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# Guest editorial: Role of knowledge management in turbulent times

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Knowledge management becomes even more important during turbulent times, such as during a pandemic, as organizations face unprecedented challenges and uncertainties. The rapid spread of the virus and the need for social distancing have disrupted traditional ways of working, requiring organizations to quickly adapt and find new ways to collaborate and communicate. In this context, effective knowledge management can help organizations respond to the crisis by facilitating the sharing of information and best practices, enabling remote collaboration and communication, supporting decision-making and maintaining business continuity by identifying and addressing potential risks.

The special issue, *Role of Knowledge Management in Turbulent Times*, contains eight papers that discuss the research output on how various aspects of knowledge management play a vital role in turbulent times. By investing in knowledge management, organizations can better navigate the challenges of turbulence and emerge stronger in the aftermath.

This special issue on knowledge management during times of crisis and business turbulence aimed to bring together researchers and practitioners from various fields to discuss the challenges and potential solutions for effectively managing and using knowledge in times of uncertainty and change. The goal was to provide a platform for sharing insights and perspectives based on current research and practical experience in this area. The focus was on identifying strategies and best practices for effectively navigating crises and maintaining organizational performance and resilience in the face of challenges such as economic downturns, natural disasters and other disruptions. The special issue also sought to explore the role of technology and other tools in supporting knowledge management efforts during times of crisis and to consider the ethical and societal implications of these efforts. Overall, the goal of the special issue was to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by knowledge management in times of crisis and to provide valuable insights and guidance for researchers, practitioners and policymakers seeking to address these challenges.

Digitization can play a key role in helping organizations to manage knowledge and continue operations during a crisis like a pandemic. Digitization allows for the creation and storage of electronic documents and other digital assets which, in turn, facilitate the creation of a knowledge-sharing culture. Digitization also enables organizations to leverage technology to automate various knowledge management processes. Strong leadership support for knowledge management practices is essential for building sustainable knowledge management in organizations. This includes providing resources and support for employees to engage in knowledge sharing, as well as promoting a culture of continuous learning and innovation. The first paper in this special issue entitled “The old order Changeth! Building sustainable knowledge management post COVID-19 pandemic” by



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The authors express their gratitude to all the submissions for this special issue. The authors are especially thankful to the large set of expert reviewers who helped select the papers and shape this special issue on the role of knowledge management in turbulent times.

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Debolina Dutta, Chaitali Vedak and Harshal Sawant used a qualitative case study design to examine the knowledge management (KM) systems and practices in knowledge-intensive organizations and developed a sustainable knowledge management (SKM) systems and practices model relevant to a post-pandemic organizational context. They find that significant digitization before the pandemic and strong leadership support for KM practices help build sustainable knowledge management in organizations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, technology has played a crucial role in facilitating the diffusion and application of knowledge. The widespread use of digital tools and platforms, such as video conferencing software and online collaboration tools, has allowed for the rapid and efficient exchange of information and ideas. This has enabled organizations to continue functioning and adapting to the challenges of the pandemic, even when employees were unable to work in person. Technology has also helped to support the application of knowledge by providing access to a wide range of resources and tools that can be used to solve problems and make informed decisions. Remya Lathabhavan and Moovendhan have analyzed the relationships between knowledge diffusion and knowledge application through technology intervention during the pandemic in the article titled "Knowledge diffusion-application association during the COVID-19 pandemic: investigating the role of technology intervention". The study provides insights for managers to effectively handle challenges.

During turbulent times, the quality of the leader-member exchange (LMX) is very crucial. When faced with challenges or uncertainty, team members may look to their leader for support, guidance and direction. A leader with strong, positive relationships with their team members may be better able to provide this support and help the team navigate through difficult times. LMX determines the quality of the relationship between leaders and employees within an organization. When there is a high quality of LMX, employees are more likely to feel valued and supported by their leaders, which can in turn lead to higher levels of trust, openness and collaboration. This can create a positive environment for knowledge application, as employees are more likely to share their knowledge and seek out new information when they feel that their leaders are supportive and open to their ideas. When employees are highly committed to their organization and feel supported by their leaders, they are more likely to be motivated to share their knowledge and skills, which can lead to more effective problem-solving and decision-making. Both organizational commitment and high-quality LMX can play a role in facilitating the effective application of knowledge during turbulent times. The article "The role of organisational commitment and leader-member exchange in knowledge application during the COVID-19 pandemic" by Nurul Amirah Ishak, M. Muzamil Naqshbandi, Md. Zahidul Islam and Wardah Azimah Haji Sumardi provides insights for managers into how LMX can affect knowledge application outcomes, particularly during uncertain times. They suggest that organizations can spur knowledge application among their employees by developing employee commitment based on their affective and normative commitment. The study also suggests the future scope of exploring the moderating role of LMX.

Turbulent times can have a significant impact on knowledge-sharing behavior within organizations, and organizations may need to adapt their KM practices to address these challenges. For example, during a pandemic, many organizations may need to shift to remote work or adopt other types of flexible work arrangements. This can make it more challenging for employees to share knowledge, as they may not have the same level of face-to-face interaction as before. To facilitate remote work and

communication, organizations may need to rely more on technology, such as video conferencing software and online collaboration tools. While these tools can help to facilitate knowledge sharing, they may also have limitations, such as difficulty in replicating the nonverbal cues and spontaneous interactions that often occur in face-to-face conversations. Organizational priorities may change to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. This can affect the types of knowledge that are most valuable and in demand, as well as how knowledge is shared and used. The stress and uncertainty associated with a pandemic can also affect employee morale, which may in turn impact their willingness to share knowledge with their colleagues. The paper titled “The Impact of a Pandemic on Knowledge Sharing Behavior: A COR Perspective” has discussed the positive impact of COVID on the knowledge-sharing tendency of employees across various levels of an organization. Authors Sudeeptha Pradhan, Makhmoor Bashir and Sweta Singh have also suggested variations in knowledge-sharing tendency during different phases of a pandemic. Knowledge sharing has been found to be dependent on the familiarity of employees with each other while working remotely.

Online knowledge sharing and creativity can be valuable resources for organizations in supporting remote work during turbulent times, helping employees to stay connected, collaborate effectively and find creative solutions to challenges. Online knowledge sharing can facilitate the exchange of ideas and the sharing of best practices, which can help to support teamwork and collaboration, even when employees are working from home. Creativity in the context of remote work can help employees to come up with innovative solutions to challenges and to adapt to changing circumstances. Online tools and platforms, such as virtual brainstorming sessions and online idea-generation tools, can support creativity and help employees to generate new ideas and approaches. Pham Thi Minh, Pham Tien Thanh and Le Tuan Duy in their paper titled “Online knowledge sharing and creativity in the context of working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic” have discussed the positive association of online platform and organizational innovation climate with the creativity of employees. Authors have emphasized the mediating role of internal and external online knowledge-sharing behavior of employees.

Trust is a critical factor in facilitating knowledge sharing among organizations during turbulent times. In times of crisis, different organizations need to be able to share information and resources effectively to provide the best possible solutions. Many barriers can impact organizational trust in knowledge sharing, making it more difficult for employees to feel confident that their contributions will be valued and used effectively. When employees do not have access to information about how decisions are made or how resources are allocated, they may be less likely to trust the organization. If employees do not feel that the organization values their development and growth, they may be less likely to trust that the organization is committed to their success. Inconsistent or conflicting messages from leadership can undermine trust and make it more difficult for employees to understand the organization’s goals and priorities. If there are significant power imbalances within an organization, such as a hierarchical structure, employees may be less likely to trust that their knowledge and ideas will be valued and taken seriously. Carl-Magnus von Behr, Imogen Cleaver, Tim Minshall and P. John Clarkson have studied hospitals in this context in their article titled “Trust and knowledge sharing among hospitals during COVID-19: the compound effect of four barriers to organizational trust for knowledge sharing Hospitals during COVID-19: The Compound Effect of Four Barriers to Organizational Trust for Knowledge Sharing”. The article has identified organizational

features with a compound barrier effect on impersonal-based organizational trust (OT), interpersonal-based (OT) and personal trust for knowledge-sharing interactions. The identified four organizational features are lack of professional development, inappropriate reward and incentive system, reorganizations/organizational change and benchmarking. The study also explores the interplay between personal trust, impersonal OT and interpersonal OT for knowledge sharing.

Online platforms have played a great role in sustaining the organization by keeping their employees fully engaged during the turbulent times of the pandemic. Online learning platforms that offer personalized learning experiences, such as customized learning paths, can increase employee engagement by providing content that is relevant and meaningful to individual learners. Online learning platforms that include interactive learning activities, such as games, simulations and group discussions, can help to keep employees engaged and motivated by providing opportunities for active learning and collaboration. The platforms with features such as mobile accessibility, offline access and easy navigation can help to increase employee engagement by reducing barriers. Online learning platforms that support social learning, such as forums, discussion groups and peer feedback mechanisms, can help to create a sense of community and support among learners, which can help to increase employee work engagement and motivation. Vinit Ghosh, Manaswita Bharadwaja and Hory Mukherjee have shared insights about online learning platform features that create a significant influence on employee work engagement, in their article titled "Examining Online Learning Platform characteristics and employee engagement relationship during Covid-19". They identify online content and ease of use as important influencers of employee work engagement. They share the role of learner's personality characteristics and financial incentives to learn online in the context of employee work engagement.

During turbulent times such as COVID-19, knowledge-related tensions can arise in remote working arrangements and organizations may need to adapt their knowledge management practices to address these challenges. Employees may face challenges in accessing the knowledge and resources they need to complete tasks and make decisions when they are working remotely. This may be due to limitations in technology or difficulties in connecting with colleagues and other sources of information. They may find it difficult to share knowledge and collaborate effectively to complete the work. In a remote working environment, it may be more challenging to protect sensitive or confidential knowledge from unauthorized access or disclosure. This can create tensions around issues such as data security and information privacy. Remote work can also make it more difficult to manage knowledge within an organization, as it may be more challenging to track and organize information and ensure that knowledge is being shared and used effectively. The article "Knowledge-related tensions in remote working arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic" by Matikainen, Kianto and Olander identifies the knowledge-related tensions in remote work in a higher education context. The study presents a framework for managing knowledge-related tensions in remote and hybrid work modes for the use of knowledge-intensive organizations.

## Conclusion

Digitization helps organizations manage knowledge and cope well during turbulent times like a pandemic. In times of uncertainty or challenges, the relationship between leaders and team members becomes particularly crucial, and organizations may need to adjust their knowledge management strategies to address issues such as remote work and potential

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tensions related to knowledge sharing. Trust and online platforms can also help facilitate knowledge sharing and support remote work during difficult times. Guest editorial

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