

## **Unveiling Cultural Dynamics in Knowledge-Sharing Organizations: A Study from Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Institutions**

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### **Abstract**

The study aims to explore the culture and knowledge-sharing practices adopted by organizations and how organizational culture facilitates knowledge sharing among individuals. Furthermore, this study tested the SECI model of knowledge sharing within and among organizational units to identify the level of SECI model practiced in the organization. Using a qualitative research approach, this study investigated the role of culture in knowledge sharing in open and distance learning institutions through semi-structured interviews with 10 faculty members. Thematic analysis revealed that the creation and sharing of knowledge can be leveraged through its systems, processes, and structure, which make the culture of an organization a significant determinant of knowledge sharing. The study's findings have implications for educational institutions and other stakeholders.

### **Keywords**

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions, SECI (Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization) model, Knowledge sharing, Culture

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## Introduction

Emergence of knowledge based economy has forced organizations to re-consider knowledge as a significant source of competitive advantage that leads towards long term success (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Researchers have proclaimed that creating, sharing and transferring knowledge is the essence of what organizations exist for and culture acts as facilitator for this knowledge sharing process (David and Fahey, 2000). Among all organizational resources, knowledge is the most critical intellectual resource that is treated as significant factor of productions for the organizations (Sohail and Daud, 2009) the only meaningful resource in the knowledge economy (Rowley, 2000). The survival of organizations is to be innovative that is dependent on the knowledge workers; the successful organizations are ones who value their knowledge assets, share and create continuous knowledge (Lee, 2018).

The identification of the culture type practiced in the organization is important to analyze which culture type is facilitating the knowledge sharing (Ng, 2023) and how SECI model of Nonaka (1994) is being practiced in the organizations. Among various culture types, organizations may be practicing more than one culture i.e. sub-cultures that are practiced because of disagreements of departments on following of a specific culture (Cacciattolo, 2014). Organizations with a culture of facilitating knowledge sharing among individuals are not only creating and sharing the knowledge but they are also retaining the individuals with tacit knowledge that losses as the individuals leave the organization (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2000).

Due to its characteristics, knowledge is an asset that is rare, valuable, inimitable and un-substitutable, therefore plays a significant role in attaining sustainable competitive advantage (Lee, 2018). Role of knowledge as a strategic asset is evident through the literature. Similar to all other organizations, knowledge sharing and the role of culture in facilitating knowledge creation and transfer is of equal importance for educational institutions. Educational institutions are considered to be the reservoirs of knowledge along with the providers of knowledge to the students (Al-Kurdi, El-Haddadeh, & Eldabi, 2018). The higher education institutions and universities are said to be in the education business, who are facing challenges in managing their knowledge sharing process (Goddard, 1998).

Being the knowledge creators and disseminators, the management of knowledge resources is inevitable for educational institutions. Knowledge sharing in educational institutions is crucial because intellectual capital is the dominant resource that can help them in creating competitive advantage over other educational institutions if strategically managed (Budur et al., 2024). Access to resources, facilitating environment, valuing knowledge as an asset, connectivity, norms, values, and processes of knowledge creation affect the knowledge sharing among faculty members (Rowley, 2000). Among various organizational factors of educational institutions affecting knowledge sharing; nature of knowledge, working culture and social interaction play a significant role (Sohail and Daud, 2009). Knowledge sharing in universities and educational institutions is virtual as academic staff is the storehouse of tacit knowledge; they possess knowledge and can share and generate new knowledge for the organizations and community (Jain et al., 2007).

## Research Gap and Objectives

With the advent of information and communication technologies, open and distance learning has become an emerging field of education not only worldwide but also in Pakistan, with the projected

increase in its users to 7.1 million by 2029 (Statista, 2025). Universities are now shifting and blending their education system by using distance learning. In Pakistan, studies have been conducted on the exploration of culture and knowledge sharing aspects of the organizations; few studies have investigated knowledge sharing in higher education in Pakistan but merely found any in ODL institutions. This study aims to identify the impact of culture on knowledge sharing in the distance learning institutions of Pakistan.

The study aims to explore the culture and knowledge sharing in Open and Distant Learning (ODL) Institutions in Pakistan; in this context, the study proceeded with following objectives:

1. To identify the prevailing organizational culture and sub-culture (if any) in the ODL institution
2. To explore the perceptions of the faculty members about knowledge and knowledge sharing within institution
3. To identify the level of the SECI model practiced in the organization
4. To explore the role of prevailing culture and/or sub-culture in facilitating knowledge sharing among the faculty members of the ODL institution (inter-unit and intra-unit)

This study only considers the impact of organizational culture in terms of organizational structure, controlling mechanism, decision making, communication system, organizational task, team orientation, conflict management and environment on knowledge sharing activities, specifically in ODL institutions. Other sections of the paper include a literature review on knowledge sharing and culture types, the relationship between organizational culture and knowledge sharing and the empirical testing of these concepts, followed by data and methodology in section 3. Results and discussions are presented in section 4, and section 5 concludes the study.

## **Literature Review**

With the emerging concept of knowledge-based economies; the terms knowledge, knowledge sharing and learning organizations have gained significant momentum. Organizations are now re-thinking and redefining their resources and assigning a key role to knowledge as one of the critical resources. Among the organizational resources, knowledge is considered a strategic resource (Lee, 2018). If successfully transferred, leads the organizations towards success. The effectiveness of knowledge is its transfer among employees and the creation of new knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Organizations with knowledge sharing culture facilitate the transfer and generation of new knowledge among employees (Al-Kurdi et al., 2018).

## **Knowledge**

Knowledge has been defined differently in the literature; experience and belief-based understanding (Allee, 1997) generalization that people apply to interpret and manage the world around them (Wiig, 1997). Knowledge can be expressed as organized and analyzed information used in problem-solving and decision-making. Nonaka (1994) described knowledge as a specific entity that resides in the minds of individuals and conceptualized differently as the organizations based on the structures of the organizations. The traditional conception of knowledge was disembodied, formal and abstract information (Blackler, 1995) that is static and non-human. The modern concept of knowledge is a dynamic social process of justified human personal beliefs (Nonaka et al., 2000). The critical point here is understanding, creating and managing these forms of knowledge as a strategic resource. Some studies on defining knowledge have stated it as 'strategic resource embodied in the organizational entities, its culture, policies, procedures, routines and the human resource(Grant, 1996). While opponents of this definition expressed it as part of a learning community, negating it as organizational

resource (Brown and Duguid, 1991, Brown et al., 1989). Supporting the views of both, Gemino et al. (2015) defined knowledge as part of a community based on activities, context and the culture to which it belongs.

Summing up the literature on defining ‘knowledge’, it is a multidimensional, multilayered concept that is context-based, affected by the culture and the activities of the organizations and the communities where developed. There is also a need to differentiate between knowledge and organizational knowledge, so as to differentiate between culture and organizational culture. Knowledge is what an individual understands, interprets about the world; what an individual possesses in the form of tacit or explicit knowledge, while organizational knowledge is “the shared individual knowledge”. The knowledge, when it becomes part of groups and the organizations, transferred and shared by the individuals and becomes organizational knowledge.

## **Knowledge Sharing and SECI Model**

Knowledge sharing is a mechanism of transferring individual knowledge into group and the organizational knowledge; a process with sequenced events at a time involving at least two parties (individuals or groups), i.e. the donors of knowledge and the learners sharing knowledge (Hendriks, 2004). Knowledge sharing process requires the knowledge of both the parties i.e. the bringing party and the obtaining party, to make it useful and successfully transferred for the creation of new knowledge (Blackler, 1995).

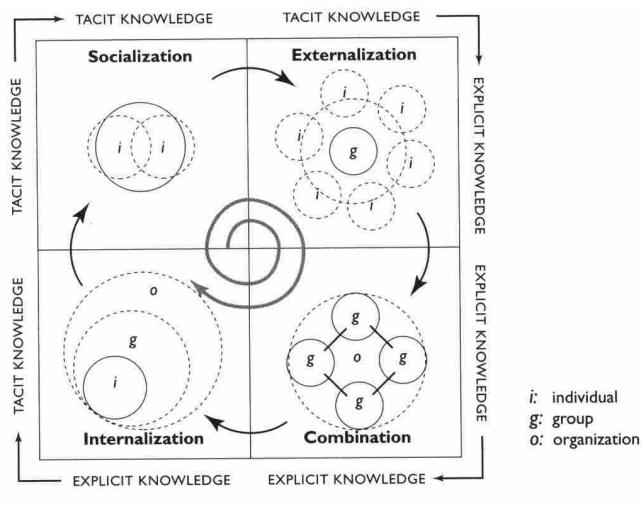
Being the process of social interaction, knowledge sharing is necessary to bring knowledge from the minds of individuals to the processes and other people in the organizations, i.e. transferring tacit and explicit knowledge. Employees interact, discuss, find solutions for the problems and create new knowledge (tacit or explicit) through knowledge sharing process (van den Hooff and De Ridder, 2004). Nonaka (1994) presented two dimensions of knowledge sharing in the organizations, i.e. tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is context-based, personal, difficult to share and formalize, expressed through emotions, actions, values, attitudes and experiences of the individuals (Nonaka and Konno, 1998). It is referred as a continuous knowing activity, linked with individual technical and cognitive skills (Nonaka and Konno, 1998), unarticulated knowledge that is either inherited physical functioning or the creative thinking of individuals (Pauleen and Gorman, 2012).

Another type of knowledge explained by (Nonaka, 1994) as organizational knowledge is explicit; articulated knowledge residing in the routines, processes documents of the organizations. It is codified and can be expressed in terms of numbers and words by individuals (Campbell, 2009). Although explicit knowledge is openly expressed in organizations but effectiveness still depends upon the communication system and organizational culture of knowledge sharing. Organizations need to understand and articulate both types of knowledge for knowledge creation and sharing; explicit knowledge without interaction with tacit knowledge, loses its meaning (Nonaka et al., 2000). Knowledge sharing process facilitates the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge and allows the transfer and creation of new knowledge.

SECI model by (Nonaka, 1994) identified interaction of tacit and explicit knowledge in four patterns that are in spiral form; how both types of knowledge can be transferred, and new knowledge is created.

**Figure 1**

*SECI model (Nonaka and Konno, 1998).*



The success of SECI model of knowledge sharing is largely dependent on how well organizations manage the four stages. For organizations, being continuous knowledge creation entities, the management and creation of this strategic resource “knowledge” is a critical matter. Individuals and groups in organizations possess tacit knowledge that is locked in their personalities; the success of organizations depends on how they unlock the tacit knowledge and include it in the flow of knowledge within the organization (Choo, 1996).

### Culture and Types of Culture

Culture is defined as shared experiences of social groups in organization, assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes. Organizational processes, especially culture, facilitate knowledge activities, i.e. knowledge creating, sharing and transfer. The domain of culture is so rich that it has strong links with well-established subjects like sociology, psychology, anthropology and organizational behavior (Schein, 1990). O'Reilly, C. A., Chatman, J., & Caldwell, D. F. (1991) defined culture as “... a set of cognitions shared by members of a social unit...” (p 491). Culture is composed of assumptions and values defining the norms to guide the behaviors of the members of a particular society (Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1999; Rousseau, 1990).

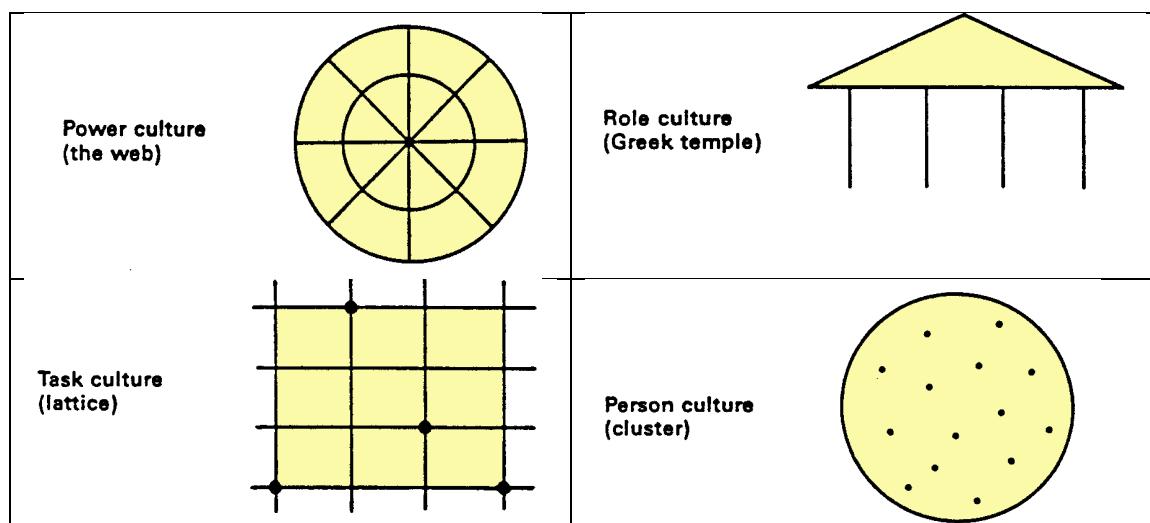
The culture defined above is with respect to society and other social units. Organization is also a social unit where people work together to achieve a common goal. Therefore, the culture of an organization is defined as the behavior and attitude of employees directed by the beliefs systems and values of an organization (Martin, 1985). Schein (1990) discussed the organizational culture as values, norms and behaviors of individuals forming the system of an organization. Beliefs of organizations are demonstrated through routine behaviors displayed in the organization (Deal and Kennedy, 1983). Therefore, organizational culture is formed through its exposure to critical incidents and assumptions assisting in goal attainment become the major elements of its culture.

In previous studies, different dimensions of culture have been explained that categorize the culture into a specific type. Hall (1989) differentiated culture as high-context or low-context cultures based on the communication style prevailing in the organization. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's Values Orientation

Theory (as cited in Hills (2002)) classified culture into six dimensions based on its environment, time orientation, perception about human nature, human actions, interpersonal relationships and use of space as private or public. Hofstede (1993) defined regional cultures through power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity and long-term orientation. Handy (1993) has presented culture in four different types, named as power culture, role culture, task culture and person culture. Handy's model specifically explains the types of organizational culture into four categories based on beliefs and norms of its members, its ownership, rules & policies, the way people interacts, organizational structure, critical business incidents and environment. This study has opted Handy's culture model to identify culture type based on communication system, controlling mechanism, internal environment, decision making, conflict management, performance standards, organizational tasks and team orientation to facilitate knowledge transfer of the SECI model.

**Figure 2**

*Handy Model of Organizational Culture (Handy 1993).  
Organizational Culture and Knowledge Sharing*



Organizational culture plays important role in sharing knowledge among the organizations; it can either facilitate or impede the knowledge sharing among employees. Organizational structure, reward system, leadership style, social networks, resources, organizational environment, trust information system and experiences are some of the components of culture that influence sharing of knowledge (Ismail Al-Alawi et al., 2007, Kathiravelu et al., 2014). Besides these factors, employees' behavior and response towards knowledge sharing with others are also important factors in knowledge management. Lack of trust among employees is the missing link among the employees, and that results in the concentration of knowledge towards some members (Robinson, 1996).

Knowledge sharing in an organization is largely dependent upon the culture or subculture that is prevailing there (Castaneda and Ramírez, 2021). Considering the culture types identified by (Handy 1993); four patterns of SECI model of (Nonaka, 1994) may be different for power culture, role culture, task culture and person culture. Each culture type varies in knowledge sharing patterns and the knowledge management techniques (Davel and Snyman, 2005). Empirical testing of the knowledge sharing cultures further assists the organizations to promote a particular culture to encourage

knowledge creation and transfer, one of the major factors of organization's success. Further, this study facilitates identifying the culture type supporting each phase of SECI model and the extent to which each proceeds of the model is supported by a particular organizational culture.

## Methods

This section includes the research method, selection and justification of research approach and paradigm, research design explaining the population and sample that is used in the study. Further, this section explains the methods selected for data collection, analysis, conclusion and limitations of the study.

This study has explored the organizational culture prevailing in ODL institute and the level of knowledge sharing practiced in it. Since the exploration of organizational culture and knowledge sharing requires detail analysis of employees' experiences and events of the organization; qualitative method is used for this study. The study investigated the prevailing culture and sub-cultures in ODL institution and their knowledge sharing level by analyzing individuals' experiences and perceptions about the prevailing culture and knowledge sharing, which is quite subjective in nature. Considering the population of the study, which are the ODL faculty members' unique experiences in terms of culture and knowledge sharing, the qualitative approach seems more suitable, interpretive, studying things in natural settings, making sense and deriving meaning (Newman and Benz, 1998). The interpretivist approach (i.e. understanding the human behavior meanings, motives, subjective context and time-based experiences (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Neuman, 2000)) for the exploration and description of culture and knowledge sharing patterns of ODL faculty members is adopted.

## Population and Sampling

The role of culture and knowledge sharing is significant for every organization in the knowledge-based economy, and specifically for the educational institutions, which are the main source of knowledge creation and transference among the masses. The emerging role of information technology (IT) and online mode of education has gained momentum in the present economy; research has declared online modes as an effective way of generating, sharing and transferring knowledge (Ketcha et al., 2015). Considering the role of technology and online mode of education in knowledge sharing, the population of interest for this study is the faculty members of ODL. This study is only considering the ODL, therefore strategy of inquiry is a case study on ODL mode of education. Purposive sampling technique has been used to select the faculty members from the ODL institution; purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, allows researchers to select the individuals or group based on certain attributes that are necessary for the study (Berg et al., 2004). Informants have been selected based on experience of at least 2 years or more; as faculty members, they must have spent enough time in the organization to experience the culture and the knowledge sharing level to share their perceptions and experiences. Moreover, for an in-depth inquiry of the behaviors of individuals, a purposively selected small sample might provide meaningful results (Glassner and Haldipur, 1983).

## Data Collection

Qualitative data is collected from a small sample of ODL faculty members to collect rich information from the individuals having certain characteristics and experiences (Curry et al., 2009). To fulfil the purpose of the study, 10 semi-structured interviews from the faculty members of ODL have been conducted. An interview protocol is developed on the basis of cultural dimensions presented by Handy

(1993) and the knowledge sharing model of Nonaka (1994), representing the proposed interview questions that were modified as per responses.

## Analysis Technique

The unit of analysis is the individual faculty member of the ODL institution; each member is considered as a case interviewed to get rich information about the culture and knowledge sharing level. Interviews have been recoded and transcribed verbatim (verbatim transcription adds validity, congruence, reliability and veracity of the qualitative data collection and brings the researcher closer to the data (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006, Wengraf, 2001)). Individual interviews are analyzed through thematic analysis by using NVivo 11 plus, which provides tools to handle rich text data, to code and to organize the concepts and to construct relationships (Richards, 1999). Themes are identified through transcription of recorded data (Ryan and Bernard 2003). These themes emerged from similarities and differences in the concepts, and the degree of strength is determined through content analysis to identify the sub-themes. Based on identified themes and sub-themes, relationships have been developed, and a concept map has been attained.

## Results & Discussion

**Table 1**  
*Main themes and their strength*

Informants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Themes and Sub-themes										
<b>Culture</b>										
Communication system	7	5	4	4	7	6	5	4	3	5
Controlling Mechanism	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Overall environment	6	5	5	4	5	2	3	4	5	4
Decision Making	4	5	4	5	6	4	5	3	6	4
Managing Conflict	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	3	2	2
Performance standards	1	1	2	1	4	2	1	1	3	1
Task Distribution and Accomplishment	5	5	6	3	4	5	5	6	5	4
Team competition	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3
<b>Knowledge Sharing</b>										
Internalization	2	3	1	4	2	3	2	2	4	1
Socialization	8	7	6	7	8	6	5	5	6	7
Externalization	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	1	2	1
Combination	2	3	2	3	2	1	2	0	2	3

*Authors 'output*

Based on analysis of individual cases by using NVivo Table 1 represents the major themes and their strength. These themes have been identified from thematic analysis of interviews.

Under culture, main themes identified are communication system, controlling mechanism, environment, decision making, conflict management, performance standards, task distribution and accomplishment and team competition. Similar to findings of Ismail Al-Alawi et al. (2007) communication system is the prominent factor of culture, as mentioned in Table 1; other significant factors contributing towards culture of organization are environment and decision-making style.

Among the four levels of SECI model of knowledge sharing, socialisation is the dominant level practiced in the ODL institution, while externalization, combination and internalization are not fully practiced. The association of power culture with the least externalization and combination is also supported by Snyman (2005).

## Discussion

While analyzing the first dimension of the study, i.e. organizational culture, power culture is found prominent in the organization with centralized decision making and least involvement of the faculty members in decision making. There are standard rules and formalized structure followed in ODL institution.

*“There are uniform policies in a sense that rules are pre-defined and communicated as it without taking any feedback from the faculty members” (Informant 1).*

*“Centralized decisions, different levels are not involved to participate in the decision making” (Informant 4).*

While informally, there is a people culture prevailing, which is an indication of subcultures. Faculty members informally share knowledge, and their informal discussions are healthy and a source of knowledge generation as well. Employees are cooperative at informal levels and mostly use informal ways to share knowledge.

*“Knowledge sharing is through informal discussions that are helpful, and knowledge is enhanced through these discussions and sharing” (Informant 2).*

*“At informal level mostly, information is shared” (Informant 5).*

The presence of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and punishment through explanation call through team leads is a way of controlling the people in the organization.

*“Team leads are there to control the activities and there are explanation calls in case of any mistake” (Informant 5).*

Communication system is not clear at faculty level; information is shared through informal ways. Middle level communicated partial information and sometimes no sharing because of number of levels involved for sharing the information.

*“We get information through grape wine and most of the information comes to us through our discussions that are routine discussions” (Informant 8).*

*“Rules are not well and clearly communicated, and it is because of complex hierarchical level” (Informant 2).*

*“Communication system is not much appropriate, at certain level, all the information is not communicated from top to middle level while suggestions given by employees are also not communicated to higher ups” (Informant 6).*

Task assignments are not on a rational basis and are not of a challenging nature, creating monotony for the faculty members. There is less liberty at the faulty end regarding tasks, and the distribution of the tasks is not impartial. Target setting is also not satisfactory; quantity and deadlines are more focused without considering the nature of the task, representing the prevalence of task culture also. Performance is also evaluated on the basis of the quantity of tasks and meeting targets on time. Most of the faculty members perform tasks, taking it as their duty and are committed to their work.

*“Tasks are not challenging and repetitive tasks that don’t involve learning. Sometimes distribution is not fair, expertise of people is not considered while assigning the task” (Informant 6).*

But this approach varies departmentally; some faculty members are satisfied with the assignment of

tasks and the deadlines, while others are not. This also indicates the presence of subcultures in the organization

*“Tasks are not assigned by considering the subject nature and not in setting the targets” (Informant 1).*

*“Equally divided, work burden is considered and now people have awareness that they can speak for their right, tasks are on equal basis, tasks are SMART” (Informant 4).*

Prominent themes under culture are the communication system, overall environment of the organization and decision-making style (Table 1). Summing up the analysis of main themes to identify culture, overall ODL institution has a cooperative, friendly, cohesive, supportive, mixed and secure culture with informal knowledge sharing and informal bonding at the peer level. These identified themes are also supported by literature as factors affecting knowledge sharing in higher education institutions (Ali et al., 2014, Al-Kurdi et al., 2018, Mazorodze and Mkhize, 2022, Faith and Seeam, 2018).

### **Knowledge Sharing Level as per SECI Model**

Faculty members of all departments share knowledge, but this sharing is at an informal level among the peers, indicating transfer of tacit knowledge in the organization. Informal discussions are the source of gaining and transferring knowledge, either job-related or for personal development. From organizational point of view, there are standard rules that are explicit and shared through formal ways that are accessible. The findings are in line with (Faith and Seeam, 2018).

*“Knowledge sharing is good; people share whenever we ask about anything either it is personal or related to job” (Informant 2).*

*“Knowledge sharing is through informal discussions that are helpful, and knowledge is enhanced through these discussions and sharing” (Informant 9).*

Informal sharing is more general and job-related issue, but there is less sharing on prevailing opportunities or information related to employees' development because of competition.

### **Socialization**

Socialization is practiced through information meetings and discussions that are to share tacit knowledge. Informally, faculty members have healthy discussions that help in generating new ideas and resolving job-related issues, but at the formal level, there is less transfer of tacit knowledge from the top level to the middle level. Moreover, there are seminars and workshops for the development of employees, but the selection of participants is not fair. Informal meetings are not much encouraged at the top level.

*“During such meetings people share knowledge; yes, somehow such activities are encouraged, and these activities can bring innovation. People discuss at comfort level; they discuss about different opportunities and skills they possess that lead towards development” (Informant 10).*

### **Externalization**

Externalization is not fairly practiced as faculty members are not satisfied with the use of their point of view, the findings of meetings and other suggestions by external parties in the decision-making and the formulation of rules. There is no less documented information about meetings, seminars and external bodies' opinions, which means tacit knowledge is not properly transferred into explicit knowledge. Faculty members are not aware of the process through which information is documented. *“No comment because I have no experience” (Informant 7).*

*“I don’t think so, sometimes things are not implemented even if these are communicated through e-mail. I have not seen any implementation” (Informant 9).*

Moreover, formal ways of communicating the documented knowledge are not available to the faculty members. This shows that the transfer of tacit knowledge of faculty members into explicit knowledge is not fully practiced.

### **Combination**

There is a partial transfer of explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge; information is classified and accessible, but with limitations, while change in the formulated things is not much encouraged. Rules and regulations are there, but not properly communicated to the staff

*“Formal documents are accessible; on request it is available, at personal level it is easily available, but it become complex at top level. There should be access to these documents to see the trends and to understand the perceptions of the externals about courses and working” (Informant 5).*

### **Internalization**

Explicit knowledge is not properly shared to transfer it into tacit knowledge that can be possible through learning by doing, training and on-job learning. Training is there for the faculty members but the selection of trainees is not fair, moreover most of the explicit knowledge is not accessible to the staff.

*“Limited access is there, we cannot access the external reports, and some things are open, but some are restricted that can be opened through putting request” (Informant 2).*

Among the four levels of SECI model, socialization mode remained the prominent mode of sharing knowledge among faculty members in ODL institutions. The findings are also supported by literature (Adesina and Ocholla, 2019). The factors contributing towards the application of levels of SECI model include institutional support, policies and procedures, and referring culture as a critical factor of knowledge sharing. The findings revealed the presence of SECI, but Combination, Internalization, and Externalization emerged areas where improvement is required from management. Management needs to assess the factors hindering knowledge sharing to target the areas that need special attention.

## **Conclusion**

“Knowledge” has been identified as a major resource contributing towards competitive advantage for the organization. It is one of the operant resources that cannot be imitated or substituted easily, therefore, provides an advantage over other competitors. The significance of knowledge is enhanced for the organizations that are service-based, which are more dependent on the KSA (knowledge, skill, attitude) of its human resource. The use of knowledge as a main “product” is prominent in the education sector where knowledge is created and transferred among stakeholders. Considering the significance of knowledge, this study has selected the education sector to identify the knowledge sharing level through SECI model. Culture is the aspect that differentiates an organization from others, depicting its specific value system and norms defining its structure, rules and activities. To bring any change, culture needs to be aligned with the modifications, else it will hinder the whole process.

Similarly, culture plays a significant role in knowledge-creating and sharing processes. The exploration of cultures and sub-cultures and their impact on the generation and sharing of knowledge is an important aspect for the performance of organizations. Multiple studies have been conducted for the identification of organizational culture and its impact on organization’s performance but its

significance in knowledge sharing is mentioned in very few studies. However, this association of culture and knowledge sharing is not studied with respect to the educational sector, specifically for ODL institutions. This study has focused on ODL institutions to identify the role of organizational culture in knowledge-sharing activity. The study has identified the presence of power, task, and people culture in the ODL institutions. Among these three, power and people culture are found to be most prominent. Mostly decisions are centralized, indicating the existence of a power culture that also facilitates the externalization in order to make tacit, explicit through documentation. However, it cannot fully externalize the maximum body of tacit knowledge, and most of the knowledge is shared through socialization. Faculty members share knowledge in informal ways. Knowledge sharing is more informal, dependent on the personal relations of the members with each other that shows the presence of people culture. Due to extra hierarchy levels, people usually prefer informal communication medium to avoid the number of levels involved in the flow of communication.

The 'People culture' has facilitated the socialization process by providing an informal structure to mingle with each other. This cohesiveness in culture supports socialization in sharing tacit knowledge, which is not necessarily documented to make it explicit. Moreover. Combination and internalization levels of knowledge sharing are not practiced significantly and there is no formal mechanism to synergize the explicit knowledge and ensure the internalization of knowledge among faculty members. Main cultural factors affecting the knowledge sharing are the communication system prevailing in the organization, its decision-making structure and the overall environment. Faculty members are satisfied with the culture because of informal bonding and the knowledge-sharing attitude of the members. To promote knowledge sharing, the communication system should be clear and simple, as communication is positively related to knowledge sharing activities (Islam et al., 2011).

To promote knowledge sharing activities combination and internalization are also significant, which cannot be initiated unless or until a proper formal mechanism is adopted. To facilitate externalization, combination and internalization, task culture is recommended, and power culture needs to be restricted. To use culture as a facilitator of knowledge sharing rather than a barrier, a conducive environment is required that can help the faculty members to freely communicate at different levels to gain knowledge and to share it with each other. This gap can be filled through an open and flexible culture for the faculty members in knowledge creation activities, a move towards getting a competitive advantage.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

This study encourages the customized SECI model for ODL institutions by showing the dominance of socialization (informal sharing) while combination and internalization remain underutilized. Moreover, the institution's culture (power, task, people) directly shapes knowledge creation and sharing, with the prominent contribution of people culture in fostering tacit knowledge and power culture promoting externalization.

The findings of the study recommend that educational institutes adopt a flexible culture promoting faculty to openly share their knowledge and formal mechanisms to strengthen combination and internalization to make tacit knowledge explicit. It is recommended that institutions streamline informal sharing with structured mechanisms to ensure clear, open, and conducive communication systems. Future research can be extended to the application of the SECI model with a focus on leadership, incentive systems etc., as contextual factors in knowledge sharing for higher education institutions.

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## Abbreviations

Knowledge, Skill, Attitude	KSA
Open and Distance Learning	ODL
Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization	SECI