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Determinants of Individual Readiness for Knowledge Management Adoption in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Universities and colleges operate as knowledge-centered organizations, where knowledge is treated as a vital resource for growth and innovation. This research explores how top management backing, the sense of collegiality, and the organizational culture (OC) influence trust among faculty members and shape their personal readiness to embrace knowledge management (KM) practices. Data were gathered from academic staff working in Indian higher education institutions and analyzed using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, followed by structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS. The results indicate that both collegiality and organizational culture strongly contribute to building trust, which in turn enhances individuals' willingness to participate in KM initiatives. Encouraging trust is therefore key to improving KM efforts across institutions. The outcomes of this research offer actionable insights for decision-makers and administrators in HEIs and present an original framework for understanding KM adoption in academic environments.

Keywords: Knowledge management, Higher education, Trust, Organizational culture, Management support, Collegiality

Introduction

Knowledge encompasses awareness, experience, values, and understanding related to a person or subject, including factual (descriptive), skill-based (procedural), and acquaintance knowledge. Knowledge management (KM) enhances a higher education institution's (HEI) ability to gather, analyze, and apply information effectively [1]. It involves identifying valuable academic and research data, consolidating it, and sharing it with stakeholders—students, faculty, and staff—to stimulate creativity and innovation [2, 3]. For universities and colleges to succeed in an evolving and competitive environment, cultivating and applying creative knowledge is essential [4, 5]. Institutions must prioritize developing knowledge and skills that contribute meaningfully to economic and social growth [6]. However, distinguishing between high- and low-value knowledge and determining how easily they can be replaced remains a challenge [4]. Unlike tacit knowledge that resides within individuals, explicit knowledge can often be substituted. When faculty or staff leave, HEIs lose not only their knowledge but also their social capital—the relationships and resources tied to those connections.

A central challenge for HEIs is ensuring that knowledge remains easily accessible to all members—faculty, students, and administrative staff [1, 7]. Despite the growing recognition of KM's importance in Indian HEIs, research exploring its enablers and outcomes remains limited [5]. According to Bhusry and Ranjan [8], universities must develop a culture that values knowledge as intellectual capital [9].

In the 21st century, innovation and information have become key drivers of societal progress. Economists such as Machlup and Porat (1960s–1970s) analyzed the economic role of knowledge, while Drucker [10] emphasized knowledge as a core

production factor—surpassing land, labor, and capital. Today, institutions prioritize knowledge as a strategic asset. For universities, effective management of intellectual and knowledge resources is vital to delivering quality education and maintaining efficiency under financial constraints.

The digital era has further transformed education. Online learning platforms like MOOCs have made knowledge widely accessible but have also created challenges for Indian HEIs. Balancing traditional classroom teaching with online delivery has become complex, and repetitive teaching materials hinder faculty creativity [4, 11]. Without integrated KM systems, educators frequently recreate course content, leaving little time for mentoring or research collaboration. Additionally, although institutions expect research output from faculty, many lack the necessary support infrastructure—such as research groups, collaboration platforms, and access to paper repositories or plagiarism-checking tools. As faculty performance directly affects institutional performance, efficient knowledge systems are essential [6].

Moreover, informal and evolving knowledge often lacks proper channels for sharing within HEIs. Limited collaboration between departments and administrative units further restricts the flow of information [5, 12]. Therefore, understanding key antecedents—trust, perceived collegiality, and top management support—is essential for promoting KM adoption [5, 13].

Strategic decisions by top management shape an institution's direction [1]. To stay competitive, HEIs must innovate rapidly [14]. Leadership plays a central role in policy formulation, restructuring, and motivating employees to embrace new practices. Collegiality complements leadership by fostering mutual respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility among faculty members [15, 16]. When employees feel supported and valued, they are more likely to align with institutional goals.

Organizational culture also plays a pivotal role in embedding shared values, norms, and behaviors. In HEIs, a strong culture unites faculty, staff, and students under a shared mission, facilitating smoother implementation of new processes [17]. Consequently, organizational culture (OC), perceived degree of collegiality (PDC), and top management support (TM) are critical antecedents of individual readiness (IR) for KM adoption. However, limited research has examined how **trust** mediates the relationships among these factors and readiness for KM.

Thus, this study aims to analyze the interrelationships between organizational culture, perceived collegiality, top management support, and trust, as well as to evaluate the mediating role of trust in determining individual readiness for adopting knowledge management within higher education institutions.

Literature Review

Knowledge management

According to Wilson [18], Vandavasi *et al.* [19], and Abbas and Kumari [17], managing knowledge is inherently complex and challenging. Davenport and Prusak [20] define knowledge management (KM) as a systematic approach that enables organizations to share, distribute, create, capture, and interpret knowledge effectively. Liebowitz [21] further describes KM as the interaction between human capital and information within an organization. He explains that human capital is composed of factors such as intelligence, creativity, intuition, education level, skills, and experience, while information encompasses documented experiences and problem-solving insights.

In the educational context, Petrides and Nodine [22] define KM as a series of practices designed to improve teaching, research, and administration by enhancing the sharing and use of institutional data [23]. Similarly, Ashok [24] and Sahibzada *et al.* [5, 25-27] view KM as an organizational learning process focused on expressing, applying, and sharing human knowledge to strengthen institutional performance. Dal Mas *et al.* [28] emphasize that KM generates intellectual capital, which fuels innovation and helps organizations gain a competitive edge in a dynamic global environment.

Deloitte [29] also highlights the importance of KM as a cultural approach that enhances organizational resilience amid global social and economic challenges, such as those intensified by the pandemic. Moreover, the role of a learning culture as a key component of KM has been reinforced by studies such as Sahibzada *et al.* [30, 31] and Cillo *et al.* [32], underscoring the need for organizations—especially educational institutions—to cultivate continuous learning and knowledge sharing.

Top management support and trust

Effective knowledge management requires strong commitment and active participation from top management [6, 14, 33-35]. Senior leaders are expected to promote knowledge sharing, lifelong learning, and innovative thinking among employees to drive performance improvement [5, 17, 25-27]. Leadership plays a crucial role in modeling these behaviors, maintaining morale, and creating an environment where KM practices can thrive [1].

Previous studies [36-39] consistently emphasize that KM initiatives succeed only when top management demonstrates genuine and sustained support. Leaders not only establish policies and infrastructure for KM but also foster trust by reinforcing collaboration and transparency. Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H01: Top management support has a significant and positive effect on trust among faculty members in higher education institutions.

Perceived degree of collegiality and trust

Collegiality refers to the sense of shared responsibility and mutual respect among members of an organization, functioning without excessive hierarchical oversight [40, 41]. Within academic environments, it reflects the professional relationships that encourage members to value each other's ideas and care about collective well-being [16, 41]. Ambrose *et al.* [15] note that collegiality among faculty enhances job satisfaction, leading to greater institutional commitment and positive organizational change.

A high level of perceived collegiality strengthens trust and cooperation among colleagues, thereby supporting effective knowledge sharing and management [42, 43]. This collaborative culture is vital in educational institutions, where knowledge creation and exchange are central to success. Hence, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H02: Perceived degree of collegiality has a significant and positive impact on trust among faculty members in higher education institutions.

Organizational culture and trust

Alongside top management support, organizational culture plays a vital role in the effective implementation of knowledge management (KM) [23, 44]. Culture is defined as the set of shared values, beliefs, norms, and customs that influence behavior within an organization [32]. Building a positive and collaborative culture is often one of the biggest challenges organizations face. However, once such a culture is established, it significantly facilitates KM practices.

A collaborative organizational culture encourages employees to work together, exchange ideas, and share knowledge [9]. Since culture varies across organizations and national contexts, it must be intentionally shaped to promote communication and teamwork [45]. Empirical studies by Lee and Choi [46] confirmed that collaborative culture plays a central role in KM success. Trust, as a cultural element, also supports KM by reducing suspicion and fostering open knowledge sharing [46-48]. Moreover, innovation-oriented cultures empower employees with greater autonomy and encourage them to take initiative in knowledge-related activities [6, 32]. In open cultures where mistakes are accepted as part of learning, employees feel more confident to experiment and share insights [5, 32, 49]. Conversely, in rigid cultures resistant to change, KM efforts are often hindered. Therefore, organizations must either adapt KM practices to fit their existing culture or transform their culture to support KM initiatives [32, 50]. In light of these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H03: Organizational culture has a significant and positive effect on trust among faculty members in higher education institutions.

Trust and individual readiness for knowledge management

Trust refers to the confidence and mutual faith that individuals or groups have in one another's fairness, reliability, competence, and ethical conduct [51, 52]. According to Putnam [53] and Kankanhalli *et al.* [54], trust involves believing in the goodwill and dependability of colleagues, particularly in how they contribute to and use shared knowledge. It forms the foundation for cooperation and knowledge exchange, even among individuals who are not personally acquainted [52].

Previous studies have consistently shown that trust enhances knowledge sharing in organizations [52, 55]. Sahibzada *et al.* [56] found that trust significantly influenced KM processes among knowledge workers in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan and China. Sharing knowledge requires employees to relinquish a degree of personal control, which is only possible when trust exists among coworkers [43].

Given the limited research on this relationship in the Indian higher education context, examining how trust affects individual readiness for KM is both timely and essential. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H04: Trust has a significant and positive influence on individual readiness to implement knowledge management in higher education institutions.

Research Methodology

Item generation

To measure the study's constructs, relevant items were adapted from previous validated studies. Constructs such as trust, perceived collegiality, and individual readiness were drawn from Marouf and Agarwal [43], while items assessing organizational culture and top management support were adapted from Agarwal and Marouf [4]. All items were modified to better suit the Indian higher education context and were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

For pre-testing, ten academicians from a centrally funded university in northern India reviewed the questionnaire [57]. They evaluated the clarity, relevance, and consistency of each item and suggested minor revisions for better contextual fit. After incorporating their feedback, the revised questionnaire was re-evaluated and approved before final data collection.

Sample

The sample consisted of faculty members from higher education institutions (HEIs) located in the Delhi-NCR region. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used. Since this region attracts a culturally diverse student population from across India, it serves as a representative setting for studying trust and KM readiness within a multicultural academic environment.

Data Collection

Following the guidelines by Bashir and Madhavaiah [58], the data collection process was conducted online. A Google Forms questionnaire was distributed via university forums, academic groups, and student pages. The survey remained open for one month and yielded 318 responses. After data screening, 173 incomplete or invalid responses were excluded, leaving 245 valid questionnaires, achieving a utilization rate of 77.04%.

The final sample size, based on 17 items, was sufficient for structural equation modeling [59, 60]. Tests for normality indicated acceptable skewness and kurtosis values within the -2 to $+2$ range [61, 62]. Additionally, all variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 3, confirming the absence of multicollinearity among variables [63].

Analysis and Results

Data reduction and model evaluation

A pilot test was first carried out among 100 faculty members from the Delhi-NCR area to assess the clarity, consistency, and dependability of the constructs. The outcomes showed acceptable reliability levels. The main survey was then conducted with 245 valid responses, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to confirm that each construct was unidimensional [61, 62].

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation served as the extraction method. Since the indicators reflected their respective latent constructs, items with factor loadings below 0.40 were excluded to strengthen model validity. The remaining items demonstrated strong loadings on their corresponding constructs, verifying discriminant validity.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the extracted constructs were satisfactory: continuation intention (0.925), user satisfaction (0.928), post-adoption perceived risk (0.838), post-adoption perceived utility (0.848), and post-adoption perceived value (0.745). These values confirmed adequate internal consistency for further analysis.

Measurement model assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 24 to validate the measurement model. All items loaded significantly on their respective constructs, suggesting a strong model structure. The model fit indices also met acceptable criteria: Cmin/df = 1.995, TLI = 0.946, CFI = 0.957, and RMSEA = 0.065 [61, 64].

Convergent validity was verified as both average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50 and composite reliability (CR) values were above 0.70 [65]. Discriminant validity was further confirmed using the HTMT ratio, which remained below 0.85 as per Monte Carlo simulation results [66].

To check for potential common method bias (CMB), Harman's single-factor test was performed [67]. The results showed poor model fit (Cmin/df = 9.955; GFI = 0.599; TLI = 0.564; CFI = 0.597; RMSEA = 0.156), indicating that CMB was not a major issue in this study.

Table 1. Data reduction and constructs

S.No.	Item Code	Item	EFA Loading	Factor (Source)
Total Variance Explained = 78.119%; KMO = 0.842; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (p = 0.000)				
1.	TM1	Senior leadership clearly demonstrates commitment to implementing a knowledge management (KM) system.	0.920	**Top Management Support (TM)** Cronbach's α = 0.948 CR = 0.942 AVE = 0.803
2.	TM2	Senior executives consistently offer guidance and assistance in carrying out KM initiatives and policies.	0.910	
3.	TM4	Top management actively values and recognizes innovative suggestions from staff.	0.900	
4.	TM5	A strong alignment exists between senior management's strategic planning and the KM framework.	0.873	

5.	Tr1	I am confident that colleagues in my institution properly acknowledge others' contributions to knowledge.	0.704	**Trust (Tr)** Cronbach's α = 0.874 CR = 0.876 AVE = 0.638
6.	Tr2	I believe my institutional peers possess strong expertise in applying knowledge management practices.	0.836	
7.	Tr3	I trust that colleagues at my institution correctly attribute sources when using shared information.	0.838	
8.	Tr4	I view my peers as having positive motives when it comes to reusing existing knowledge.	0.789	
9.	PDC1	Most peers in my institution appear to have greater expertise than I do.	0.827	**Perceived Degree of Collegiality (PDC)** Cronbach's α = 0.849 CR = 0.849 AVE = 0.652
10.	PDC2	Faculty and students at my institution show mutual respect toward one another.	0.837	
11.	PDC3	Colleagues in my institution provide reciprocal support to each other.	0.832	
12.	OC2	My institution allocates adequate facilities and scheduling for continuous learning.	0.884	**Organizational Culture (OC)** Cronbach's α = 0.895 CR = 0.897 AVE = 0.743
13.	OC3	My institution encourages and creates opportunities for creative advancements.	0.891	
14.	OC4	An atmosphere of reciprocal trust and teamwork prevails among staff members.	0.884	
15.	IR1	I am always willing to disseminate my knowledge to institutional colleagues upon request.	0.753	**Individual Readiness to Implement Knowledge Management** Cronbach's α = 0.753 CR = 0.766 AVE = 0.526
16.	IR2	I plan to regularly exchange my knowledge with peers at my institution going forward.	0.763	
17.	IR3	I will make concerted efforts to transfer my knowledge effectively to institutional colleagues.	0.811	

Table 2. (HTMT analysis) discriminant validity

Construct	TM	Trust	PDC	OC	IR
TM	-	-	-	-	-
Trust	0.309	-	-	-	-
PDC	0.376	0.526	-	-	-
OC	0.251	0.298	.255	-	-
IR	0.216	0.646	.359	0.317	-

Structural model

The model fit indices (Cmin/df = 1.967; RMSEA = 0.064; CFI = 0.957; TLI = 0.948) confirm that the proposed framework aligns well with the data **(Table 3 and Figure 1)**. Results indicate that support from top management did not have a significant influence on faculty trust (ß = 0.086; p = 0.24), thus hypothesis H01 was not confirmed. In contrast, organizational culture showed a meaningful positive link with trust among faculty members (ß = 0.189; p = 0.006), validating hypothesis H02. Likewise, the perceived level of collegiality exhibited a significant positive relationship with trust (ß = 0.449; p = 0.014), supporting H03. Furthermore, trust had a substantial positive effect on individual readiness to adopt knowledge management practices (ß = 0.634; p = 0.000), confirming H04.
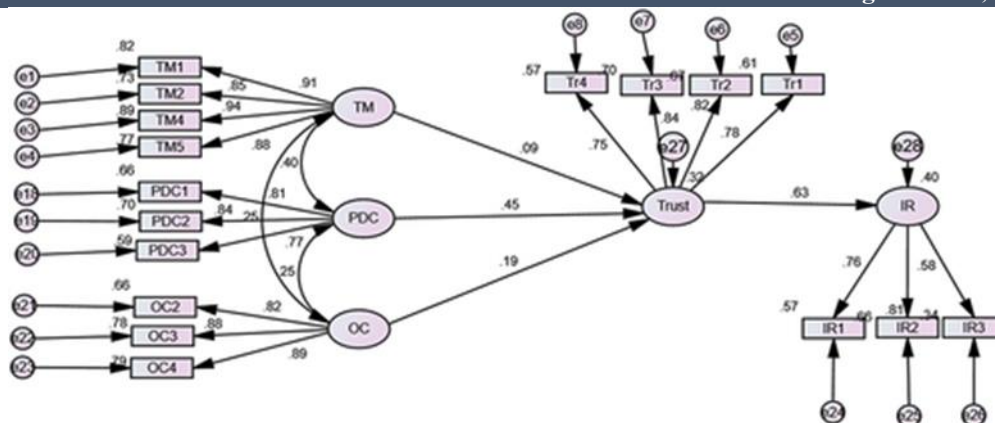
Figure 1. Structural model

Table 3. Results of hypotheses test (Table view)

S.NO.	Hypothesis	Path	Estimates	C.R	P	Result
1.	H01	TM→Trust	0.086	1.215	.224	Not Supported
2.	H02	OC→Trust	0.189	2.746	.006	Supported
3	H03	PDC →Trust	0.449	5.563	.000	Supported
4.	H04	Trust→IR	0.634	7.485	.000	Supported

Discussion

This research generated several noteworthy insights. First, it proposed that support from top management positively affects employees' readiness to engage in knowledge management (KM) practices within Indian higher education institutions (HEIs). Similar observations were made by Latif *et al.* [37], who noted that leadership in HEIs provides direction for KM initiatives. Furthermore, hypotheses H2 and H3 revealed that organizational culture and the perceived level of collegiality are both key elements in fostering trust among faculty members when implementing KM. These findings align with prior studies emphasizing that peer support and a constructive institutional culture can strengthen confidence and motivate faculty members to participate actively in KM initiatives [9, 44, 52, 68, 69].

Results related to hypothesis H4 showed that higher trust among faculty members enhances their willingness to implement KM at their universities. This suggests that strong interpersonal relationships within academic departments and between faculty and the institution as a whole increase the likelihood of KM adoption. Earlier research has also established that employee trust serves as a driving factor for successful KM implementation [5, 25-27, 52].

Interestingly, one of the unexpected outcomes of this study was that top management support did not have a statistically significant impact on trust. This finding contradicts previous research asserting that support from senior leaders is one of the most critical determinants of KM success [47-49, 52, 70, 71].

Theoretical Implications

This study makes several important contributions to KM theory by introducing a new conceptual framework. It explored the interconnections among collegiality, organizational culture, top management support, and trust, offering valuable insights for future KM research in higher education.

First, the study provided empirical evidence for the relationship between top management support and trust in HEIs. Second, it identified collegiality as a significant factor that strengthens trust and, consequently, enhances readiness for KM adoption—an area previously underexplored in KM literature. Third, it confirmed that organizational culture has a meaningful impact on employee trust, expanding the theoretical understanding of KM in educational contexts. Finally, the study verified the essential role of trust in promoting employees' readiness for KM practices. Collectively, these findings advance the academic discussion on KM implementation, particularly within higher education environments.

Managerial Implications

The results of this study carry several practical implications for HEI leaders and administrators. Institutions can leverage these insights to design strategies that support KM adoption. Understanding the strong connection between organizational culture and trust can help management implement targeted cultural initiatives that build a sense of security and collaboration among staff and faculty.

Additionally, fostering collegiality—through open communication, teamwork, and peer recognition—can further enhance faculty confidence in adopting KM practices. The findings also suggest that building and maintaining trust within the institution should be a central managerial priority. By investing in trust-building initiatives, HEIs can increase faculty readiness and ensure smoother KM integration across departments.

Limitations, Future Scope, and Conclusion

Despite its valuable insights, this study has certain limitations. It primarily focused on three organizational factors: culture, collegiality, and top management support. Future research could broaden the model by incorporating additional individual-level variables such as employee attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, possibly as moderating factors. Moreover, since the data were collected solely from Indian HEIs, future studies could include participants from other countries to enhance the generalizability of the results. Comparative analyses across disciplines and nations may also offer deeper understanding.

In summary, this research examined faculty members' readiness to adopt KM practices within higher education institutions. The findings highlight the importance of cultivating collegiality and a supportive organizational culture to strengthen trust—an essential prerequisite for successful KM implementation. Ultimately, in HEIs, trust stands out as a decisive factor that influences individuals' willingness to engage in knowledge management processes.

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