarchy this person is, the power of network they are in increases. Most of the studies argue that people do not share knowledge out of fear that it makes them powerless making it necessary to orient people towards the long term benefits of this phenomenon to envision the importance of long-term benefits and can see situation in fresh and revealing ways which they will be more appreciative of.

Knowledge and knowledge sharing are strongly interwoven. Knowledge sharing is needed for the common ascription of meaning based on the existing knowledge making knowledge a 'collective resource'. The operational definition of knowledge for this study is given by Denning (2001) "the ideas or understandings which an entity possesses that are used to take effective action to achieve the entity's goal." The definition might appear to be just brushing the surface and losing out on few nuances and facets, but it is relevant to this study and captures the essence.

There are two postulates made by Polanyi (1962) that ‘every knowledge is grounded in tacit component’. This assumes that tacit and explicit knowledge are inseparable. The

\(^{11}\)The term " Duality " is defined by Wenger (1998:66 ) as "A single conceptual unit, that is formed by two inseparable and mutually constituted elements whose inherent tension and complementarities give the concept richness and dynamism"
second postulate is we know more than we talk about which assumes that we can unlearn knowledge with socialization. Mercer claims (1995:13) practical hands-on job can gain new depths of meaning if it is “talked about.” Thus, knowledge sharing enhances better understanding. Callon and Latour (1981) suggest knowledge itself is dynamic and contained within the actor networks; this forms a point of departure for this study. Knowledge is viewed as a process rather than a resource in the form of an object and is not categorised as viewed in previous studies but considers pluralistic complementary view of knowledge at workplace. Organizations should work to provide a context in which employees at every level become independent agents, take responsibility, experiment, make mistakes and learn to strive for continuous improvement in the organization’s growth process.

Proceeding this way challenges some conclusions and recommendations from established theories about knowledge and its management and why knowledge is an appropriate foundation for theory of a firm. Investment in knowledge and information doesn’t get destroyed or exhausted in consumption. Its value and meanings can be enjoyed again and again. The social value of ideas and information increases to the degree they can be shared with and used by others. Ideas and innovations have extensive externalities, their benefits typically extending well beyond those who first put them forward.

2.3 Culture: Character of an Organization

THE PEOPLE YOU PAY ARE MORE IMPORTANT OVER TIME THAN THE PEOPLE WHO PAY YOU

(LORSCH AND TIERNEY, 2002)

The concept of culture stems from two distinct disciplines- anthropology and sociology. Anthropology through an interpretive view considers culture as a socio-cultural system, a system of knowledge, of learned standards for perceiving, believing, assessing and acting. Sociology endorses a functionalist view and defines culture as something an organization possesses. Organizational culture is a phenomenon shared by people which support them to integrate into the organizational system. Culture is collective and shared by a group (Sackmann 1991; Schein 1985). It provides guidelines through which people interpret, interact and make sense of reality by administering a handy framework to illustrate behavior and thoughts of people. Every culture has a time and place in the competitive world depending on the context in which it is functional by harmonizing conflicting forces to assist incremental growth. Culture is a complex and "nested" phenomenon having various layers (Swindler, 1986) that shape how people from diverse background behave, network & builds relationships in the organization (De Long
Culture shapes people and to some extent, it is shaped by each of us by providing a system of behavioral patterns and gives meaning to action; it is the basis of acquired behavior (Schein, 1985). The strategic advantage of culture is that unlike technology, procedures and SOP of an organization, it is relatively difficult for competitors to emulate, as it is about how people relate to each other and their spirit together cannot be replicated without context.

In management literature, while analyzing culture, scholars envisaged it from a particular lens by committing to a distinct conceptual assumption which guides to a radical shift in the theoretical framework from conservative rational closed theories to more fluid, nimble theories which are favorable to analyze contemporary organizations. The commonality merging these conceptualizations is, making beliefs and values the central reference points. Beliefs separate people and values unite people at the workplace. In organizational studies, the most widely used framework is by Edgar Schein proposing a functionalist view describing culture as a unique arrangement of assumptions originated, discovered or refined by people while dealing with external environment and internal integration. These underlying assumptions form the essence of an organization and values in the culture have intrinsic worth as the values in the culture talk about what the organization stands for.

There are opposing views about measuring culture within the management literature. Many scholars feel that measuring culture is not desirable but should be just describable. There is an old truism in professional business management that goes “if you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it.” This is the best method of making it more efficient for taking it to the desired stage. Similar is the case for culture, if it is important and needs to be changed, one should have clarity on what to change and how much to change. Thus, appraising organizational culture by quantifying it through different attributes or components is crucial.

For this study, synchronic view of culture is considered wherein, culture is studied at a particular point in time and space without taking cognizance of how it has evolved. Structural - functionalists view culture as an adaptive mechanism by which people operate as an ordered community in a given context but this argument, considering organizations as a part of sub-systems of society seems erroneous due to its inability to explain the difference between cultures of two organizations falling in the same social context. The cultural difference between two organizations might be due to historical roots, or distinct phases organization might have gone through. Culture is that feature of the organization with which insiders live, conform to it to have a better acceptance from other people and outsiders experience culture.
2.3.1 Sociability and solidarity:

Organizations stand for something more meaningful than just the vision statement and strategies. The meaningfulness of the organization is due to the people who make the organization. Firms are consciously created by entrepreneurs for a specific purpose (Schumpeter, 1942) and are the product of human association and interactions in a specific context (North, 1991). Organizations work on the principle of differentiation and coordination (Koonitz and O'Donnel, 1972) of tasks to attain common goals in a specific context. The forces to disintegrate an organization are powerful than those working to collaborate in the business environment making culture a powerful tool to hold companies together by building internal resilience and agility to make the best use of opportunities. When the successful organizations simply give the reason that it is in their DNA and that DNA is invisible culture.

Business cannot be a zero sum game, (we win and they lose) the survival of the entire organization is important. People do not believe in just economic relations with the firm but are ready to give more in return to enhanced learning and employability. Expectations from organizations and workplace have changed to a greater extent as the manner in which people view career and work have changed drastically. Hence, people have a lesser sense of betrayal or loss when they exit. Organizational Culture binds people through socialization and at the same time guides to accomplish common goals. Based on this premise Goffee and Jones (2003) proposed a framework to assess culture through the lens of sociology, dividing the community into two types of distinct relations: Sociability and Solidarity. Sociability refers to sincere friendliness among people and the way they relate to others in the organization. Increasing sociability abruptly in the organization is tricky as people know when it is authentic so if balanced well, sociability has a great levelling effect. Sociability develops among people who share similar ideas, values, personal histories, attitudes and interests (Lee, 2001). These factors provide a fertile environment to share knowledge. Sociability also leads to trust among people that in turn helps knowledge sharing at the workplace (Ahmed, Lim and Loh, 2002). Solidarity is driven by clarity about goals, values and purpose and refers to the community's ability to pursue a shared goal effectively, regardless of personal ties. Solidarity gives a robust framework by aligning people to achieve a common goal and effective alignment demands an environment for people to collaborate and pool together collective talent. People cannot work in the team unless they share knowledge and collaborate. Hence, organizations with a right mix of sociability and solidarity encourage knowledge sharing at all levels. These two attributes capture KS at a workplace to accomplish a common goal through collaboration and the context has a significant
bearing on the mental mode. Gareth and Jones further suggested a typology of organization shown in the following figure.

Prima facie the relationship between certain attributes appear to be antagonistic but detailed analysis gives clarity on actual complementarity. Similarly, it is hard to visualize two types of relations as sociability and solidarity working in tandem as they have opposite forces. Very few organizations have successfully balanced these attributes to create a positive effect since there is an increasing incompatibility between high solidarity and high sociability but purpose and culture of an organization make it unique.

The organizational ecosystem has to be edifying for people to feel motivated to come to work since they invest maximum constructive time at the workplace. In the book “Work Rules” VP- People Operations, Google observes that workforce today feels that “work just sucks...it is not pleasant; it's mean to an end.” Despite, being rated as the best place to work for six consecutive years due to their exceptional work environment, if people at Google have that feeling, it gives an idea of the difficulty the HR leaders are facing today.

![Fig. – 5: Sociability / Solidarity Dimension of Culture](image)

2.3.2 Celebrating Nuances of Culture:

Many practitioners suggest culture change without assessing the readiness of current culture to accept the change or critically examining the need for the particular culture. No two organizations in the same sector can have a similar culture. Organizations should consider culture as a competitive resource and celebrate the diversity.
We are inching towards a creation of monoculture in society and different institutions. Global control of raw material and markets make the monoculture necessary for those who want to control resources. Having a centralized control through monoculture is easy. This ultimately kills diversity. Diversity is always threatened whenever it is either considered as an obstacle or supreme. The one who controls, strives for uniformity as it is easy to manage thing but there is a significant fallout, the disturbance in one part gets easily translated to the remaining whole. The same applies to the organization. Organizations are aware of the existence of sub-cultures but killing those cultures for uniformity has ripple effects at the workplace.

It is also observed that when organizations impose homogenization people start disintegrating, and it makes the organization vulnerable to external forces. In a real sense culture plurality ingredient of organizational culture gives it an innate capacity to self-organize in case of business exigency.

2.3.3 Culture and Knowledge Sharing:

A culture of an organization provides social context that stipulates how and when the knowledge is shared by facilitating or inhibiting knowledge sharing at a workplace (Snyder & Wilson, 2002). Conceptualizing knowledge sharing as culturally determined activity assumes that the possibility of reinforcement of this behavior in the community is possible due to the context in the organization.

Few scholars defined culture as knowledge because it is highly contextual and is intricately tied to organizational knowledge. Workplace behavior is framed, inspired and constrained by a complex mix of values, orientation and attachments, often transcending organizational boundaries (Beirne2013). Knowledge workers need to collaborate, communicate and coordinate for work accomplishments and cannot work in isolation accordingly; they increasingly rely on group interactions than individual expertise to generate knowledge (Bechky, 2003). Transformation of personal knowledge to organizational knowledge is an incremental and iterative process since work is networked at various levels in the organization. Lemon & Shaota (2003) viewed culture as a knowledge repository related to the innovation capacity of an organization assisting knowledge development process. Social network model helps track knowledge shared by knowledge workers in the organization (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

At times, there is a discord between values of an organization and initiatives at the workplace, it is, therefore, essential to understand this dissonance by examining invisible values behind a visible facade of culture. If organizations want to encourage employees to exhibit KSB, the values should be in tandem with initiatives of KS. Social interaction
shapes assumptions about which knowledge is worth sharing and it actuates how and to whom knowledge will be communicated in a given situation.

The research by Simonin (1999) and Lyles & Salk (1996) in the domain of knowledge sharing and culture investigates cross-cultural differences and barriers in knowledge sharing between international business partners. The study has taken into account cultural dimensions of both the partners. One of the interesting observations is also how these partners identify key people to facilitate the KS process.

While leveraging internal and external sources of knowledge, firms at times are not open to the new ideas, technology or frameworks due to the not-invented-here syndrome, creating a barrier to acquire outside knowledge (Hayes & Clark, 1985; Katz & Allen, 1982) which affects KSB at the workplace. Arrow (1999:19) suggests that “countries and firms must be open to new ideas, have multiple sources of ideas, and see that ideas are diffused” since, organizations cannot depend on local knowledge and prosper (Atkinson & Stiglitz 1969) in the long run.

2.3.4 Culture and Individual Actors:

Each one gets their personal culture at work which influences the organizational culture and a lot of invisible dynamics and combinations of personal and organizational culture make the issue more complex yet unique. Every individual brings at work a unique combination of race, gender, nationality, religion, education, wealth, health, family, sociability and while at work, he has attributes like function, experience, position, the way that person earns satisfaction, respect or peer approval, etc. Personal context of individual has no purpose from organization’s perspective, but it affects business critical social relationships like teamwork, trust, cooperation, and friendship. In spite of so many diverse attributes of people at a workplace, culture focuses more on commonalities and respect diversities.

Culture is much complicated and it is essential to understand how values are made actionable in a specific cultural context. At a philosophical level, culture might be fascinating but at an actionable or measurable level, it is tough to manage. People make sense of reality differently due to the individual social context so they connect with the culture of an organization differently. The total of relationship all actors have with culture is a cultural competence of an organization. Disengaged people or those exhibiting counter-conduct make a weak case for enhancing cultural competence. The best case scenario, in this instance, would be when an organization can successfully couple organization’s and its people’s needs.
Acculturation is a gradual learning process of the new entrant with the help of mentors, which is unique to each firm, to get a sense of membership and environment. Newcomers take a time to engage, learn and internalize the organization's norms (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). This is very crucial process being a starting point of identification of a person to the organization. If organizations take care of the three needs of inclusion, respect, and fairness, new joinee thrive in the organization.

2.3.5 Culture and Business Performance:

Each organization has a larger purpose and profit maximization is just one of them. A cohesive and unified corporate culture built for speed, agility, creativity and decisiveness is a prerequisite for success and even when we talk about culture, we mean business. The culture of an organization needs to be designed as per the business needs and has a dual purpose (i) to integrate people in the organization and (ii) to cater to the needs of business. Organizations with strong culture do better than their peers in financial performance as well as innovation, reputation and endurance (Collins and Porras, 1994). Culture is living and moving as per the business need, and any change, or fine-tuning of culture happens in a particular context and not in isolation.

In the majority of the organizations, corporate culture is dominated by the leader's values, the way they want to run the show. If it works successfully, the value is validated and over a period gets converted into shared assumptions. Many practitioners are cynical and confused about organizational culture since they find it very abstract but they will surely not refute its importance due to lack of clarity about managing the culture.

2.3.6 Culture and Work Dimension:

As people work in an organization for a longer time, they internalize the shared values and norms (O’ Reilly & Chatman, 1996). Culture helps articulate the dimensions of meaningful connections among people by offering a sense of community in a subjective sense of belonging and sense of solidarity (Weber, 1946). The term community has a relational connotation and not geographic (Gusfield, 1975). Employees experience a sense of commonality and togetherness at work which encourages them to work seamlessly. Work has many dimensions and each values a particular aspect of the work.

People cannot work in isolation thus employee engagement and work relationships are instrumental in accomplishing the task. People in the organization depend on each other to learn new skills by being important members in the process of socially constructing an organizational life (Weick, 1995). Connections at work enabled people to feel validated and valued (Kahn, 1993); It satisfies the basic need of relatedness and growth (Alderfer, 1972).
Traditionally, people sharing location, interest, activities were considered organizational communities. With the advancement in ICT, virtual communities developed and many academicians are investigating the culture in virtual communities and how they deal with the lack of sociability and shared sense making in the network.

2.3.7 Cultural Attributes:
While studying the concept of organizational culture, and analyzing it, the vagueness is more since the characterizations are metaphorical, and there are a lot of dependencies with metaphors. We can more or less describe culture with the help of metaphors, but it becomes difficult to make precise claims. Stoyko (2009) attempted a systematic categorization into three groups Ideas and Attitudes, Behaviours and Object orientation culture drives decision, actions and overall effectiveness of an organization. Best organizations do not go by organic form of the culture but plan and manage culture efficiently by promoting desired attributes. The practicality of effectively leading the culture you want is more when it is studied defining or analyzing it through attributes. I have illustrated the process of scoping wherein the details of arriving at 5 critical attributes for further analysis is explained. There are 44 cultural attributes compiled by Harper (2000) as cultural attributes that were taken as a baseline for scoping. Most of the organizations try to describe their culture by using their attributes rather than categorizing it under typologies since it offers utility. Cultural attributes are also referred to as cultural factors by some practitioners.

The research on components or attributes of organizational culture has validated that all organizations might not have similar attributes, or the intensity of attributes might differ.

2.3.8 Culture and Knowledge Management:
Organization culture is durable and stable and can be changed with great difficulty (Kilmann, 1985; Schein, 1985). Companies that successfully implement knowledge management do not try to change their culture to fit their knowledge management approach. They build their knowledge management system which not only fits their culture but also can leverage the culture. The approach organizations follow to implement KMS successfully depends on the values and styles of the organization. The different approaches taken by the organizations to solve similar kinds of problems directs them towards what they value and also accept things in the organization.

Choo (1995) suggests that organizational culture is best communicated through oral and verbal texts such as stories, metaphors, analogies, visions, and mindsets, "and promotes commitment through the creation of shared meaning and values." Culture determines the acceptance of knowledge management (Moss Kanter, 1996). Knowledge sharing is
accepted if it fits ‘the way we work’ (McDermott & O’Dell 2001). Alavi & Leidner (2001: 108) claim that knowledge gets embedded in and flows through multiple entities including organizational culture and identity, routines, policies, systems and documents, as well as individual employees.”

2.3.9 SUMMARY:

Sir Edward Bernard Taylor\(^\text{12}\) (1871) defines culture as a “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” It is described as a way of life cultivated by people.

Culture is a notoriously elusive topic; ironically everyone connects with it but fails to understand. Culture has a unified orientation which people always feel, it gives them a collective identity since it is a common point of reference to everyone. Organizational culture is a part of the holistic architecture of an organization which facilitates successful translation of their values into reality. The culture of an organization shapes the interactions and behavior of people. Thus, people can relate and successfully operate at the workplace if an organization offers a conducive culture. It’s a fallacy to consider business culture similar to social culture since it exists primarily for the economic purpose and has a clear rationality.

Whenever people are asked about the difference between two organizations, they hardly talk about position, money or business line, instead, they describe their experience in the particular organization. People derive satisfaction from experience and experience exchange as it helps them to connect and also gives stories to share. Organizations should work on positive experiences people can frame within the particular context. Strengthening and revitalizing organization’s culture ensures long term benefits.

Studying culture in the organizational context focuses more on models and typologies to outline the traits of corporate culture which forms an initial point of reference for relating culture to another phenomenon in the organization. However, there is a lack of theory to explicate that culture is an essential component of the knowledge management process in any organization, and it also influences the way people share knowledge and information in the organization.

Organizations like Google, have even introduced ‘culture keepers’ or ‘chief culture officers’ at the executive level to promote and protect cohesive corporate values. Organizations make a lot of efforts with the intention of fusing people together, of

moulding and socializing their commitments so that they welcome innovations and respond positively.

2.4 Association between Culture and Knowledge:

When various people team up to accomplish a common goal, incompatibilities of diverse perspectives could be the potential reason for conflict at the workplace. The culture of an organization subtly models how to acknowledge, appreciate and respond to others’ perspectives. The diverse perspectives add to knowledge and learning of people encouraging them to establish conflict – free constructive work environment. Knowledge based view (KBV) of an organization views knowledge as a strategic resource which provides competitive advantage to organizations. Organizations, an epistemic community tries to accomplish the shared goal/purpose through contribution of all the employees having expertise in various areas. People in the organization connect with each other through solidarity and sociability which are two fundamental dimensions of culture of an organization. These two dimensions effectively direct the knowledge processes in the organization as sociability takes care of the knowledge creation through the process of socialization. Solidarity on the other hand decides the action-oriented nature of the knowledge. To conclude, knowledge processes in the organization depend on culture of an organization which is guided by the overall purpose or goal of an organization.

Conceptualization

![Conceptualization Diagram]

Fig. – 6 : Association between Culture and Knowledge
2.5 Conceptualization of study:

I started the journey to understand and investigate knowledge sharing in the organization through cultural lens assuming its simple and straightforward relationship. The beginning of the quest was not as smooth as I expected it to be, though the area of work and process were known. The presumptions about the phenomenon under investigation shattered after my first interview with the operations and the HR professionals from textile sector. Exploring the issue by departing from assumptions was getting out of comfort and predictable zone to an unpredictable and unexplored area, and this shift made my journey more enjoyable.

After discussing with professionals from various organizations, I realized that people with distinct professional expertise, view organizational knowledge differently. The other significant observation was the assumptions about knowledge from the business point of view is related to the rationality of an organization and the sector in which they are operating. The curiosity to look at knowledge sharing and how it differs in an organization and why it fluctuates is indeed intriguing.

2.5.1 Exploratory Phase:

The exploratory phase of the study includes understanding knowledge sharing in the organization and identification of the factors which affect knowledge sharing behavior of the employees. In the beginning of this research, eight experts were interviewed to understand the practicalities of the core concept of the study and get clarity on the line of inquiry. The expert interviews were conducted in a group at Management Development Programme (MDP) in an unstructured way. The interviews provided various perspectives of knowledge sharing in the organization and relevance to strike a balance between practitioner's view and scholarly views. The exploratory phase assisted in scoping the study and planning research process.

Stage one: To understand knowledge sharing in different organizations (covering major sectors) and important determinants of knowledge sharing in the organization.

This stage was the first attempt of exploring knowledge sharing in the field. The guiding questions during the interview process were:

1. What is knowledge and importance of various knowledge processes in the organization?

2. What is knowledge sharing and why it is important for an organization?
3. How does the process of knowledge sharing take place in the organization?

4. Which are the important determinants for knowledge sharing in the organization?

5. Can knowledge exchange in the organization be enhanced and which are the different ways to increase knowledge sharing in the organization?

The following charts illustrate sector-wise and function-wise distribution of firms selected for interviews by purposive sampling method. An attempt was made to gain information about knowledge sharing in various functions of firms from different sectors to get rich insights. Various functions in the organization are categorized as operations, service and sales. \(^{13}\) I could sense the difficulty in data collection and mapping various knowledge sharing initiatives as none of the management representatives could define the knowledge and describe knowledge sharing activities in their organization.

![Sectorwise Distribution](image)

**Fig – 7: Exploratory Phase - Sectorwise Distribution**

\(^{13}\)The reason for categorizing HR, CSR, Finance, IT, PR, Administration, R & D, Design are grouped as services since they are strategic enablers to the core operations of an organization. The same categorization is used in this study.
Functionwise Distribution

![Functionwise Distribution Chart](image)

**Fig – 8: Exploratory Phase- Functionwise Distribution**

**Table – 1: Exploratory Phase – Sector and Function Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>SECTORS (NO. OF ORGANIZATIONS)</th>
<th>OPERATIONS PROFESSIONALS</th>
<th>SERVICES PROFESSIONALS</th>
<th>SALES PROFESSIONALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MANUFACTURING (10)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>IT, ITES &amp; ELECTRONICS (5)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>FMCG (5)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>RETAIL (2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>SERVICES (5)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>OIL &amp; GAS (2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>CONSTRUCTION (2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>DIAMOND (1)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL ORGANIZATIONS (32)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Above table mentions the number of sectors, organizations and the number of employees interviewed to get a better understanding on knowledge sharing at the workplace. Sampling of organizations was purposive, senior HR professional in the organization was approached who further suggested lead people involved in knowledge management in the organization for further discussion. Most of the organizations involve IT professionals apart from HR professionals and operations people come in the picture.
at the later stage of implementation. Very few organizations had knowledge officers (as a position or role). The HR professionals and operations people were interviewed to understand:

1. The process of knowledge sharing in the organization

2. Goal and Method of knowledge sharing

3. Factors affecting knowledge sharing in the organization

The research in the domain of knowledge management calls for a more practical approach. Winter (1987) stated that exploration to problem formulation of the studies in this field needs to be done along with managers wherein their views, and practical experiences on the theoretical backdrop will give a better grounding for any study.

Stage Two: Understanding Culture Using Cultural Attributes:

The second stage in the exploratory phase deals with getting an understanding of various cultural attributes which are essential to facilitate or inhibit knowledge sharing and identifying critical cultural attributes using Two-stage Delphi Technique.¹⁴

2.5.2 Process Involved in Identifying Cultural Attributes

Reigle and Westbrook (2000) states that researchers and practitioners have insufficient means to quantify and measure culture and no survey instrument can capture tacit shared assumptions in an organization (Schein, 1999). Thus, there is no consensus on methods of mapping organizational culture. Organizational culture profile (OCP), a framework was initially designed by O'Reilly et al. (1991) to assess a person-culture fit that describes the culture of an origination using an exhaustive list of a set of attributes. Initially, there were 54 items classified into nine categories and the respondents would sort these 54 items as per the characteristics of an organization and based on which the organizational profile would be identified. Harper (2000) decreased the number of attributes to 44 and this modified list (given below) which is used as a guiding tool by the respondents while identifying the cultural attributes concerning knowledge sharing in the organization for this study. The executives identified 20 attributes which affect knowledge sharing in the organization which formed the base for further scoping of the study.

¹⁴ Delphi Method (developed by Rand in 1950) solicits the opinions of experts through a series of questionnaire to establish a convergence of opinion. Source: http://www.rand.org/topics/delphi-method.html
The cultural attributes identified by executives affecting knowledge sharing at the workplace are listed below:

1. Decisiveness
2. Cross-Team Problem Solving
3. Adaptability
4. Being Competitive/ Aggressive/ Result Oriented
5. Informality
6. Trust
7. Flexibility
8. Stability / Certainty - Predictability
9. Being Innovative/ Experimentation
10. Attention To Detail / Being Careful
11. Team-Oriented Work
12. Tolerance To Failure
13. Respect For Individual Rights
14. Low Level Of Conflicts
15. Supportive Employees / Socially Responsible
16. Enthusiasm For Work
17. Security Of Employment
18. Fairness
19. Praising For Good Work / Rewards
20. Openness
2.5.3 Use of Delphi Technique:

It is not feasible to study twenty attributes of culture identified by executives as essential for effective knowledge sharing in the organization. By using Delphi Technique, the number is narrowed down to top 5 (after prioritizing) for detailed analysis. The aim of using Delphi technique is to reduce the range of responses and arrive at something closer to expert consensus based on the data. The following graph showed the prioritized responses by executives when they were asked to rate and identify critical cultural attributes essential for effective knowledge sharing in the workplace. The research further investigates the top five cultural attributes which facilitate KS:

1. Rewards
2. Flexibility
3. Trust
4. Team Orientation
5. Openness
2.5.4 Summary of Exploratory Phase:

Exploratory phase of the study is divided into two stages followed by three stage Delphi Technique to identify critical cultural attributes for knowledge sharing in the organization. This phase gave few great leads to explore the phenomenon under study in a particular direction. Though most of the organizations can not define or pinpoint knowledge for an organization, there was an agreement on the importance of Knowledge, an important strategic asset (Grant 1996) which gives a unique competitive advantage to an organization (Gold et al, 2001). Most of the senior professionals in the organizations identified innovation, venturing into new business, product development and employee satisfaction (by learning and motivation) as the core areas which positively influenced by knowledge sharing in the organization. Participants also agreed that culture is most important apart from technological and individual traits for knowledge sharing and making cultural changes by understanding what needs to be modified or focused should be a great baseline to start for practitioners. Knowledge sharing methods and goals and preferred mode of KS by knower and receiver identified by participants will be further explored in the organizations as well as literature to determine if they are strategically coupled.