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A DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH ON THE EVALUATION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT THEMED PUBLICATIONS[1]

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Abstract

Knowledge management is an important business which has technical and social dimensions, and directs the future of organizations. However, knowledge management is often perceived as the field of information technology experts and managers. The fact that the concept cannot be clearly separated from similar ones has a negative impact on knowledge management processes. In other words, although widespread use of information systems and big data analyzes play an active role in decision-making processes; it is thought that knowledge without social dimension will be insufficient. In this context, a study has been designed to determine the focus of researches on knowledge management.

First, publications in the field of "knowledge management" were searched through the university online library (lib.ikc.edu.tr). The distribution of these studies according to the different scientific areas was determined and the studies focusing on knowledge management, in the field of business & management within the scope of social sciences, were examined. Then, to make a comparison, in all issues of the Academy of Management Journal, which have the highest impact factor in the field of business and management, publications with keyword "knowledge management" have been reached and within these publications keywords which are used together with knowledge management have been analyzed. In addition, within the scope of the study, the publications were evaluated according to their subjects and years, and the differences were explained between general literature and Academy of Management Journal. According to the findings, it is possible to say that the technical dimension of knowledge management is studied more frequently than the social dimension in general business & management literature. In the Academy of Management Journal, it is seen that the social dimension of knowledge management is studied more frequently than the technical dimension.

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1. Introduction

"Knowledge management" is a frequently encountered concept both in academic literature and in practice. However, contradiction in terms concerning to the subject continues. In this context, it is observed that the terms of information and knowledge are used interchangeably. Whereas, information technologies management is a tool for knowledge management and that knowledge management has technical and social dimensions can be discussed. In other words, businesses collect and analyze the big data through technology and use it to support management decisions, but using of technology alone is not enough to access new information. The factors such as easier access to information in today's mobilized environments, intellectual capital providing competitive advantage to businesses, and efficient use of existing knowledge paving the way for progress justify this questioning.

As a matter of fact, the human asks questions, seeks answers, and adds an interpretation in the stages of accessing knowledge from information and using existing knowledge. In summary, an effective knowledge management requires the evaluation of knowledge with its social and technical dimensions as a whole. In addition, evaluating and managing knowledge together with its elements have great importance in the post-modern period with high speed of change.

In this study, it is aimed to present the frequency of studying technical and social dimensions of knowledge management and the distribution of issues related to knowledge management in the literature. In this context, the publications with 'knowledge management' among their keywords in the general literature and in the Academy of Management (AOM), the field's leading journal, were analyzed.

Considering the effective and objective management of existing knowledge and contribution to increase of knowledge are one of the most important factors determining the future of organizations, this study is thought to be significant in specifying the extent to which these issues are dealt with in research. In other words, to determine the relevant subjects to knowledge management in the academic literature, to make suggestions by comparing, to measure meanings and understandings in different literary groups are among the expected contributions of the study. The fact that there is no other research in which publications on knowledge management are studied with a similar method in the literature strengthens this expectation.

In this context, firstly the concepts of knowledge and knowledge management are discussed theoretically and then analyzes are included.

2. Knowledge and Knowledge Management

One of the most important statements about knowledge is Francis Bacon's discourse of "knowledge is power" (Nag, 2012, p. 421). However, even though it plays such a critical role, it is not possible to give a single definition for knowledge. For example, while Plato regards knowledge as "proven true belief", Bell expressed knowledge in the form of "systematic expression of a series of facts or ideas presented judicially and experimentally through a communication tool" or "intellectual property which is objectively known and attached to a person or a group" (Gao, 2008, pp. 4-5). Additionally, it is claimed that knowledge is internalized by being developed with existing perceptions and experiences (Hey, 2004, p. 9), and creates cultural and linguistic relativism (Bernstein, 2009, p. 70). Also, whereas knowledge is "a framework consisting of integration of experiences, values, contextual informations, and expert opinions" according to Davenport and Prusak, it is "a capability built on the information obtained from the data" in reference to Boisot. On the other hand, Nonaka and Takeuchi define knowledge as "a dynamic human process that people carry out to prove the truth of what they believe" (Gao, 2008, pp. 4-5).

Those evaluating the issue in terms of organizations stated that knowledge is a strategic resource for businesses and provides competitive advantage today (Nag, 2012, p. 421). In this context, Nonaka (2008, pp. 3-4) stated that an organization is not machine but a living organism, and argued that creating knowledge in a business will recreate and revive the business. According to Drucker's view, knowledge is "information that provides change or makes an individual and an organization more effective by becoming grounds for an action" (Gao, 2008, pp. 4-5). In other words, businesses cannot manage their knowledge with traditional methods. At this point, using "knowledge lens" gives power to businesses. Knowledge lens is a map that guides businesses and is required to be followed about the way knowledge is managed. For example, education experts follow the curriculum designs that create programs having cognitive impact through a knowledge lens. Knowledge and knowledge principles should be taken into account in each step of the road map determined within the scope of knowledge lens. Organizations set an objective and follow strategies fit for it. Organization members learn and share together in a team. When knowledge is shared within the team, it contributes to both individual and organizational development. Therefore, new ways should be found to obtain and share knowledge and to transform available knowledge into new knowledge, the process should be supported by feedback. Because ever-changing knowledge is organic rather than mechanical (Allee, 1997, pp. 71-74).

Knowledge that we often encounter in a wide spectrum includes the interrelated concepts of data, information and wisdom, on the other hand. It is

possible to explain this relationship through the "knowledge pyramid" (Frické, 2009, p. 132, Rowley, 2007, pp. 163-164).

There is "data" in the first step of the pyramid. Always existing data can appear in many forms as numbers, characters, and even symbols. Data alone has no meaning, it expresses a truth regardless of anything (Bellinger et al., 2004, p. 3). However, data can be defined in various ways depending on the context of its use. While information science expresses data as the representation of raw information and objective phenomenons, data is used as traffics and packets in computer science. For example, signal is a data and its width is metaphorically size of the line on which the data will go (Hey, 2004, pp. 5-6).

Information, on the other hand, is a classified and summarized form of data. In other words, information is the state of data having a meaning with relational connections. However, it may seem meaningless if it does not serve a specific purpose (Bellinger et al., 2004, p. 3). Besides, information is measured, measurable, commoditised, transferable, convertible, autonomous and transparent. Also, information has a form that can be processed, accessed, produced, stored, distributed and used. Finally, information can have a qualitative or quantitative character, it can even be manipulated (Hey, 2004, pp. 7-8).

Nietzsche stated that "the world can be recognized as long as the word knowledge has meaning" in the context of perspectivism. Knowledge is an area where concepts arise, are defined and applied, it is discourse dependent (Nietzsche, 2002, Foucault & Faubion, 2000, pp. 114-115). Knowledge progresses cumulatively, but it is never complete and the effort to reach new knowledge always continues (Walton, 2005, p. 61). Due to new technologies and products, knowledge expands and can be easily distorted. This requires a revision of an old knowledge equation that "knowledge = power, so hoard it" as "knowledge = power, so share and multiply it". From this point of view, knowledge is a set of information prepared to serve a specific purpose in the context of data, information and knowledge hierarchy. After the process including data collection, classification, summarization, and transformation of it into information, the step of making it interpretable and meaningful is the obtainment of knowledge (Bellinger et al., 2004, p. 3). In addition to these, knowledge is perceived as an "entity" unlike data and information and it can be formalized experientially and by personal perceptions (Hey, 2004, p. 9).

Finally, wisdom is a point where processes such as the understanding, assimilation or judgment of knowledge having its main meaning in the human brain begin. It is an aspect in which awareness such as right or wrong, good or bad is essential. Knowledge has passed on to an aspect where unanswered questions are asked as well as questions answered. Wisdom is the ability of carrying knowledge to another area and benefiting from it (Frické, 2009, p. 132).

In addition to these, Russell Ackoff stated that the "understanding" stage, which he added to the knowledge pyramid, is not a stand-alone step and is integrated with processes (Bellinger et al., 2004, pp. 2-3).

The statement of knowledge as 'proven belief increasing the entity capacity for effective action' brings about examination from various perspectives and grouping of these perspectives as reason, object, process, conditions of access to information and ability (Nonaka, 1994, Huber, 1991, Alavi, 2001). Aforementioned knowledge perspectives and their effects are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Knowledge Perspectives and Their Effects

Perspective		**Implications for Knowledge Management**
Knowledge versus data and information	Data are facts and raw numbers. Information is processed / interpreted data. Knowledge is personalized information.	Knowledge Management focuses on exposing individuals to potentially useful information and facilitating the assimilation of information.
State of reason	Knowledge is the state of knowing and understanding.	Knowledge Management includes improving individuals' learning and understanding skills through providing information.
Object	Knowledge is an object that can be stored and manipulated.	The main issue of knowledge management is to create and manage knowledge stocks.
Process	Knowledge is the process of applying experiences.	The focus of knowledge management is the process of creating, sharing and distributing knowledge.
Access to information	Knowledge is the state of access to information.	Knowledge management focuses on organized access to and provision of content.
Capacity	Knowledge is the potential to influence action.	Knowledge management is related to building core competencies and strategic procedures.

Source: Alavi, M., & Leidner, D. E. (2001). Knowledge Management and Knowledge Management Systems: Conceptual Foundations and Research Issues. Mis Quarterly, 111.

Following the implications of knowledge perspectives for knowledge management, which is the focal point of the study, explanations about this phenomenon can be continued. Great progress has been made in the field of

knowledge management today, when the 19th century is referred to the industrial society, the 20th century is called as the information society, and the 21st century is referred to the post-information society. Considering knowledge as an organizational resource is particularly effective with regards to increase of interest in knowledge management (Alavi, 2001, pp. 108-109).

The multidisciplinary nature of knowledge management has led many disciplines to claim that the field of knowledge management belongs to them (Sarrafzadeh, 2006, pp. 621-635). In this context, knowledge management has become a frequently discussed subject in the fields of cognitive sciences, sociology, management sciences, information science, information engineering, artificial intelligence and economics academically and professionally (Kebede, 2010, p.416).

The process of knowledge management, which can be expressed as managing formal and informal structures by means of technology (Quintas, 1997, p. 388), is a systematic and integrated process coordinating the overall organization in accordance with organizational goals. In other words, it is accepted that knowledge management practices should be compatible with the organizational context in order to create competitive advantage (Zheng, 2010, p. 763, Davenport & Prusak, 1998). For example, knowledge management and the use of information technologies in human resources management is necessary (Oltra, 2005) and radical innovations offering new business opportunities can be made with the contributions of employees in enterprises and the rational use of available knowledge (Berends, 2007, pp. 314-328). Although knowledge management was accepted as the calculation of the assets and material inventory of an organization in the past, it can be said that the financial resources and technological equipments of organizations will increase in value thanks to the correct use of brain power in the organization. In this context, the correct use of intellectual capital is seen as the most important part of executive role (Kerfoot, 2010).

It is necessary to determine the knowledge agenda, and to establish, develop, implement and control the information architecture and infrastructure of the organization in a way that can provide knowledge to the organization. Funding for knowledge management programs should also be assured and prioritized. Finally, it is important to develop knowledge bases in different functions and departments and to facilitate knowledge-based connections, coordination and communication activities inside and outside the company (Herschel, 2000, pp. 37-45).

3. Methodology

A descriptive research was designed within the scope of qualitative method in the study. As part of the research, the articles published between December 2017 - September 2020 were reviewed. The literature was searched through the university library (lib.ikc.edu.tr) and web site of AOM journal (www.aom.org) giving access to the articles published in the past years.

In the study, the general literature was searched regardless of field difference. After the general literature review, the studies with keyword of 'knowledge management' published in academic journals in the field of business & management were accessed by searching through the university library and were grouped according to their subjects. Afterwards, all articles between 1959 and 2020 published in AOM journal were examined, and the studies with keyword of 'knowledge management' were grouped according to their subjects, as well. Personal judgments were not included in grouping of the publications according to their subjects, and the subject specified by the author or journal was taken into account. Approximately 7.200.000 publications on knowledge management in the general literature, and about 21.000 publications with keyword of 'knowledge management' in academic journals in the field of business & management were reached, while 88 publications with keyword of 'knowledge management' were accessed in AOM journal.

4. Results

Among the publications accessed through the "knowledge management" general search, the subject of "information&knowledge management" ranks first. Additionally, it is seen that technical issues such as "information technologies, internet and information systems" come to the fore in general knowledge management literature. While "organizational learning" stands out among the organizational issues, information management is associated with "librarianship", as well (see Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Publications in General Literature with 'Knowledge Management' Keyword by Subject

information & knowledge management	22,810
information & communications technology	11,039
internet	10,050
information systems	9,631
library & information science	8,614
information technology	7,038
information resources management	6,782
information behaviour & retrieval	6,444
organizational learning	6,296
management	5,061
information management & governance	4,867
knowledge sharing	4,574
librarianship/library management	4,140

intellectual capital	4,111
library technology	4,094
engineering	3,787
electrical & electronic engineering	3,569
computer & software engineering	3,568
information science	3,439
innovation	3,405
information management	3,372
systems & control	3,347
systems modelling & cybernetics	3,346
industrial management	3,309
corporate culture	3,154
knowledge transfer	3,149
supply chain management	3,063
management science & operations	2,870
document management	2,861
learning	2,807
collection building & management	2,803

Secondly, a knowledge management review was made in Business & Management literature. Accordingly, subjects of "management, information technologies, industrial management and personnel management" rank high among the publications whose keyword is knowledge management. Subject of "strategic planning" and "organizational learning" stands out among the organizational issues, as in the general literature (see Table 3).

Table 3: Distribution of Publications in Business & Management Literature with 'Knowledge Management' Keyword by Subject

management	19,486
information technology	15,161
industrial management	14,873
personnel management	12,220
business enterprises	11,712

strategic planning	11,673
organizational learning	10,934
information resources management	10,206
technological innovations	9,720
project management	9,303
decision making	8,702
leadership	8,144
business planning	7,916
innovation	7,785
information & knowledge management	7,351
corporate culture	7,255
organizational change	7,213
supply chain management	7,013
organizational performance	6,871
intellectual capital	6,831
organizational behavior	6,138
human capital	5,973
learning	5,883
executives	5,806
technology	5,694
knowledge sharing	5,549
entrepreneurship	5,424
international business enterprises	5,243
management science & operations	5,119
knowledge transfer	5,021
computer software	4,978
performance	4,951
small business	4,79
management science	4,763
organizational structure	4,671
economic competition	4,595
competitive advantage in business	4,492

innovations in business	4,481
new product development	4,321
education	4,262
economics	4,235
globalization	4,162

According to AOM journal publications whose keyword is knowledge management, "management, knowledge management, organizational behavior, organizational structure, strategic planning and organizational learning" issues are the most studied subjects. It is seen that organizational issues are studied more in this journal than ones both in general and business & management literature. In other words, that organizational, behavioral and managerial concepts are more frequently associated with knowledge management in AOM journal can be suggested. Briefly, publications in the journal focus on social dimension of knowledge management (see Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution of Publications in Academy of Management Journal with 'Knowledge Management' Keyword by Subject

management	344
knowledge management	305
organizational behavior	225
organizational structure	191
strategic planning	129
organizational learning	128
decision making	126
teams in the workplace	126
management science	123
technological innovations	119
industrial management	118
organizational sociology	118
organizational change	116
personnel management	115
organizational effectiveness	107

strategic alliances (business)	91
research	83
job performance	81
research & development	76
human capital	73
international business enterprises	72
corporate culture	70
business planning	69
competitive advantage in business	67
interorganizational relations	67
economics	66
organizational research	64
social networks	59
business networks	58
executives	58
problem solving	58
innovation management	57
leadership	57
management science research	57
information resources management	55
interpersonal relations	55
industrial management research	54
knowledge transfer	54
organizational performance	52
work environment	52
performance	50
financial performance	48
industrial psychology	48
organizational communication	48
business partnerships	47
management education	47
entrepreneurship	46

innovations in business	46
new product development	46
knowledge management research	45

Finally, Table 5 reflects the comparison of publications with 'knowledge management' keyword in AOM journal and business & management literature. Accordingly, the subject of "management" is the most studied topic in both AOM journal and business & management literature. Although the subject of "information technology" has never been studied in AOM journal, it is the second most relevant topic in business & management literature. "Organizational behavior" and "organizational structure" issues are the third and the fourth most studied topics in AOM journal, whereas they are rarely studied in business & management literature. The subject of "technological innovation" has often been related to the topic of 'knowledge management' in business & management literature, but it has never been discussed in AOM journal. The subject of "job performance" has been frequently studied in publications with 'knowledge management' keyword in AOM journal but rarely studied in business & management literature.

Table 5: Academy of Management Journal and Business & Management Literature Comparison

Subject	Relation to Knowledge Management in AOM Journal	Relation to Knowledge Management in Business & Management Literature
Managament	Most Relevant Topic	Most Relevant Topic
Information Technology	Not in the Journal	Second Most Relevant Topic
Organizational Behaviour	Third Most Relevant Topic	Rare
Organizational Structure	Fourth Most Relevant Topic	Rare
Technologic Innovation	Not in the Journal	Often
Job Performance	Often	Rare

5. Discussion

Today, management information systems, artificial intelligence technologies, robotic systems, cyber-physical systems are used today called as the

information age and simultaneous access to data is provided by cloud computing facilities. Therefore, the use of technology has become a necessity to progress.

Knowledge management, whose technical dimension stands out in the field of application, is a popular subject in academic literature with its multidisciplinary structure. It can be said that academic writing gives direction to the field of application. In this context, it is possible to state that the business & management literature focuses on the technical dimension of knowledge management rather than the social dimension of the subject as a result of literature reviews conducted to measure these dimensions. For example, the studies of Ruggles (1998), McDermott (1999), Alavi and Leidner (2001), Sher and Lee (2004), and Tanriverdi (2005) in which information technologies as technical dimension of knowledge management are discussed come to the fore in this literature.

On the other hand, knowledge management is clearly separated from information management and associated with organizational and social concepts in AOM journal, which has the highest impact factor in the field. For example, information usage processes in organizations are discussed and the importance of information flow in management development is mentioned in Duncan's (1970, 1972) studies. In addition, empirical studies are carried out to measure perceptions in knowledge management process, and the effects of intergroup conflict on the information usage process are examined (Duncan, 1974). The relationship between management information systems users' personal perceptions and attitudes and system usage behaviors is analyzed by Schewe (1976). Tushman and Scanlan (1981) state the importance of individuals involved in the transfer of information to internal and external resources, and the effect of personal characteristics and competencies on information transfer and they discuss that expansion of personal boundaries affects the transfer of information. O'Reilly (1982) researches the frequency of using information resources of decision makers working in organizations and examines the information quality together with availability of information resources. Isenberg (1986) measures the effect of personal knowledge and experience on action plans in managerial problem solving processes in his research on managers. Stevenson and Gilly (1991) analyze how the flow of information including interpersonal communication affects professional management boundaries. Organizational information processing processes are evaluated together with competitive advantage in another study conducted in the same year (Smith et al., 1991).

In addition to these, it is seen that the number of studies examining the organization-individual relationship has increased since the early 2000s. For example, Sandberg (2000) evaluates the job perception created within the scope of organization culture together with the knowledge and skills integrated into personal experience and competencies and he states that job descriptions negatively affect the competencies of employees by limiting some qualifications. Schulz (2001) researches the effects of information flows on organizational learning and emphasizes the role of effective information flow in generation new knowledge from old one. Maitlis and Lawrance (2007) analyze the factors affecting individual

perceptions in terms of employees, stakeholders and leaders and they examine the contribution of behavioral processes management to the organization.

Another prominent result in the journal is the association of innovation with knowledge management in studies conducted between 2000-2010. Carson (2000), McGrath (2001), Katila (2002), Katila and Ahuja (2002), Subramaniam and Youndt (2005), Puranam, Singh and Zollo (2006) and, Tortoriello and Krackhardt (2010) emphasize that an effective knowledge management creates a suitable environment for innovation and improves innovation capabilities of the organization.

In addition to these, studies in which knowledge management and communication are evaluated together have intensified between 1999-2004. For example, Arthur and Aiman-Smith (2001) state that knowledge management creates an acquisition model infrastructure in organizational learning and communication is an important factor in this process. Tsai (2001) points out that organizational units' access to new knowledge developed by other units within the organization increases the innovation capacity and performance of the organization. Balogun and Johnson (2004) analyze the effects of knowledge management process determined by social interaction and clustered perceptions on organizational structure.

Finally, it is possible to say that the number of studies on knowledge management has decreased after 2010 compared to the period of previous 10 years. Knowledge management is associated with human resources management and strategic human resources management in publications of AOM today. For example, Eckardt et al. (2017) examines the effect of strategic human capital acquisition on business performance in knowledge-intensive organizations.

However, studies on knowledge management associated with organizational issues have started to gain importance in 2010 and later in business & management literature. To give examples, the studies of Sun (2010), Liao and Wu (2010), Easterby-Smith and Lyles (2011), Mills and Smith (2011), and Noruzy et al. (2013) discussing the subject of knowledge management in terms of social dimension have received high number of citations. In this context, it can be said that AOM journal directs the general business & management literature.

6. Suggestions

The findings bring along certain suggestions to both academia and practitioners. In this context, it is recommended that academicians who contribute to the business & management literature do research on the social dimension of knowledge management. In addition, it may be necessary to be more selective in academic platforms in order for the meanings of information and knowledge concepts to be correctly embedded in our language. Accordingly, it may be

suggested that future manager candidates should be provided trainings on information and knowledge concepts during undergraduate periods and their awareness of the differences between the concepts should be increased.

When the evaluation is made in terms of practice, it is seen that the technical expertise of information technology experts or managers is not sufficient for knowledge management. Therefore, that the efficiency of explicit and implicit knowledge in businesses will increase by assigning talented and competent people such as Chief Knowledge Officers (CKO) in the field of knowledge management can be discussed. It is thought that efficient use of knowledge will provide businesses with increased profitability and businesses contribute to development of the country's economy with their innovations.

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