

Engaged employees: The link between culturally aware leadership and effective knowledge management

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Abstract

This study analyzes the effect of cultural intelligence and knowledge-oriented leadership on knowledge management success with work engagement as a mediating variable at PT Bank DBS Indonesia, Jakarta's head office. This study uses a quantitative approach and cross-sectional design, with data collected through an online survey of 197 permanent and contract employees. The analysis technique used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results showed that cultural intelligence and knowledge-oriented leadership have a positive and significant effect on knowledge management success. Work engagement acts as an important mediator in the relationship between these variables. These findings provide practical contributions for companies to improve knowledge management success through cross-cultural training, knowledge-oriented leadership, and strategies to increase work engagement. This research also extends the knowledge management literature in the context of multinational companies in Indonesia.

Keywords: Cultural Intelligence, Knowledge-Oriented Leadership, Work Engagement, Knowledge Management Success.

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Abstrak

Kinerja perusahaan mencerminkan efektivitas perusahaan dalam mengelola sumber daya untuk mencapai tujuan ekonomi serta menciptakan nilai bagi pemangku kepentingan. Dalam praktik bisnis modern, pengungkapan emisi karbon semakin penting sebagai bentuk transparansi lingkungan yang dapat memengaruhi persepsi dan kepercayaan investor. Penelitian ini menganalisis pengaruh kecerdasan budaya dan kepemimpinan berorientasi pengetahuan terhadap keberhasilan manajemen pengetahuan dengan keterikatan kerja sebagai variabel mediasi pada PT Bank DBS Indonesia Kantor Pusat Jakarta. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain potong lintang (*cross-sectional*), dengan pengumpulan data melalui survei daring terhadap 197 karyawan tetap dan kontrak. Teknik analisis yang digunakan adalah *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kecerdasan budaya dan kepemimpinan berorientasi pengetahuan berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keberhasilan manajemen pengetahuan. Keterikatan kerja berperan sebagai mediator penting dalam hubungan antara variabel-variabel tersebut. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi praktis bagi perusahaan untuk meningkatkan keberhasilan manajemen pengetahuan melalui pelatihan lintas budaya, penguatan kepemimpinan berorientasi pengetahuan, serta strategi peningkatan keterikatan kerja. Penelitian ini juga memperkaya literatur manajemen pengetahuan dalam konteks perusahaan multinasional di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Kecerdasan Budaya, Kepemimpinan Berorientasi Pengetahuan, Keterikatan Kerja, Keberhasilan Manajemen Pengetahuan.

1. Introduction

Globalization has intensified cultural diversity in the workplace, particularly within multinational companies. This condition requires organizations to manage cultural differences effectively in order to optimize human resource potential. The success of multinational firms in addressing these challenges depends largely on individuals' and organizations' ability to understand and adapt to diversity. In this context, cultural intelligence is a key construct that explains an individual's capability to function effectively in culturally diverse environments (Earley & Ang, 2003). Cultural intelligence enables employees to interact and collaborate productively despite differences in values, norms, and work practices. This is critical because team diversity serves as a major source of innovation and competitive advantage in multinational corporations (Ng et al., 2009).

Alongside cultural complexity, knowledge management has become a strategic issue in sustaining organizational competitiveness. Firms are not only required to manage information, but also to create systems and cultures that encourage knowledge creation, sharing, and utilization. In this regard, knowledge-oriented leadership plays a central role in directing and facilitating knowledge management processes. Leaders with a strong knowledge orientation are able to foster innovative, learning-oriented, and collaborative work environments (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). However, in multinational settings characterized by high cultural diversity, the effectiveness of such leadership is closely related to leaders' ability to understand and manage cross-cultural differences.

In addition to leadership and cultural intelligence, work engagement is a critical determinant of individual and organizational performance. Work engagement reflects a positive, fulfilling psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's work (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Highly engaged employees tend to demonstrate superior

performance, stronger commitment, and greater willingness to contribute beyond formal job requirements. In multinational companies, work engagement may serve as a key mechanism linking leadership characteristics and cultural intelligence to knowledge management success. Leaders who are culturally intelligent and knowledge-oriented are more likely to create a work climate that fosters employee engagement.

Although previous studies have examined cultural intelligence, leadership, and work engagement, empirical research that integrates these variables to explain knowledge management success—particularly in the context of multinational companies in Indonesia—remains limited. Therefore, there is a need for empirical investigation that tests the effects of cultural intelligence and knowledge-oriented leadership on knowledge management success, with work engagement as a mediating variable.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze the effects of cultural intelligence and knowledge-oriented leadership on knowledge management success at PT Bank DBS Indonesia, Jakarta Head Office, and to examine the mediating role of work engagement. This study adopts a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design and employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze data collected from permanent and contract employees through an online survey. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the literature on knowledge management and leadership, and practically to multinational companies in designing effective human resource and leadership strategies grounded in cultural intelligence, knowledge orientation, and employee engagement.

2. Theoretical background and hypothesis

Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is broadly defined as an individual's capability to function effectively in culturally diverse contexts (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). It reflects a set of interrelated abilities that facilitate effectiveness across different cultural environments (Ang, et al., 2015). Prior studies indicate that CQ is conceptually distinct from personality traits and explains additional variance in cross-cultural competence beyond stable individual differences (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Since the development of the four-factor CQ scale by Ang et al. (2007), CQ has received substantial scholarly attention.

As a malleable capability, CQ can be developed through cultural exposure, training, modeling, mentoring, and socialization (Earley & Ang, 2003). It is therefore considered a developmental competence that can enhance expatriates' and employees' effectiveness over time (Crowne, 2013; Earley & Peterson, 2004; Triandis, 2006).

Knowledge-Oriented Leadership

Knowledge-oriented leadership (KOL) is an emerging construct that emphasizes leaders' roles in encouraging employees to generate, collect, share, and utilize knowledge (Gürlek & Çemberci, 2020). Rather than fostering aversive behavior that restricts knowledge flows, KOL promotes guidance, support, and rewards for knowledge-related behaviors (Donate & Sánchez de Pablo, 2015; Khatri et al., 2023).

Donate and Sánchez de Pablo (2015) conceptualize KOL as leadership that encourages responsible employee behavior and teamwork, supports experiential learning and the acquisition of external knowledge, tolerates mistakes within reasonable limits, acts more as an advisor than a controller, and values both knowledge sharing and its application (Mabey et al., 2012).

Knowledge Management Success

Knowledge management success (KMS) refers to an organization's ability to capture the right knowledge, provide it to the right users, and utilize it to improve individual and organizational performance (Wang & Yang, 2016). It involves developing systems that support knowledge creation, storage and retrieval, transfer, and application. According to Wang and Yang (2016), effective KMS is reflected in improved search speed and accuracy, which enhance decision-making quality by enabling decision makers to find and retrieve relevant knowledge in a timely manner.

Work Engagement

Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Maslach and Leiter (1997) describe engagement as the opposite of burnout, marked by energy, involvement, and efficacy. Engaged employees experience a strong, energetic connection to their work and perceive themselves as capable of meeting job demands.

Cultural Intelligence and Knowledge Management Success

Recent studies increasingly highlight the facilitative role of CQ in knowledge management practices (Zhang et al., 2024). CQ enables individuals to understand and adapt their thoughts and behaviors in intercultural environments (Earley & Ang, 2003). In multinational companies that rely heavily on strategic knowledge management, CQ becomes particularly important (Zhang et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence suggests that CQ significantly influences KMS. CQ supports not only general understanding of different cultures but also the adaptive use of cross-cultural knowledge, enabling individuals to engage effectively with diverse stakeholders (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2022) and to contribute to harmonious work environments (Tsai et al., 2017). These conditions are conducive to successful knowledge creation and sharing.

H1: Cultural intelligence has a positive effect on knowledge management success at PT Bank DBS Indonesia.

Knowledge-Oriented Leadership and Knowledge Management Success

Leadership is widely recognized as a key determinant of KMS (Kulkarni et al., 2006; Muhammed & Zaim, 2020). Among various leadership styles, KOL is particularly relevant because it directly emphasizes knowledge-related contexts and processes (Zhang et al., 2024). Studies report a positive relationship between KOL and knowledge management among employees (Shamim et al., 2019; Shariq et al., 2018). Leaders who adopt this style are effective in managing information flows and utilizing knowledge resources strategically, thereby improving KMS (Sahibzada et al., 2021).

H2: Knowledge-oriented leadership has a positive effect on knowledge management success at PT Bank DBS Indonesia.

Cultural Intelligence and Work Engagement

Employees with high CQ tend to have better interpersonal interactions and access to diverse resources, which motivates them to invest more effort and energy in their work (Ramalu & Subramaniam, 2019). Scholars have emphasized the importance of work engagement in encouraging initiative and managing the complexity of cross-border activities (Selmer & Luring, 2016). Tay et al. (2008) found a negative relationship between CQ and burnout. Because engagement is the opposite of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2006), CQ is expected to positively

influence work engagement. This is supported by Afsar et al. (2020), who found that CQ significantly enhances employee engagement.

H3: Cultural intelligence has a positive effect on work engagement at PT Bank DBS Indonesia.

Knowledge-Oriented Leadership and Work Engagement

Work engagement is influenced by the quality of leader–member relationships (Agarwal et al., 2012). Leadership behaviors have been shown to significantly affect employee engagement (Aryee et al., 2012; Van Dierendock et al., 2014). Shamim et al. (2017) demonstrated a positive and significant relationship between KOL and work engagement. Effective leadership improves employees’ motivation and psychological attachment to work, thereby strengthening engagement (Bhutto et al., 2021).

H4: Knowledge-oriented leadership has a positive effect on work engagement at PT Bank DBS Indonesia.

Work Engagement and Knowledge Management Success

Engagement theory suggests a positive relationship between employee engagement and knowledge sharing (Ford et al., 2015). Atapattu et al. (2021) found that work engagement is significantly related to knowledge management and plays an important role in improving overall KM performance. Engaged employees are more willing to share, apply, and develop knowledge resources.

H5: Work engagement has a positive effect on knowledge management success at PT Bank DBS Indonesia.

Mediation Effects Work Engagement

Ramalu and Subramaniam (2019) and Afsar et al. (2020) showed that CQ positively influences work engagement and that engagement serves as an important mediator in translating CQ into better work outcomes. Although relatively few studies have examined KMS as an outcome of engagement (Chen et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2015), engaged employees tend to invest more effort in creating and utilizing work resources over time (Kakkar et al., 2020; Scrima et al., 2014). Shamim et al. (2017) further demonstrated that KOL has both direct and indirect effects on knowledge management through work engagement. Thus, work engagement is expected to mediate the relationships between CQ and KMS, and between KOL and KMS.

H6: Work engagement mediates the relationship between cultural intelligence and knowledge management success at PT Bank DBS Indonesia.

H7: Work engagement mediates the relationship between knowledge-oriented leadership and knowledge management success at PT Bank DBS Indonesia.

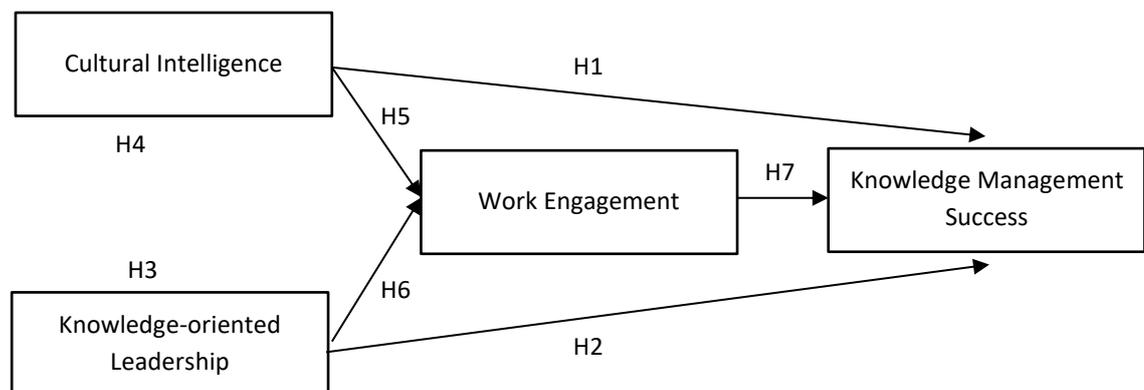


Figure 1. Research model

3. Methodology

Sample and Procedures

This study adopts a quantitative research approach. Primary data were collected through an online survey by distributing structured questionnaires to respondents, while secondary data were obtained from a review of relevant literature to support the research framework and interpretation of findings. The sampling technique employed was non-probability sampling using a purposive sampling method. This approach was selected to ensure that respondents possessed characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study (Turner, 2020). Accordingly, the sample consisted of permanent and contract employees of PT Bank DBS Indonesia at the Jakarta Head Office. A total of 197 valid questionnaires were returned and used for analysis.

Measurement

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measured on a Likert-type scale. The Likert scale, introduced by Rensis Likert, is widely used to assess attitudes, perceptions, and opinions (Babbie, 2014). In this study, a five-point interval scale was applied, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Higher scores indicate stronger agreement with the statements, while lower scores indicate stronger disagreement.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics and SmartPLS software. The analysis followed several stages. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and responses, primarily using measures of central tendency such as the mean. Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement instruments were evaluated for validity and reliability. Validity was assessed by examining item–total correlations, where indicators are considered valid if the calculated correlation coefficient exceeds the critical r -value. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. An instrument is considered reliable when the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.60, indicating acceptable internal consistency for research purposes (Hair et al., 2021).

4. Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the results of the descriptive statistical analysis for all research variables.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation between variables

Variable	Mean	Category
Cultural Intelligence	3,740	High
Knowledge-oriented Leadership	3,879	High
Knowledge Management Success	3,795	High
Work Engagement	3,749	High

Source: Results Processed by Researchers (2024)

The mean score of Cultural Intelligence (3.740) indicates that employees' cultural intelligence is at a high level, suggesting that employees demonstrate good adaptability and

effectiveness in interacting within a multicultural environment. Knowledge-Oriented Leadership shows the highest mean value (3.879), reflecting that leaders in the organization tend to encourage and motivate employees to share and utilize knowledge. This indicates that knowledge-based leadership practices have been well implemented.

Knowledge Management Success has a mean value of 3.795, indicating that the company has been relatively successful in managing knowledge and optimizing information-sharing and organizational learning processes. Work Engagement has a mean score of 3.749, suggesting that employees exhibit high levels of involvement, motivation, and commitment to their work. Overall, the descriptive results show strong performance across all examined constructs.

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The outer model was evaluated to assess the relationships between latent constructs and their indicators (Hair et al., 2021). In this study, Cultural Intelligence and Knowledge-Oriented Leadership function as exogenous variables, Knowledge Management Success as the endogenous variable, and Work Engagement as a mediating variable.

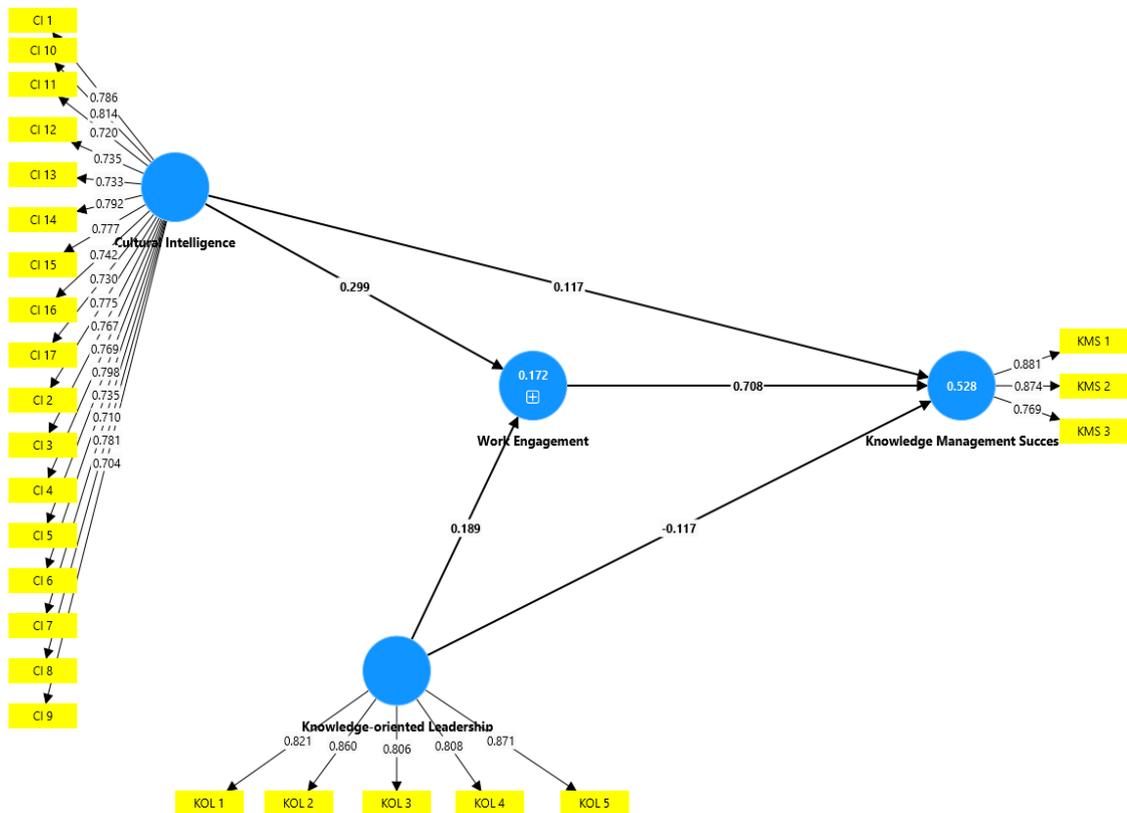


Figure 2. PLS Outer Model Algorithm Estimation Results

The results indicate that all indicator outer loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating satisfactory convergent validity. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs are greater than 0.50, indicating that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance of its indicators. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), with values ranging from 0.174 to 0.822, all below the recommended cut-off of 0.90. These results confirm that each construct is empirically distinct.

Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability, with values ranging from 0.795 to 0.954, all exceeding the minimum criterion of 0.70. This demonstrates that the measurement instruments are internally consistent and reliable.

Structural Model (Inner Model) and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was assessed using path coefficient analysis to test the proposed hypotheses. A relationship is considered significant when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 2. Regression results

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Interpretation	Information
Cultural Intelligence → Knowledge Management Success	0,117	2,142	0,016	Positive, significant	H1 is accepted
Knowledge-oriented Leadership → Knowledge Management Success	- 0,117	2,356	0,009	Negative, significant	H2 is accepted
Cultural Intelligence → Work Engagement	0,299	3,299	0,000	Positive, significant	H3 is accepted
Knowledge-oriented Leadership → Work Engagement	0,189	2,574	0,005	Positive, significant	H4 accepted
Work Engagement → Knowledge Management Success	0,708	10,293	0,000	Positive, significant	H5 accepted
Cultural Intelligence → Work Engagement → Knowledge Management Success	0,212	3,399	0,000	Positive, significant	H6 accepted
Knowledge-oriented Leadership → Work Engagement → Knowledge Management Success	0,134	2,428	0,008	Positive, significant	H7 accepted

Source: Results of Processed Researcher Data Using SmartPLS, 2024

As shown in Table 2, Cultural Intelligence has a positive and significant effect on Knowledge Management Success ($\beta = 0.117$; $t = 2.142$; $p = 0.016$), supporting H1. Cultural Intelligence also has a positive and significant effect on Work Engagement ($\beta = 0.299$; $t = 3.299$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. Knowledge-Oriented Leadership has a positive and significant effect on Work Engagement ($\beta = 0.189$; $t = 2.574$; $p = 0.005$), supporting H4. Work Engagement shows a strong positive and significant effect on Knowledge Management Success ($\beta = 0.708$; $t = 10.293$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H5.

The mediation hypotheses are also supported. Work Engagement significantly mediates the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Knowledge Management Success ($\beta = 0.212$; $t = 3.399$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H6, and between Knowledge-Oriented Leadership and Knowledge Management Success ($\beta = 0.134$; $t = 2.428$; $p = 0.008$), supporting H7.

Interestingly, Knowledge-Oriented Leadership shows a significant but negative direct effect on Knowledge Management Success ($\beta = -0.117$; $t = 2.356$; $p = 0.009$), supporting H2 in terms of significance, although the direction of the relationship is negative. This suggests that while leadership oriented toward knowledge may not directly enhance knowledge management success, its positive influence operates primarily through increasing employee work engagement.

Overall, all proposed hypotheses are statistically supported, either directly or indirectly, and the findings provide meaningful insights into how cultural intelligence, leadership, and work engagement jointly influence knowledge management success in a multinational banking context.

Discussion

The findings of this study portray PT Bank DBS Indonesia as an organization with a strong structural and managerial foundation; however, the success of knowledge management is largely driven by human factors, particularly employee work engagement. The results indicate that effective knowledge management is not solely determined by formal systems or leadership structures, but by the extent to which employees are psychologically and emotionally engaged in their work.

Cultural Intelligence and Knowledge Management Success

The results demonstrate that cultural intelligence has a positive and significant effect on knowledge management success, although the magnitude of this effect is relatively modest compared to other variables. This finding is consistent with recent studies emphasizing the facilitative role of cultural intelligence in knowledge management practices within multinational organizations (Zhang et al., 2024). Cultural intelligence, as conceptualized by Earley and Ang (2003), enables individuals to understand, interpret, and adapt their behavior in culturally diverse environments.

However, in the multicultural context of Jakarta, the findings also suggest the presence of a comfort gap, where employees exhibit a degree of hesitation when interacting within unfamiliar cultural settings. This condition limits the direct contribution of cultural intelligence to knowledge management success. Nevertheless, when cultural intelligence enhances work engagement, its influence becomes substantially stronger. This supports the arguments of Charoensukmongkol and Phungsoonthorn (2022) and Tsai et al. (2017), who contend that culturally inclusive environments foster psychological safety, improve interpersonal interactions, and facilitate knowledge exchange.

Knowledge-Oriented Leadership and Knowledge Management Success

The study reveals that knowledge-oriented leadership has a negative and significant direct effect on knowledge management success, a finding that contrasts with much of the prior literature (Shamim et al., 2019; Shariq et al., 2018). This result suggests that although knowledge-oriented leadership constitutes a key structural strength within the organization, it functions more as a catalyst rather than a direct driver of knowledge management success.

Leaders at PT Bank DBS Indonesia have successfully established a framework of responsibility and cooperation. However, the empirical evidence indicates that such a framework alone is insufficient to ensure the effective flow of knowledge. Leadership approaches that emphasize control and formalized knowledge processes may inadvertently reduce employees' intrinsic motivation to share knowledge. Therefore, this finding highlights the need to balance structured leadership with employee empowerment to achieve sustainable knowledge management outcomes.

Cultural Intelligence, Knowledge-Oriented Leadership, and Work Engagement

The results further indicate that both cultural intelligence and knowledge-oriented leadership positively and significantly influence work engagement. These findings align with Ramalu and Subramaniam (2019) and Afsar et al. (2020), who identify cultural intelligence as a personal resource that enhances employee energy, dedication, and absorption at work.

Similarly, the positive influence of knowledge-oriented leadership on work engagement is consistent with the arguments of Agarwal et al. (2012) and Shamim et al. (2017). Leaders who promote learning, knowledge sharing, and intellectual support contribute to higher levels of employee engagement. Although such leadership may not directly increase knowledge management success, it plays a critical role in fostering the psychological conditions necessary for engagement.

Work Engagement and Knowledge Management Success

One of the most significant findings of this study is that work engagement exerts the strongest influence on knowledge management success, accounting for 52.8% of the explained variance. This result reinforces engagement theory, which posits that engaged employees are more likely to proactively share knowledge and contribute to organizational effectiveness (Ford et al., 2015; Atapattu et al., 2021).

Work engagement serves as a crucial bridge between leadership intentions and successful knowledge management practices. Engaged employees do not merely perform their tasks mechanically; instead, they actively participate in creating, storing, and disseminating organizational knowledge. Consequently, knowledge at PT Bank DBS Indonesia is not confined to databases or systems but is activated through the commitment and enthusiasm of its workforce.

The Mediating Role of Work Engagement

The mediation analysis confirms that work engagement significantly mediates the relationships between cultural intelligence and knowledge management success, as well as between knowledge-oriented leadership and knowledge management success. These findings are consistent with prior studies by Ramalu and Subramaniam (2019) and Shamim et al. (2017), which emphasize work engagement as a key psychological mechanism linking individual and leadership factors to organizational outcomes.

Engaged employees tend to be more adaptive, enthusiastic, and willing to invest additional effort in developing knowledge resources over time (Kakkar et al., 2020; Scrima et al., 2014). Overall, the findings underscore the importance of shifting organizational focus from merely managing knowledge to nurturing the knower. By fostering a culture that views mistakes as learning opportunities and explicitly connects employees' daily tasks to the organization's broader mission, PT Bank DBS Indonesia can transform strong statistical performance into a sustainable competitive advantage. The evidence clearly shows that knowledge at DBS Jakarta is not simply stored—it is unlocked through the passion and commitment of an engaged workforce.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal a complex dynamic between organizational drivers and knowledge outcomes at PT. Bank DBS Indonesia. While cultural intelligence consistently exerts a positive and significant influence on both knowledge management success and work

engagement, the role of knowledge-oriented leadership presents a more nuanced picture. Specifically, while this leadership style successfully fosters higher levels of work engagement, it surprisingly shows a negative and significant direct influence on knowledge management success. However, work engagement serves as a vital mediating variable; it not only positively impacts knowledge outcomes directly but also effectively bridges the gap for both cultural intelligence and leadership. Consequently, through the lens of an engaged workforce, both cultural intelligence and knowledge-oriented leadership ultimately contribute to a positive and significant indirect influence on the overall success of knowledge management within the organization.

Limitations

To address the limitations of this study, future research should consider expanding the geographic and organizational scope beyond the head office of PT. Bank DBS Indonesia. Conducting a comparative study across multiple multinational corporations in Jakarta would provide a broader overview and allow for a more generalized understanding of how cultural intelligence and leadership styles function across different corporate cultures. Furthermore, researchers are encouraged to explore alternative mediating variables, such as employee engagement, to better capture the specific emotional and behavioral motivations that drive knowledge sharing. Finally, given the limited literature on this topic in the Indonesian context, incorporating additional variables like organizational learning capacity, innovation capability, or employee retention could provide deeper insights into the long-term sustainability of knowledge management strategies. To boost work engagement, leadership should explicitly link individual tasks to the bank's long-term vision and mission, ensuring employees feel a sense of purpose and recognition for their achievements. Finally, the bank should increase investment in integrated knowledge management platforms while simultaneously strengthening the internal sharing culture through formal training programs.

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