

Organizational Culture as a Mediator Between Knowledge Management and Performance in Nepal's Private Banks

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Abstract

This study examines how organizational culture mediates the link between knowledge management (KM) practices and organizational performance in Nepalese private banks. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) and data from 440 respondents from 11 private banks, the mediating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between four KM dimensions—knowledge acquisition, conversion, transfer, and application—and bank performance has been assessed. The results reveal that knowledge acquisition and transfer directly enhance performance. Knowledge application significantly outlines organizational culture, whereas conversion negatively influences culture but positively impacts performance. Mediation analysis shows complementary mediation for application, competitive mediation for conversion, and direct-only non-mediation for acquisition. In particular, the transfer's influence on performance is direct. These results emphasize the indicated roles of different knowledge processes and their relations with organizational culture in inspiring bank performance. These findings highlight the comprehensive role of organizational culture in understanding KM practices for better performance, suggesting that effective implementation needs a culture-sensitive approach.



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Introduction

Organizational culture is continually recognized as a crucial factor that can influence organizational performance and success. It has become a prominent area of research in organizational behavior (Zhang & Min, 2021). Organizational culture significantly affects the mindset and outcomes of individuals, which are strongly linked to organizational performance (Biliavska, 2017). Organizational culture has been described using various metaphors, but the central idea remains consistent. It revolves around shaping the behavior of individuals in alignment with the norms and values of the organization. Several organizational culture models are relevant to various organizations, regardless of their nature of similarity or diversity, as documented in the available literature. Banks and financial institutions are the mainstay of a

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country's economic progress, as economic development highly depends on corporate culture, the extent of resource mobilization and investment, and the operational efficiency of various segments of the economy. Although the banking industry in Nepal has made remarkable progress and growth, the corporate culture and organizational performance have been average, and risks are on the rise (Ghimire et al., 2021). Organizational development and its success depend on various factors, including the performance of the organization, the efficiency of its workforce, the effective utilization of resources, and the ability to adapt to technological changes. However, conceptualizing, measuring, and defining performance have not been straightforward tasks for organizations striving for success. In assessing organizational success, these studies have employed a variety of independent factors, such as staff performance, employee satisfaction, innovation, efficiency, and responsiveness (Maksoud et al., 2008). Organizational performance can be understood as the organization's ability to achieve its objectives by efficiently and effectively utilizing resources and other means through predefined processes. Organizational performance has faced challenges not only in terms of defining it but also in terms of theoretical issues related to organizational activities and processes (Theriou & Chatzoglou, 2008). In the banking industry, assessing organizational performance offers various approaches for management and leadership to enhance and integrate performance and its assessment practices toward higher-value tasks and institutional objectives.

A growing number of businesses in the twenty-first century are increasingly adopting knowledge management and its applications to differentiate goods, increase efficiency in the delivery of high-quality services, and capitalize on the efficacy of their internal processes (Wahda, 2017). Toding et al. (2017) emphasized that knowledge is a valuable resource for an organization and that, to adapt and maintain knowledge-based processes, its management must possess extra competencies. Therefore, within contemporary organizations, professionals, leaders, managers, and executives have come to understand that knowledge-intensive activities consume all valuable resources and that an organization's success is tied to the excellence and relevance of its undertakings, particularly the willingness and expertise of its knowledge employees to apply that knowledge for the organization's benefit (Nikpour, 2017).

Knowledge management holds significant importance for all organizations, particularly those in the banking industry. Knowledge that is exchanged among experts and individuals in a certain topic or domain is considered to be highly significant, particularly within the business sector and other organizations (Mills & Smith, 2011). The concept of corporate culture has not yet developed and has been practiced in Nepalese organizations to the extent seen in some developed countries. Nevertheless, some investigations and empirical studies have been conducted to analyze the impact of organizational culture on organizational performance in the

banking sector of Nepal (Jain & Lamichhane, 2020). Based on the discussion, this paper seeks to investigate the role of organizational culture on knowledge management and performance in private banks in Nepal.

Literature Review

Knowledge Management and Performance of Banks

A favorable and statistically significant correlation has been shown in the literature between knowledge management and organizational performance. Knowledge acquisition involves the effective use of existing knowledge and the generation of new knowledge through active conversation and externalization, which is then distributed as new knowledge (Milton, 2007). Conversion-oriented knowledge management processes focus on making existing knowledge useful. Processes that enable knowledge conversion include an organization's ability to organize, integrate, combine, structure, coordinate, or distribute knowledge (Bratianu, 2015). Knowledge transfer can enhance firm performance, although there are mixed results (both positive and negative) that can be attributed to the complexity of knowledge transfer and its nature concerning firm performance (Jasimuddin et al., 2011). Payal et al. (2019) highlighted that effective knowledge application has helped firms enhance efficiency and reduce costs. It also aids in improving business performance by ensuring access to up-to-date information and knowledge.

To have an impact on organizational performance, knowledge must be used to support the firm's processes. Therefore, knowledge utilization transforms acquired knowledge from a potential capability into a realized and dynamic capability that influences organizational performance (Hemmati & Hosseini, 2016).

Organizational performance and the capabilities of the knowledge management concept, encompassing knowledge acquisition, knowledge conversion, knowledge transfer, and knowledge application have been shown by several studies conducted in diverse situations (Pombo & Gomes, 2019). Knowledge storage, generation, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge application were shown to have a substantial effect on knowledge management. Productivity and financial performance, employee performance, creativity, work relationships, and customer satisfaction all have a substantial correlation with organizational performance (Gholami et al., 2013). In the light of these discussions, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H1: Knowledge acquisition significantly influences the performance of private banks.

H2: Knowledge conversion significantly influences the performance of private banks

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H3: Knowledge transfer significantly influences the performance of private banks

H4: Knowledge application significantly influences the performance of private banks

Knowledge Management, Organizational Culture, and Performance

The correlation between knowledge management and organizational culture is strong and has been the subject of much scholarly research. Knowledge management influences organizational attitudes and behaviors, contributing to the achievement of organizational objectives (Abbas & Khan, 2022). Organizational culture and knowledge management are strong predictors of organizational performance and development (Manley & Shaw, 2007). Organizational culture plays a significant role in guiding individuals on how to behave within the organization, aligning their actions with the organization's norms and values (Rai, 2011). Knowledge-based perspectives emphasize that intellectual assets are critical for organizations to gain a competitive advantage, with knowledge being the primary organizational resource (Lukasova, 2006). Organizations effectively managing knowledge assets can reap a wide range of benefits, including reduced infrastructure costs, enhanced workforce productivity, improved shared efficiency, services, and innovation (Wahda, 2017). Therefore, organizations must foster a culture of knowledge management as a crucial aspect of the knowledge economy (Osatuyi et al., 2010).

Organizational culture plays a vital role in achieving organizational performance, and empirical evidence suggests a positive and significant impact of organizational culture on long-term performance (Ibidunni & Mayowa, 2014). Organizations that possess robust cultures that prioritize management and strategic constituencies—such as consumers, shareholders, and employees — achieve superior performance compared to those that do not possess these cultural attributes (Aida & Abadiyah, 2022).

The literature indicates that organizational culture significantly influences organizational performance, with a growing consensus that it becomes even more crucial for organizations' success in the future (Lukasova, 2015). The organizational culture's multifaceted dimensions make it a critical factor in knowledge management and ultimately contribute to improved organizational performance (Syaifuddin & Sumartik, 2022).

Based on the preceding discussions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Knowledge Management has a significant relationship with the culture of the Private Banks.

H6: Organizational Culture has a significant relationship with the performance of Private Banks.

H7: Organizational Culture has a significant effect on the performance of Private Banks

H8: Organizational Culture mediates the association of Knowledge Management and Performance of Private Banks

Research Methods

The study includes 11 private banks during the survey period spanning from September 2022 to January 2023. In the course of the research, questionnaires were distributed and officers and personnel of various ranks were individually visited at banks. 440 of 550 questionnaires that were given were received and considered useable, which corresponds to a response rate of 80 percent for the entire population. In stratified sampling, the value of the sample sizes in the respective strata is chosen by the researcher (Ardilly & Tillé, 2006). To attain the objective of the study 40 respondents were selected from each bank. A pilot study involving a sample of twenty-five employees from banks in neighboring districts (Rupandehi, District) was conducted. Primary data were used for the study and they were obtained mainly from the structured questionnaires. Questionnaires were used by researchers to gather information on study participants' thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personality, and behavioral intentions (Marrais & Lapan, 2004). A five-point scale of semantic differential agreement/disagreement was utilized for this purpose, with 1 indicating significant disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement.

Sample Descriptive Statistics

The majority of the respondents (56.4%, n=248) are male, while 43.6% (n=192) are female. In terms of age, most participants (64.8%, n=285) belong to the 25–35-year category, followed by 31.8% (n=140) in the 36–45-year range, with only 3.4% (n=15) being above 46 years. Regarding educational qualifications, 64.8% (n=285) hold a master's degree, whereas 35.2% (n=155) possess a bachelor's degree. The distribution of work experience shows that 42.5% (n=187) have less than five years of experience, while 32.7% (n=144) have 6–10 years, and 24.8% (n=109) have more than 11 years of experience. These descriptive statistics provide a structured overview of the sample, ensuring the study's representativeness and reliability.

Study Results

Table 1 indicates the internal consistency, reliability, and validity of the constructs. The Cronbach's alpha value of all the constructs is above the critical value of 0.70. Further, the rho_A and composite reliability values of all the constructs are between 0.75 and 0.95 critical values (Hair et al., 2021). Additionally, the average variance extracted value of all the constructs

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is more than 0.50, which denotes more than 50% variance among the constructs (Bagozzi, 1981). Hence, the convergent validity and reliability of all constructs are established.

Table 1

Assessments of Reliability and Validity

Reliability Standards	KA	KC	KT	KAP	OC	OP
Cronbach's alpha	0.922	0.918	0.94	0.925	0.913	0.944
Composite reliability (rho_a)	0.923	0.919	0.942	0.93	0.921	0.945
Composite reliability (rho_c)	0.935	0.933	0.949	0.939	0.931	0.943
Average variance extracted (AVE)	0.616	0.635	0.676	0.657	0.659	0.692

Source: Field Survey, Sept. 2022 – Jan. 2023

Table 2 indicates the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) which indicates the discriminant validity of all constructs. HTMT ratio is used to measure the correlations between two latent variables (Chin et al., 2003). The HTMT ratio values of all constructs are less than 0.90 critical values which indicate that the discriminant validity of all the constructs is established.

Table 2

Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio Matrix)

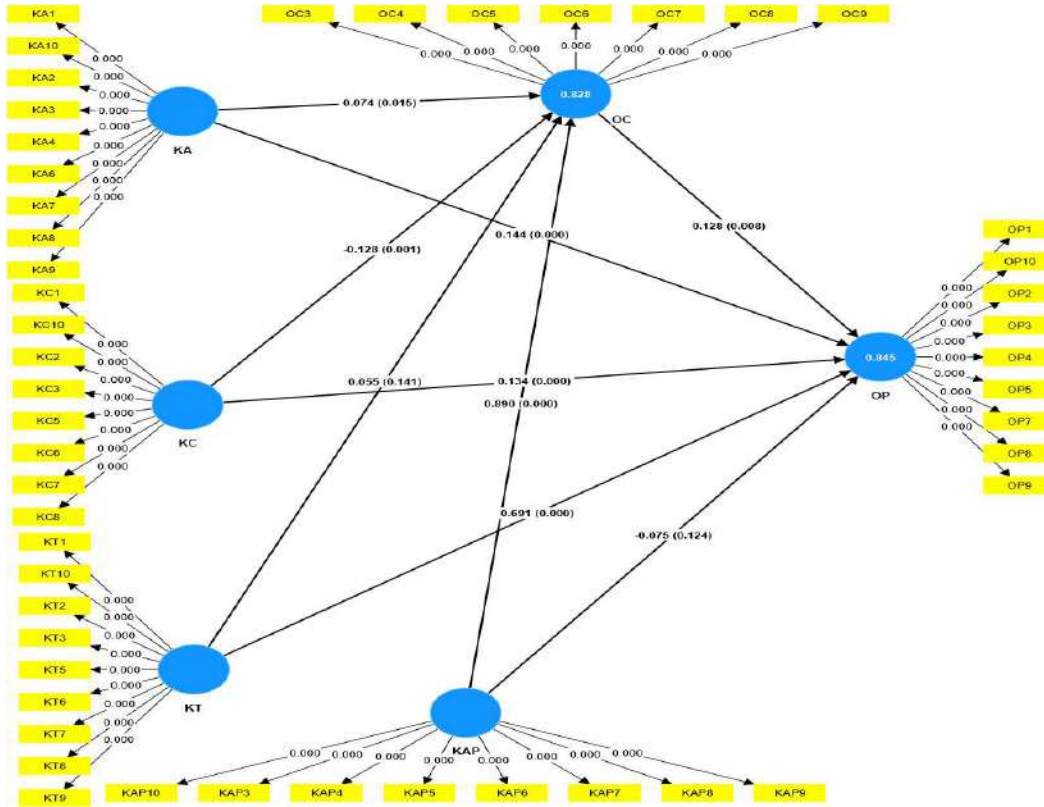
	KA	KC	KT	OC	OP	KAP
KA						
KC	0.816					
KT	0.850	0.880				
OC	0.207	0.400	0.250			
OP	0.860	0.857	0.862	0.192		
KAP	0.223	0.381	0.255	0.885	0.215	

Source: Field Survey, Sept. 2022 – Jan. 2023.

The mediation of organizational culture on knowledge management and the performance of private banks are analyzed at three levels. At first, the indirect mediation effect of organizational culture was assessed with all knowledge management dimensions (knowledge acquisition, conversion, transfer, and application) and private bank performance. A structural equation modeling technique has been applied to test the proposed hypothesis. The results reveal that out of four KM variables, two are positively and one is negatively significantly associated with the performance of the private banks. Namely, knowledge acquisition and knowledge application with organizational culture and bank performance have p values less than 0.05 and T statistics greater than 2.00; this confirms that there is significant and positive mediation between the variables, which is supported by the findings of Turban et al. (2007).

Figure 1

The Mediating Effect of Organizational Culture of Knowledge Management and Bank Performance



The study pointed out that the ability of an organization to learn, develop memory, and share knowledge is dependent on its culture. Thus, positive transformations in culture are expected to influence organizational performance and add thrust to other developments taking place elsewhere in the organization. In the issue of knowledge transfer, the beta and mean values are found to be negative, which indicates that the mediating indirect effect of organizational culture is negatively significant. However, it does not have the same impact on knowledge conversion, indicating that organizational culture does not affect the performance of the private bank. The p-value and t-statistics of the mediation between organizational culture and knowledge conversion on bank performance are greater than 0.05 and less than 2.00. This result says that there is an insignificant mediating effect of organizational culture on knowledge conversion and the

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performance of private banks. This finding is consistent with Ho (2009). The study found empirically that a supportive culture can have a positive influence on organizational performance.

Table 3

The Mediating Effect of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Management and Performance of Banks

(a) Path Coefficient

Hypotheses	β	Mean	SD	T Stat.	P Values	Decision
KA -> OC	0.074	0.074	0.031	2.424	0.015	Rejected
KA -> OP	0.144	0.143	0.031	4.689	0.000	Not Rejected
KAP -> OC	0.890	0.890	0.012	72.093	0.000	Rejected
KAP -> OP	-0.075	-0.075	0.049	1.537	0.124	Not Rejected
KC -> OC	-0.128	-0.128	0.037	3.436	0.001	Rejected
KC -> OP	0.134	0.135	0.035	3.832	0.000	Rejected
KT -> OC	0.055	0.056	0.037	1.473	0.141	Not Rejected
KT -> OP	0.691	0.691	0.035	19.512	0.000	Rejected
OC -> OP	0.128	0.129	0.048	2.668	0.008	Rejected

(b) Total Indirect Effects

Hypotheses	β	Mean	SD	T Stat.	P Values	Decision
KA -> OP	0.009	0.010	0.006	1.639	0.101	Not Rejected
KAP -> OP	0.114	0.115	0.043	2.660	0.008	Rejected
KC -> OP	-0.016	-0.016	0.008	2.056	0.040	Rejected
KT -> OP	0.007	0.007	0.006	1.238	0.216	Not Rejected

(c) Specific Indirect Effects

Hypotheses	β	Mean	SD	T Stat.	P Values	Decision
KAP -> OC -> OP	0.114	0.115	0.043	2.660	0.008	Rejected
KA -> OC -> OP	0.009	0.010	0.006	1.639	0.101	Not Rejected
KT -> OC -> OP	0.007	0.007	0.006	1.238	0.216	Not Rejected
KC -> OC -> OP	-0.016	-0.016	0.008	2.056	0.040	Rejected

(d) Total Effects

Hypotheses	β	Mean	SD	T Stat.	P Values	Decision
KA -> OC	0.074	0.074	0.031	2.424	0.015	Rejected
KA -> OP	0.154	0.153	0.031	4.959	0.000	Rejected
KAP -> OC	0.890	0.890	0.012	72.093	0.000	Rejected
KAP -> OP	0.039	0.040	0.018	2.120	0.034	Rejected
KC -> OC	-0.128	-0.128	0.037	3.436	0.001	Rejected
KC -> OP	0.118	0.119	0.036	3.319	0.001	Rejected
KT -> OC	0.055	0.056	0.037	1.473	0.141	Not Rejected
KT -> OP	0.698	0.698	0.036	19.364	0.000	Rejected
OC -> OP	0.128	0.129	0.048	2.668	0.008	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, Sept. 2022 – Jan. 2023.

The results in Table 3 reveal that knowledge acquisition exerts a significant direct effect on organizational culture ($\beta = 0.074$, $p = 0.015$), implying that knowledge acquisition significantly affects mediating variable organizational culture. Similarly, knowledge acquisition displays a significant effect on bank performance ($\beta = 0.144$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, knowledge application demonstrates a substantial direct effect on mediating variable organizational culture ($\beta = 0.890$, $p < 0.001$), but its direct effect on bank performance ($\beta = -0.075$, $p = 0.124$) is not statistically significant.

Knowledge conversion, on the other hand, displays a significant negative direct effect on organizational culture ($\beta = -0.128$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting an inverse relationship with the mediating variable. Furthermore, it is worth noting that knowledge conversion has a substantial positive direct impact on OP ($\beta = 0.134$, $p < 0.001$), thus signifying its direct influence on the performance of the bank. In the case of knowledge transfer, it demonstrates a non-significant direct effect on mediating variable organizational culture ($\beta = 0.055$, $p = 0.141$) but a statistically significant effect on bank performance ($\beta = 0.691$, $p < 0.001$).

Based on the results in Tables 3 (a), (b), (c), and (d), the mediations identified are: Knowledge application \rightarrow organizational culture \rightarrow bank performance shows a significant specific indirect effect Table 3 (c)). This suggests complementary mediation for knowledge application, where both its direct and indirect paths through organizational culture are significant. Knowledge conversion has a significant negative effect on organizational culture and a significant positive direct effect on bank performance. Knowledge conversion, organizational culture, and bank performance show a significant specific indirect effect Table 3 (c)). This suggests competitive mediation, where the direct effect of organizational culture competes with the indirect effect of organizational culture in influencing bank performance. Knowledge acquisition has statistically significant effects on both organizational culture and bank performance. Knowledge acquisition \rightarrow organizational culture \rightarrow bank performance does not show a significant specific indirect effect (Table 3 (c)). This suggests direct-only non-mediation for knowledge acquisition, where its influence on bank performance is primarily through the direct path. Knowledge acquisition exerts a significant direct effect on organizational culture ($\beta = 0.074$, $p = 0.015$) and a significant direct effect on bank performance ($\beta = 0.144$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a dual influence of knowledge acquisition on both the mediating variable and the outcome variable. Knowledge application demonstrates a substantial direct effect on organizational culture ($\beta = 0.890$, $p < 0.001$) but a non-significant direct effect on bank performance ($\beta = -0.075$, $p = 0.124$), signifying a direct effect on the mediating variable but not on the outcome variable. Knowledge conversion exhibits a significant negative direct effect on organizational culture ($\beta = -0.128$, $p = 0.001$) and a significant positive direct effect on bank performance ($\beta = 0.134$, $p < 0.001$),

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suggesting an inverse relationship with the mediating variable and a direct influence on bank performance. Knowledge transfer shows a non-significant direct effect on organizational culture ($\beta = 0.055$, $p = 0.141$) but a statistically significant direct effect on bank performance ($\beta = 0.691$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a direct-only relationship with the outcome variable.

Discussion

The study examined the mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between knowledge management (KM) dimensions (knowledge acquisition, conversion, transfer, and application) and the performance of private banks. The findings reveal a complex relationship between these variables, highlighting the impact of organizational culture on KM effectiveness.

The results show that knowledge acquisition and application significantly and positively mediate bank performance through organizational culture. This supports the assertion by Turban et al. (2007) that organizational culture is foundational to an organization's ability to learn, develop memory, and share knowledge. Specifically, the significant positive mediation of knowledge acquisition and application suggests that a culture fostering learning and active knowledge utilization directly enhances bank performance. This supports the concept that a helpful culture, as highlighted by Ho (2009), positively influences organizational results. This is also reliable with the broader literature emphasizing the significance of a learning culture in fostering knowledge creation and application (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Furthermore, a culture that encourages knowledge application can show the way to innovation and improved performance, as suggested by Davenport & Prusak (1998).

However, the study also revealed a significant negative mediating effect of organizational culture on knowledge transfer. This contradicts innate findings and advocates that while knowledge transfer directly impacts bank performance positively, the mediating effect of organizational culture hampers the process. This might be due to cultural barriers within the banks, such as unwillingness to share knowledge, a lack of trust (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), or a hierarchical structure that impedes effective communication (Alvesson, 2013). Further investigation is needed to explore these specific cultural factors. The cultural dimensions could provide a framework for understanding how national and organizational cultures influence knowledge transfer (Hofstede, 2001).

Furthermore, the study found that the mediating effect of organizational culture on knowledge conversion was insignificant. This aligns with Ho (2009), who also reported that not all cultural aspects necessarily translate into performance impacts. Specifically, the findings imply that while knowledge conversion directly and positively influences bank performance, organizational culture does not significantly ease or obstruct this relationship. This specifies that

other factors, such as technological infrastructure (Ives & Learmonth, 1984), individual capabilities (Polanyi, 1966), or the availability of codified knowledge (Grant, 1996), might play a more significant role in knowledge conversion within these banks.

Knowledge acquisition established a significant direct influence on both organizational culture and bank performance, suggesting a direct-only non-mediation. This implies that knowledge acquisition's impact on bank performance is principally through its direct effect, rather than through the mediating role of organizational culture.

Knowledge application displayed a substantial direct effect on organizational culture but not on bank performance. This suggests a complementary mediation, where the indirect effect of organizational culture is crucial for knowledge application to manipulate bank performance.

Knowledge conversion showed evidence of a significant negative direct effect on organizational culture but a significant positive direct effect on bank performance. This indicates a competitive mediation, where the direct effect of knowledge conversion on bank performance competes with its indirect effect through organizational culture. This may specify a cultural conflict to the kind of alteration involved in knowledge conversion, while the direct impact of the converted knowledge is still valuable.

Knowledge transfer showed a non-significant direct effect on organizational culture but a significant positive direct effect on bank performance. This suggests a direct-only relationship, where the impact of knowledge transfer on bank performance is independent of organizational culture.

The findings highlight the complex and varied roles of organizational culture in mediating the relationship between KM dimensions and bank performance. While knowledge acquisition and application benefit from a supportive organizational culture, knowledge transfer faces cultural barriers, and knowledge conversion's impact is typically independent of culture. These results emphasize the importance of adapted interferences to boost KM effectiveness within private banks, focusing on strengthening accommodated cultural aspects while dealing with specific cultural barriers.

Conclusion and Implications

This study demonstrates the complex mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between knowledge management (KM) dimensions and private bank performance. Knowledge acquisition and application significantly benefit from a supportive organizational culture, enhancing performance. Conversely, knowledge transfer faces cultural barriers, negatively impacting its mediating effect. Knowledge conversion's influence on performance is primarily direct, independent of cultural mediation. These findings emphasize the significant need for

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modified cultural involvements within banks to optimize KM effectiveness. Specifically, nurturing a culture that supports knowledge acquisition and application, while addressing barriers to knowledge transfer, is essential for improved performance.

The study results have significant implications for private bank management. It is important for fostering a robust organizational culture that actively promotes knowledge acquisition and application is supreme for enhancing performance. Likewise, targeted involvements are necessary to take apart cultural barriers hindering effective knowledge transfer. With the direct impact of knowledge conversion, banks should prioritize dealing in supporting infrastructure and capabilities, independent of cultural mediation. These findings emphasize the necessity for an indicated, dimension-specific approach to knowledge management, aligning cultural strategies with distinct KM processes to optimize organizational performance.

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