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WHEN KNOWLEDGE IS HELD HOSTAGE: EXAMINING KNOWLEDGE-SHARING HOSTILITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

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https://doi.org/ 10.55190/JPADA.2024.350

ABSTRACT

This article explores knowledge-sharing hostility in selected South African government departments. There is an assumption that there is a coherent body of knowledge about governing, and that the mechanic of actual governing is held, circulated, and shared within the bureaucracy. The study took a qualitative approach and included 30 semi-structured interviews, comprising 28 lower-level employees and managers within two government departments and two knowledge management managers in other departments with established knowledge management divisions. This article argues that knowledge is hoarded and utilised as a personalised tool to cement one's status within the institution and as a political commodity to advance one's position. The study reveals that knowledge hoarding is seen as more valuable than knowledge sharing. The study offers important insights about the nature of a learning bureaucracy and the obstacles to knowledge sharing in some state institutions.

Keywords: Knowledge-sharing, Knowledge management, Hostility, Managers, Political commodity



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1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge sharing is recognised as a core component of knowledge management in that it facilitates knowledge creation, storage, and the use of existing knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Christensen, 2007; Semertzaki, 2011; Nazim and Murkhejee, 2016). Sharing knowledge in government is fundamental to carrying out daily activities through directives, routines, and standard operating procedures. Within the public sector, there is an assumption that there is a coherent body of knowledge about governing, and the mechanic of actual governing is held, circulated, and shared within the bureaucracy. Knowledge, after all, is the basis of decision-making, forecasting, budgetary accountability, and policy implementation. Furthermore, despite changes in political office-bearers over time, there is a reasonable expectation that management and decision-making tasks at the administration level would have a steady, shared, and increasingly growing basis of knowledge. As might be expected, this is not unique to bureaucratic organisations; it is ubiquitous to all in-

stitutions which require knowledge-based decision-making over the long term. However, this article presents a unique and intriguing perspective in the public service. It argues that knowledge is not shared but used instrumentally as quasi-individualised assets, which are resources that individuals can leverage to secure their place in the institution and as political currency to ensure positions.

Knowledge hoarding is becoming a prevalent practice in the departments rather than knowledge sharing. Indeed, multiple factors contribute to knowledge-hoarding behaviour. Employees find it more advantageous to hoard rather than share knowledge for a few reasons. One, because knowledge is seen as a valuable 'commodity', as a form of organisational capital, there is fear of victimization where knowledge is possessed by actors without rank, and where the content is likely to disrupt hierarchical relationships of power. Conversely, there is also a competitive spirit, making hoarding a more likely outcome. Second, and relatedly, since knowledge as a commodity is often personally held as a site of professional security, though systems exist, there are few structured incentives to share knowledge. Conversely, there are structural disincentives to do so, including retributive action where accounts of policy decision-making failures or challenges implicate those who must demonstrate accountability for policy implementation. This in turn means that those willing to share knowledge are met with resistance from the receivers. Indeed, some individuals refrain from sharing knowledge because of privacy concerns, security fears, and a lack of understanding and misconceptions about the value of knowledge in general.

This article contends that while knowledge sharing is a significant activity in organisations, it is a complicated activity because it depends on the range of matters concerning the nature of knowledge, the willingness of people to share knowledge, relationships of power in the policy and political environment and the organisational context itself. Although the range of matters profoundly shapes the knowledge-sharing ecosystem and the value of knowledge itself (Bock and Kim, 2022), they are quite different from the presence of knowledge-sharing platforms. This study's first key argument is that knowledge hoarded is seen as more valuable than knowledge shared, because knowledge is treated as an instrument of power. Some people may hoard knowledge if a trust deficit exists, particularly in a politicised work environment. Such cases include situations where there is a multi-party system, with people from different political parties working in the same unit hoarding knowledge to advance their party's agenda, retain power, and maintain ownership of policy initiatives. There are instances where knowledge is shared and made public in documents and reports, codified sets of routine practices, bureaucratic norms and processes, translating policy prescripts into discernible decisions, and the acumen supporting routine administrative and deeply political sets of information. This knowledge may range from perfunctory processes to political machinations and from information shared in routine administrative functions to expert knowledge serving a particular agen-

da. Organisations have developed various methods and systems to promote knowledge sharing to ensure that tacit knowledge is transferred into organisational knowledge for later use. Some scholars propose a need for knowledge-sharing systems to promote knowledge sharing (Ncoyini and Cilliers, 2016; Dikotla, Mahlatji, and Makgahlela, 2014). Sharing platforms may be present, but knowledge sharing success depends on individual behaviour and willingness to share.

The second argument is that reporting mechanisms that feed into knowledge management systems cannot extract or capture knowledge. There is evidently, no mechanism for 'capturing' non structured or tacit knowledge. Employees do not therefore ordinarily share tacit knowledge in formalised systems for later use by others. Knowledge sharing is therefore a voluntary activity (Chen, 2011; Mergel, 2010; Husted & Michailova, 2002; Alvessson & Karreman, 2001), which implies that an individual has control over the knowledge they would want to share, but also that the kinds of knowledge 'legible' in a system is mainly explicit knowledge about procedures and reporting.

The final argument is that some systems can inadvertently create perverse incentives to encourage knowledge hoarding. While incentives are created for good reasons, human behaviour, and decisions can become locked into these reward systems and structures. For instance, rewards tied to individual performance and innovative ideas can focus on personal gain rather than sharing knowledge. This aligns with Denning's (2001) argument that while introducing rewards for individual knowledge-sharing activities can underscore the significance of knowledge-sharing, it also risks establishing unrealistic expectation of rewards for behaviour that should be inherent in the regular business operations of the organization. The seminal work of Bock and Kim (2002) revealed that the anticipation of organisational rewards does not drive knowledge-sharing among public employees. Instead, the pivotal factors were the reciprocal benefits and the sense of belonging with co-workers, significantly influencing their knowledge-sharing behaviour. While acknowledging that knowledge-sharing and incentive systems may facilitate knowledge-sharing, this study argues that there is a need to examine knowledge-sharing hostility in government organizations. Knowledge-sharing hostility refers to the willingness to hide and withhold knowledge from others (Husted and Michailova, 2002: 64). Husted and Michailova (2002) asserted that knowledge-sharing hostility manifests in two ways: knowledge hoarding and rejection. Knowledge hoarding and rejection are subtle obstacles to making knowledge explicit, limiting learning opportunities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Information, learning, and Knowledge

Before delving into the literature, it is crucial important to first clarify some of the

concepts used in this article. Scholars agree that what differentiates knowledge from information is that knowledge is action (Chen, Snyman, and Sewdas, 2005; Nonaka, 1995). For example, Huber (1991) argues that knowledge is the interpretation of information that can result in organisational learning. Information is data in context (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995), meaning that it is conceived as processed data with relevance, meaning, and purpose. Learning occurs when information is processed, analysed, and interpreted to create knowledge, and when knowledge reformulates policy intentions, process, practices or ideals. The relationship between the three concepts of information, knowledge, and learning is crucial in studying knowledge-sharing hostility. The description of the three concepts confirms that the relationship of these concepts helps with understanding of how knowledge is constructed, shared, and utilised within organisations.

Various knowledge definitions exist in the literature with the common understanding that knowledge is actioned data and information (Chen et al., 2005; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Davenport and Prusak (1998:5) define knowledge "as a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information". The definition by Davenport and Prusak (1998) is well-suited for this article as it provides a comprehensive perspective on knowledge. It recognises that knowledge is context-specific and determined by the experience and values of the knowers, which appears in organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms and then documented in institutional repositories. The nature of knowledge is subjective, dynamic, and contextual (McInerney, 2002). Similarly, Tiwana (2002) argues that knowledge does not simply emerge from databases. Instead, it evolves with gradual learning from both successes and failures due to sharing between individual and collective minds. These views show that knowledge goes beyond just documented information as it incorporates human-related factors: learning, experience, and skills, resulting in the ability to produce value (Davenport and Prusak, 1998).

Information is easily accessible because it is often documented in written records, whereas knowledge is possessed by individuals, who can choose to share or keep it to themselves. The importance of access to knowledge is highlighted by Al-Hawamdeh (2002), who notes that knowledge is contained in books and journals, although it is not automatic that knowledge translates into actionable insights unless it is read, manipulated, and communicated from one knowledge collaborator to another. The tacit-explicit continuum by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) explains the shareability of knowledge. Tacitly knowledge remains in individuals' heads, and that knowledge is explicitly shared. According to Polanyi (1958), all knowledge has a tacit component, and not all tacit knowledge may become explicit. Through data, researchers and professionals within government produce charts and reports, which become information that needs to be understood and internalised by people so that it can be put to

practical use. Employees can also document their knowledge, storing information in hard drives and intranet sites, and hardcopy reports for others to access.

2.2 Knowledge-sharing hostility

Husted and Michailova (2002) propose that understanding knowledge-sharing hostility requires examining the motivations behind knowledge hoarding and the reasons why shared knowledge might be rejected. Thus, they categorise knowledge-sharing hostility into two behaviours: knowledge hoarding and knowledge rejection.

2.2.1 Knowledge hoarding

Knowledge hoarding is defined as the behaviour of teams or individuals who withhold knowledge, information, or learnings from the organisation's knowledge repository and others (Tessier, 2021), and an individual's deliberate and strategic concealment of information (Holten et al., 2016; Evans et al., 2015; Hansen, 2011; Khalid et al., 2020). These definitions suggest that knowledge hoarding is the accumulation of knowledge that could potentially be shared or hoarded in the future for a range of reasons. Acknowledging that this may not always be malicious, Szulanski (1996) uses the idea of the 'stickiness of knowledge' as a metaphor to describe difficulties in knowledge transfer because of personal and organisational barriers. Personal motivations and barriers affect both the source of knowledge and recipient, and organisation barriers relate to its absorptive capacity, trust, relationships between the sources of knowledge, and the context within which transfer occurs.

Although knowledge hoarding can be harmful to the organisation's performance; or related to its systemic organisational barriers, it is often rationalised from the individual point of view (Husted and Michailova, 2002). Individuals may justify knowledge hoarding as a means of self-protection or maintaining power and control even if it undermines the organisation's goals. This explains why people hoard knowledge contingent on their interests despite structured interactions and social norms designed to stimulate knowledge-sharing practices (Garcia, Oliveira, and Brohman, 2022). On the other hand, Husted et.al. (2012) state that hoarding is not necessarily harmful, since it can protect competitive advantage and works as a strategy against uncertainty. However, they consider knowledge hoarding a complex phenomenon with negative and positive effects.

The competitive nature of knowledge derives from a resource-based theory, which views knowledge as an intangible, primary, and valuable resource for sustainable competitive advantage (Grant, 1996). Organizations have unique knowledge that might be difficult for competitors to imitate due to legal protection, for instance, brand names or patents (Spender, 1996; Grant,

1996). In other instances, the strategy is to possess unique knowledge that is difficult for other organisations to imitate. Politicians can influence, shape, or manipulate what is considered acceptable or valid knowledge often to serve their interests or agendas, or influence policy. While personal motivations may play a role, knowledge hoarding in the private sector is primarily driven by profit motives and fears of intellectual property misappropriation.

Numerous researchers have explored the motivations and triggers contributing to employee knowledge-hoarding behavior. It is widely argued that knowledge hoarding is motivated by the belief that knowledge is a valuable resource that can provide power and a means to maximise self-interest (Hansen, 2011; Bilginoğlu, 2019; Wang and Noe, 2010; Husted and Michailova, 2002; Michailova and Husted, 2004). In particular, people hoard knowledge because they believe they possess specific or unique knowledge that no one else can provide to make decisions. In other instances, they do not share as they fear losing their value, competitive advantage, or ownership of knowledge (Bilginoğlu, 2019). In their study targeting academic staff, Muhenda and Lwanga (2014) found that the staff habitually kept intellectual property to themselves, motivated by a fear of being taken advantage of after disclosure. Similarly, Fullwood, Rowley, and Mclean (2019) found that employees are concerned about their intellectual property and weigh their sharing from a cost-benefit perspective in their decision to share.

Knowledge hoarding is prevalent in strongly hierarchical structures, where employees use it to maintain authority and control. Subordinates deliberately hoard their knowledge because they fear that their superiors will react negatively to their display of expertise or knowledge, perceiving it as a threat to their authority and status (Husted and Michailova, 2002). In particular, the subordinates often deliberately hoard their knowledge, anticipating that their superiors will not promote them if they demonstrate that they possess greater expertise than their superiors (Michailova and Husted, 2004). According to Husted and Michailova (2002) and Drake, Steckler, and Koch (2004), individuals who hoard knowledge or information fear that others might misconstrue or manipulate the information, either accidentally or deliberately, leading to negative consequences or harmful outcomes.

Furthermore, Husted and Michailova (2002) state that managers intentionally hoard their knowledge as a source of more power rather than a basis for making optimal managerial decisions. In their study of six Russian firms, Michailova and Husted (2004) found that Russian managers strongly believed they should always be more knowledgeable than their employees. This subordinate-superordinate perception is confirmed by Oye, Salleh, and Noorminshah (2011), stating that individuals embrace a common stereotype that older workers hoard knowledge because they are more insecure and feel threatened by younger workers. While knowledge hoarding is mainly associated with lower-level employees because of fear, Schutte and Barkhuizen's (2015) findings show that

management operates on a need-to-know basis and actively promotes a culture of secrecy. Others hoard knowledge because they do not believe in the quality of the knowledge they possess, or they are protecting themselves against external assessment (Husted and Michailova, 2002). Similarly, Haas and Gummings (2015) claim that individuals hoard knowledge to avoid causing confusion and misinterpretation by those from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Bilginoğlu (2019) believes a lack of proper platforms for effective knowledge sharing can heighten knowledge hoarding behaviour. However, Srivastava et al. (2006) presents a different view that although technology is essential in successfully implementing knowledge-sharing methods, individual behaviours may impact the process. According to them, leadership is crucial in successfully implementing knowledge-sharing platforms. Knowledge-sharing platforms in government could be meetings, forums, or training. Some employees consider these knowledge-sharing platforms costly and demand many resources (Husted and Michailova, 2002). For instance, from employees' perspective, sharing knowledge with others on platforms is a time-consuming activity that takes away from more productive individual pursuits (Husted and Michailova, 2002). The view on time-wasting is strengthened by Husted, et al. (2012), who, in their empirical study, found that the use of face-to-face communication and investments in a knowledge-sharing culture negatively related to knowledge-sharing hostility, while the strict nature of work processes, hierarchical, and rule-based, contributes to knowledge sharing.

Szulanski (1996) argues that individuals may be reluctant to share crucial knowledge because they are not receiving adequate rewards for sharing hard-won success. Similarly, Leonard (2014) argues that individuals hoard their knowledge because of financial incentives, egos, and discontent or frustration with the organization. However, other studies suggest that incentives do not necessarily encourage knowledge sharing (Bock and Kim 2001, Bock et al. 2005, Lin, 2007). For instance, Bock and Kim's (2001) findings suggest that expected rewards do not affect knowledge sharing but that associations with colleagues and expected contributions to an organisation's performance do. In other instances, hoarding knowledge to sabotage others is the most severe and counterproductive form of knowledge behaviour (Serenko, 2019). The challenge with sabotage is that managers often overlook it, assuming it is a one-time occurrence that will ultimately fade away. The intentional destruction caused by sabotage in the public sector is often directed at specific individuals rather than the organisation. Thus, intentional sabotage will negatively affect the entire organisation, sometimes causing the projects to be terminated or delayed (Serenko, 2019).

2.2.2 Knowledge rejection

The second categorisation of knowledge-sharing hostility is knowledge-rejecting behaviour. Montgomery, et al. (2024:830) define "knowledge rejection as

the intentional refusal, declining, or non-acceptance of relevant knowledge by an intended knowledge recipient when the knowledge is unambiguously offered to them, thereby hindering constructive use of knowledge resources and reducing the effectiveness of knowledge processes in the organization". Serenko and Bontis (2016) view knowledge rejection as a counterproductive behaviour that can result in knowledge loss and decreased competitiveness.

In other instances, knowledge recipients are often focus on defending their intellectual standing and prestige and may thus resent substituting their well-established knowledge for knowledge created elsewhere (Michailova and Husted, 2004). Husted and Michailova (2002) use the phrase Not-Invented Here syndrome (NIH) to explain how people resist knowledge created elsewhere. NIH was popularised by Katz and Allen in 1982. NIH is defined by Chanamolu et al. (2017) as the tendency of a group to believe it possesses the monopoly of knowledge, technologies, or solutions, which leads to a rejection of new ideas from outsiders (p.2). Various factors lead to individuals dismissing or disregarding knowledge from others. Husted and Michailova (2002) argue that individuals reject knowledge because they prefer to develop their ideas and knowledge, have general doubts regarding the validity and reliability of knowledge, or are protecting their careers. The receiver might not believe the validity and credibility of information (Husted and Michailova, 2002) because of a lack of trust, personal beliefs, or power dynamics. In hierarchical structures, there is a greater tendency to doubt or question the relevance of knowledge.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Resaerch Paradigm

The research orientation of the study is underpinned by constructivist and interpretive epistemology (Bryman, 2012), which requires a reasoned examination of everyday occurrences. While knowledge sharing is an everyday process that involves decision-making across all structure and corporate governance levels, a constructivist understanding of this process in the state, requires an in-depth understanding of the contextual processes as it is influenced by this kind of organisational environment and the bureaucratic individual behaviours rather than merely technical reporting. The research study was designed to gain an in-depth understanding of knowledge-hoarding behaviour in a bureaucratic context in two government departments and with individuals from other government departments with established knowledge management programmes as key informants

3.2 Research poulation

This article draws on doctoral fieldwork conducted in selected South African national government departments. This empirical study was conducted in the

selected South African national government departments. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 lower-level employees and managers in selected government departments, as well as two knowledge management managers in other departments with established knowledge management divisions. The focus of the study was a critical examination of knowledge sharing in a bureaucratic environment, where formal knowledge management systems have been institutionalised across the organisation to enhance sound decision-making, foster a learning state, and create a repository for all employees to make decisions and follow processes that are rationalized and recorded.

3.3 Population sampling

The researcher purposefully selected individuals within the departments with knowledge management divisions and those without directorates but have knowledge management managers. Twenty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with lower-level employees and managers within two government departments and knowledge management managers in other departments with established knowledge management divisions. These departments were selected due to their functional connection to regional offices. The underpinning assumption is that knowledge created at the national, regional, or local levels should be integrated and coordinated for policy learning, development, and decision-making to improve service delivery.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data was analysed using Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis model. They argued that thematic analysis provides a comprehensible and theoretically adaptable approach to qualitative data analysis. This involved familiarisation with the data, followed by a thorough review and delineation of emerging themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The trustworthiness of the study was enhanced by the triangulation of sources and sites consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion about the study is based on two aspects, which are drivers of knowledge hoarding and rejection of knowledge.

4.1 Drivers of knowledge hoarding

The drivers of knowledge hoarding are based on assumption that knowledge is an instrument of power, Personal Barriers to Knowledge sharing, Uncertainty and fear of victimisation, Knowledge hoarding has sense of ownership, Knowledge hoarding is meant to sabotage others and Organisational dynamics and Poor

monitoring systems

4.1.1 Knowledge is treated as an instrument of power

Knowledge is often exploited to gain power, control, or influence over others rather than shared or leveraged for the common good. The power of knowledge comes from what one knows, which makes knowledge workers share or not share with others. The notion that knowledge is power is evident in the findings in various ways. Some people do not share knowledge because they fear the other person will gain an advantage and become more powerful. One participant used the phrase "rank consciousness" to describe positional awareness. For example, some managers across various directorates working on the same project can intentionally withhold knowledge from each other that might be essential to central decision-making to enhance their own sense of power and control.

Ahmad (2018) confirms this participant's observation, stating supervisors hoard knowledge from their colleagues and subordinates for career prospects. Knowledge hoarding among colleagues or between supervisors and subordinates can taint workplace relationships, often resulting in trust issues. One participant wished that people would view knowledge as a means of empowerment rather than knowledge as power. The findings also revealed that managers and support staff use knowledge and information strategically to promote self-interest.

"They have you will replace me "mentality" if I share…sharing makes you gain more than lose" (C1SS).

"Why is knowledge management not taking off…organizational culture kills knowledge management transfer. People's knowledge is power… Knowledge is empowerment. if not used, enhanced, and activated to promote productivity and best service delivery, then it is not power" (KMM4).

"I think it is the hardest part to deal with…knowledge is power…you don't want to share because you feel it is you who holds the key, is you who are the most intelligent" (KMM3).

The notion that knowledge is power was a common theme among some participants. They expressed that the most challenging part of overcoming is the mindset that knowledge is power. People do not want to share because they want to feel that they hold the key, are the most intelligent, or believe they can work independently without collaboration or teamwork. Participants are concerned that the knowledge is power mindset hinders effectiveness, hampers productivity, and constrains problem-solving and innovativeness, ultimately affecting decision-making and service delivery. This finding is consistent with Bilginoğlu (2019) and Hansen (2011)'s assertion that

knowledge is power, and individuals attach value to it. This is also in line with Zhai et al. (2020), who believe that individuals' perceived exclusivity of knowledge, knowledge power, and knowledge privacy are the primary factors that determine how much knowledge they are willing to share with colleagues.

4.1.2 Personal Barriers to Knowledge sharing: Uncertainty and fear of victimisation

Uncertainty and fear of victimisation lead to knowledge hoarding because individuals are not certain about the consequences, they might face for sharing knowledge. Findings show that some employees hoard knowledge for self-protection and feel vulnerable. Some information that can be shared is sensitive, and it could pose a risk to the person who shared it if it falls into the wrong hands, potentially leading to trouble with higher authorities. This concern was echoed by a participant who admitted that he worried about sensitive information because he feared it might not be handled confidentially and that he might be left vulnerable. The concern is mainly the lack of consequences for those mishandling information and knowledge.

"There is fear to share because of fear of how such information is going to be treated, and it will be treated with caution, or will I be protected" (C3SS).

This evidence also suggests that employees would rather keep some knowledge and information to protect their job security and avoid potential negative consequences. Consequently, when people feel threatened, expertise and knowledge are not leveraged. The fear is sometimes a result of respect for hierarchy and power, as argued by (Husted and Michailova, 2002). The feelings of being threatened and fear are consistent with Anand et al. (2020) findings that hostility and abusive colleagues or supervisors drive employees to hoard knowledge.

"It is difficult to know who knows what. People are scared to share. They feel threatened, and expertise is not tapped into. People are not competitive, and there is less innovation" (C2SS).

Another fear is reluctance by some employees to comment on documents generated from a municipality that requires scrutiny for fear of being ostracised and categorised as obstructionist. They dread making mistakes, particularly corruption-related issues, as they may be implicated in the final decision. As perceived by employees, the cautiousness and lack of consequences underscore that more profound structural or possibly even political flaws exist. If proper systems exist, providing inputs to the document would not be a challenge, regardless of the document's source. In essence, subordinates fear criticism, ridicule, and even the loss of their jobs.

"Some employees are scared to change reports because they do not have an idea about that matter…e.g. the question of corruption. if you yourself was not a person who was looking for corruption, who are you to make a determination that there is indeed corruption because there is no other information that you have that you can critically affirm or reject" (C5SM).

The fear goes to the extent that subordinates document every little detail discussed with their managers formally and informally to protect themselves in case their reports are misconstrued.

"You know…whenever I meet with my boss I write things down. I have now started writing down informal conversations. People are getting in trouble for things they did not say" (L11SS).

Documenting every detail may demonstrate strained relationships and distrust among co-workers, senior managers, and subordinates or protect themselves from potential blame or criticism. While written evidence is for self-protection, such information can positively affect knowledge creation as somebody else can use it. Employees resorting to the documentation of shared interactions with their bosses or even colleagues could be related to the bureaucratic practices and the reporting systems that work as instruments of power. The bureaucratic structures formally legitimise authoritative power to managers, making them believe they have the right to direct subordinates' behaviour. Bureaucratic structures typically invest managers with power, permitting them to manage and restrict knowledge.

4.1.3 Knowledge hoarding and sense of ownership

The findings demonstrated that some employees hoard knowledge to validate that they are indispensable to the department. Personal ownership of knowledge could trigger statements like" This knowledge is my intellectual property; I am not sharing it." Some participants noted that people often hoard knowledge with the view that their expertise is the primary reason for their upward mobility or eligibility for promotion. Similarly, some individuals with special knowledge or skills deliberately hoard knowledge to reinforce their status as the "go-to authority" to make others dependent on them. Participants cited Information Technology staff as an example of employees who often hoard knowledge due to their perceived specialised expertise. There is also a belief and assumption that specific individuals within the department own knowledge.

One of the participants used the term "knowledge reservoirs" to describe these individuals, implying they were a rich source of knowledge, and that they have a deep understanding of particular subject or field. The knowledge reservoir characterisation can potentially exacerbate knowledge hoarding and make those "knowledge reservoirs" believe they are irreplaceable.

4.1.4 Knowledge hoarding to sabotage others

Findings show that some individuals hoard knowledge to sabotage others. Serenko (2019) found that over 40% of employees engaged in knowledge sabotage, with many doing it repeatedly. While Serenko (2019) stressed that employees intentionally provided others with wrong knowledge or deliberately concealed critical knowledge, these findings suggest that sabotage took the form of knowledge concealment rather than disclosure. The findings further show an element of knowledge hoarding for sabotage at the management level, which led to some projects being finalised without crucial inputs that could have been fundamental to the project's success. This form of sabotage is consistent with Serenko's (2019) assertion that employees deliberately hoard critical knowledge with a clear realisation of the importance of this knowledge to work-related tasks. Sabotaging by public servants in government tends to be politically motivated, as the sharing of knowledge and information is determined by friendship and political affiliation. Political saboteurs seek to influence policy decisions, advance personal agendas, or undermine rivalry or opponents. Subsequently, this type of behaviour challenges the importance of teamwork.

"There is lot of sabotage and competitiveness. For example, you send an email for inputs. You do not get feedback. There is this spirit of not supporting one another. You support each other because you are friends. If you not in good books with that person you are not going to get information. People do that because they don't know why they are there. Keeping information to sabotage is a way to let other managers down. You don't want to see another management shining. You choose relevant people for your project, but they still do not provide you with information. You can finalise your work without their inputs. Group work is important, but what can we do"? (L11SS).

Participants also expressed concern that the willingness to share knowledge is contingent upon individual generosity and feelings, which can compromise the reliability and the quality-of-service delivery.

"Sharing is determined by issues of personality. It depends on who you are… there is a need for correct placement" (C2SS).

"It becomes a needs-based or personality issue…I don't want to share this knowledge with you...then it becomes you steal my knowledge" (C5SM).

"I have got access to all of them, but if they don't cooperate, you do what you have to do to get information. There is always a way to get information. In others, you beg, and you still don't get…you have to go to the higher authority for them to give you information" (L3SS).

4.1.5 Organisational dynamics: Poor monitoring systems

Tracking and identifying knowledge-hoarding behaviours can be challenging without proper monitoring systems. After attending training or workshops, employees are required to share what they have learned with their colleagues. Training employees in the departments aims to create knowledge, develop skills, and enhance employee empowerment. The findings show limited effort to share knowledge and less or no documentation of what was learned. This is despite the knowledge-sharing platforms within the departments. The findings contradict Bilginoğlu's (2019) view that people do not share because of a lack of proper platforms for adequate knowledge. The findings are, however, consistent with Srivastava et al. (2006) assertion that human factors can hinder knowledge sharing despite technological availability.

One of the participants pointed out the lack of accountability and the consequences of failure to produce reports despite the specified submission deadlines. Specifically, the other participants highlighted that there were no monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track who attended the training, why they attended, and what skills and knowledge were gained, which limited sharing and growth. Participants were concerned about repeating the same mistake or reinventing the wheel due to a lack of sharing through systems. Thus, in their view, capturing knowledge and experience helps prevent duplication of effort and promotes efficiency and innovation. The example below qualifies as a criticism of poor documentation and learning.

"If you went to various meetings, we must know where you went locally and internationally, what you achieved, what you did not achieve, why you failed, what was said in the meetings, so that in the following year when someone is sent to the meeting does not repeat your presentations that may not have been corrected. You want to establish something that a person already did" (KMM2).

This participant provided an example of an individual who attended an annual conference in Italy, regurgitating familiar information rather than providing new ideas. Although the theme for that year was different, the presentation lacked new insights and perspectives. Participants suggested that knowledge acquired through training could be shared, thus creating a learning environment that supports and enhances their functional and administrative duties. Some participants pointed out that knowledge hoarding hampers improving processes and activities in their daily routines, undermining the organization's vision. The findings show that engaging in training does not inherently lead to knowledge sharing, as personal intentions and motivations may vary. These individual behaviours articulated by one participant can seriously undermine collective learning efforts. One participant criticises employees engaging in such behaviours, arguing that knowledge belongs to the organisation and thus should be shared to carry out tasks and projects.

Training and conferences within the departments are supposed to make a difference because individual learning should result in organisational learning. However, the findings show that this type of learning might fail due to systems and personal issues. There is a need to capture knowledge acquired for organisational learning, although people might hoard knowledge knowingly or unknowingly. These findings are consistent with Hansen's (2011) findings that people hoard knowledge to enhance their capabilities and gain competitive advantage following attendance of meetings and seminars.

4.2 Drivers of knowledge rejection

The drivers of knowledge rejection perceived from participants responses includes Generational differences and knowledge receptivity and Resistant mentees. Knowledge rejection in these findings depicts a different type of behaviour, such as ignorance or a belief that there is nothing to learn from the mentor, perhaps because of biases from different cultures or ages.

4.2.1 Generational differences and knowledge receptivity

Government, as in any other workplace, encompasses multigenerational individuals occupying different levels of positions. Each generation has its way of interpreting, conveying, and receiving information. Some participants confirmed there is resistance to new ideas from juniors by some senior staff due to seniority bias and hierarchical thinking, closed-mindedness to fresh perspectives from newer colleagues, and tenure-based arrogance. These senior management's arguments imply that their experience makes them sufficiently knowledgeable on what is best and what should be done. An example by the participant below illustrates the argument:

"*After school, you feel you have more experience you can share with other people. I come fresh from the university, hoping to share what I learned from school. At the same time, you want to gain skills. When I was employed, I thought I will meet people who can assist with this and that. There must be willingness for managers to be changed, to be exposed" (C1SS).*

Supportive of this finding, Child et al. (2019) highlighted that when a senior manager is not receptive to a junior staffer's knowledge, they are not receptive to insights and assume that they already possess superior techniques, organising abilities, and strategic judgment. Similarly, labelling this as professional pride, argue that some individuals reject knowledge because they believe they have grasped enough knowledge, so there is no need to accept others' knowledge. Oye, et.al. (2011) argue that older workers tend to withhold knowledge because they are more insecure and feel threatened by younger workers.

To the detriment of the department, some senior management ignores new knowledge despite their complete understanding of what was shared. Not being receptive sends various signals about a manager's performance, leadership, or organisational culture. The adverse effects of managers' behaviour are that new employees and junior staff would feel valueless and less motivated, thus limiting creativity and innovation and minimal application of freshly gained skills and knowledge. Consistent with this finding, Child, et.al. (2019) highlighted that the more receptive people are to knowledge, the more likely they are to learn.

4.2.2 Resistant mentees

One participant mentioned that while informal sharing may occur in passing conversations in hallways and backrooms, she shares her expertise through mentoring, although some mentees can resist guidance. The senior manager's efforts to mentor were met with resistance, even though she sees mentorship as a critical aspect of career progression and the learning of junior colleagues. She expressed that the better way of learning is by transferring knowledge and experience to her subordinates so they can do their job excellently in her absence when she retires. This attitude from juniors seems incongruous, as they do not appreciate mentoring. It would be crucial for the mentor to establish underlying causes for mentee resistance to provide appropriate guidance. The various causes could be personality clashes, fear of failure, lack of trust, or different expectations.

"I have two and half years to leave. I need to expose people under me to understand what I do. There is a lot of knowledge that I got in my head because in our career you gain knowledge as you go. New people and young generation need to be exposed "You are trying to keep people on board but they are not so keen to do these things. How do you force them to do this? And you don't know what they know and what they don't know" (L4SM). This study's findings show that a person's attitude and willingness on the receiving end of the knowledge transfer process are crucial for success. The findings suggest that the knowledge sharer's characteristics can result in knowledge rejections, affecting knowledge sharing outcomes. Generational differences and mentee resistance emerged as the two obstacles to receiving knowledge. In line with the literature, older employees reject knowledge from new employees due to resistance to new ideas and fear of being replaced or becoming obsolete (Huy, 2001), perceived lack of experience or credibility (Simola and Sutton, 2002); and prejudices or cultural attitudes (Townsend, 2016). Knowledge rejection defeats younger employees' zeal to feel proud and valued when they can share knowledge with their older counterparts

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regardless of rank or position, all organisational members possess valuable

knowledge and insights that should be shared, heard, or considered. It is also important to note that when individuals plan their daily routines, they become engaged and motivated, making systems unnecessary. Prescribed knowledge management systems have the potential to limit knowledge sharing, as they might be regarded mechanical and symbolic. However, it is essential to recognise that systems can offer valuable benefits in many instances. Knowledge hoarding and rejection significantly impact the effect of knowledge-sharing initiatives. The study therefore recommends as follows:

- a comprehensive approach to knowledge management which include measures to reduce knowledge hoarding and rejection alongside initiatives to enhance knowledge sharing.
- The public sector's political environment and power struggles may foster an increase in knowledge hoarding and rejection in the coming decade.
- Further studies can be conducted to investigate the motivations and consequences of knowledge hoarding and rejection in the political context and examine the effects of these behaviours on government performance, policy-making, and public trust.

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