ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND EPISTEMIC STRUCTURES: IMPACTS ON INNOVATION CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS - A SCOPING REVIEW

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Abstract: *The relationship between epistemic structures and organizational culture is complex and bidirectional. Epistemic structures refer to the ways in which knowledge is organized, shared, and utilized within an organization, while organizational culture encompasses the values, beliefs, and behaviors that characterize an organizational environment. This study aimed to analyze the reciprocal influence between epistemic structures and organizational culture and their impacts on innovation capacity and organizational knowledge management through a scoping review. The results indicated that the relationship between epistemic structures and organizational culture is dynamic, with each element influencing and being influenced by the other, creating an environment that either fosters or inhibits innovation and knowledge management in organizations.*

Keywords: epistemic structures; organizational culture; innovation; organizational knowledge management.

Resumo: A relação entre estruturas epistêmicas e cultura organizacional é complexa e bidirecional. As estruturas epistêmicas referem-se às formas como o conhecimento é organizado, compartilhado e utilizado dentro de uma organização, enquanto a cultura organizacional abrange os valores, crenças e comportamentos que caracterizam um ambiente organizacional. Este estudo se propôs a analisar a influência recíproca entre as estruturas epistêmicas e a cultura organizacional e seus impactos na capacidade de inovação e na gestão do conhecimento organizacional, por meio de uma revisão de escopo. Os resultados indicaram que a relação entre estruturas epistêmicas e cultura organizacional é dinâmica, de modo que cada elemento influencia e é influenciado pelo outro,

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criando um ambiente que favorece ou inibe a inovação e a gestão do conhecimento nas organizações.

Palavras-chave: estruturas epistêmicas; cultura organizacional; inovação; gestão do conhecimento organizacional

1. INTRODUCTION

Epistemic Structures are conceptual systems that define and shape knowledge, encompassing the acquisition, construction, and sharing of information. According to Burgin (2017), these structures form epistemic spaces, which represent the relationships and operations of knowledge within a specific domain. These spaces can be static or dynamic, pure or weighted, reflecting how knowledge is represented and transformed.

In the organizational context, knowledge management and innovation are influenced by models such as SECI, developed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), which describe the continuous conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge. They introduced the concept of the "knowledge spiral," where socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization are essential modes of conversion. Additionally, the concept of "ba" represents spaces where knowledge interaction and creation occur, promoting collaboration and innovation.

Organizational culture, as described by Schein (2009), is shaped by the shared experiences and challenges of a group, creating a system of beliefs and values that guide organizational adaptation and learning. Philip Selznick (2010) emphasized "institutionalization," where organizations develop their own personalities and values, reflecting and perpetuating cultural norms.

These structures and assumptions shape both interaction and operation within the organization. Changes in basic assumptions can be challenging but are essential for adaptation and innovation. Reassessing these assumptions can lead to significant changes, promoting continuous cultural and organizational evolution.

In this context, questions could be formulated regarding the relationship between epistemic structures and organizational culture, as well as the impact on innovation capacity and knowledge management within organizations. For example, how do epistemic structures influence organizational culture, and how does organizational culture, in turn, affect the adoption and development of new epistemic structures? Or, given the relationship between epistemic structures

and organizational culture, how might this relationship influence innovation capacity and organizational knowledge management?

Thus, these research problems address the bidirectionality of the relationship between epistemic structures and organizational culture, allowing for an in-depth analysis of how these elements mutually influence each other. It also opens up the possibility of investigating variations in this relationship across different types of organizations or sectors, offering a wide range of potential insights into the internal dynamics of organizations and how they are shaped by and shape the knowledge they generate and sustain. In this regard, the study aims to analyze the reciprocal influence between epistemic structures and organizational culture and their impacts on innovation capacity and organizational knowledge management.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. EPISTEMIC STRUCTURES

In academic literature, there are various conceptual systems that seek to define knowledge, each offering a unique perspective on how knowledge is acquired, constructed, and shared. One such approach focuses on the nature of knowledge (the epistemological aspect), particularly when examining its structures and epistemic spaces, aiming to understand the relationships between knowledge and belief—two fundamental concepts in cognition that constitute basic epistemic structures (Burgin, 2017).

Moreover, cognitive processes involve a multitude of other structures, including concepts, opinions, and statements, which collectively contribute to the formation of epistemic spaces (Burgin, 2017). According to the author, an epistemic structure is defined as one that represents or reflects the information present in a given domain and can be classified as static or dynamic, describing domains that are either unchanged or have been altered, respectively. Thus, they also serve as the basis for the conventional understanding of information as the central element that confers or alters knowledge.

On the other hand, epistemic structures related to knowledge form what is conventionally known as epistemic spaces. These spaces can be defined as a set of epistemic structures or their representations, along with the specific relationships and operations within a given domain, which

can be categorized as pure or weighted, with weighted spaces having the ability not only to represent epistemic structures but also the characteristics that accompany them.

From another perspective, epistemic structures refer to the ways in which knowledge is created, shared, and applied within organizations, encompassing processes, systems, and social interactions that either facilitate or hinder the flow of knowledge and consequently impact an organization's ability to innovate and adapt.

Nonaka and Takeuchi introduced the concept of the "knowledge spiral" in their seminal work "The Knowledge-Creating Company" (1995). This approach describes the process by which knowledge is continuously generated and transformed through the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge, which is subjective and personal in nature, is converted into explicit knowledge, which can be formalized and shared, and vice versa. This dynamic of knowledge conversion forms the basis for innovation within organizations (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000).

2.2. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture is essential for understanding behavior within organizations, influencing how members perceive, think, and act. Schein (2009) argues that this culture arises from shared experiences and challenges faced, becoming a structure that guides organizational adaptation and learning. Cultural assumptions, which include visible artifacts, declared beliefs and values, and underlying basic assumptions, shape the perceptions and responses of organization members and are transmitted as valid norms to new members (Schein, 2009).

Selznick (2010) introduced the concept of "institutionalization," asserting that organizations develop their own deeply rooted cultural values that shape their operations. This innovative perspective emphasizes that organizations are living entities, shaped by the social and cultural context in which they are embedded.

Researchers such as Schein, Handy, Nonaka, and Takeuchi have expanded the concept of organizational culture, exploring how shared beliefs, values, and practices influence organizational functioning and innovation. Handy (1993) proposed four types of organizational culture: power culture, role culture, task culture, and person culture, highlighting the internal dynamics of organizations. Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) developed the SECI model and the concept of "ba,"

emphasizing knowledge creation and sharing, and how organizational culture directly influences these processes.

Understanding organizational culture, especially the "underlying basic assumptions," is crucial, as these assumptions unconsciously guide the behavior of organization members and are difficult to alter without a deliberate process of reassessment and learning (Schein, 2009).

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This study employed the scoping review method (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2020), a methodological approach that seeks to explore key concepts of a topic, investigate the scope, breadth, and nature of the study, condense and publish the data, and identify existing research gaps (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Additionally, scoping reviews are useful for examining emerging evidence when it is not yet clear what more specific questions might be posed for synthesis (Peters et al., 2020).

In summary, scoping reviews are appropriate when a topic or body of knowledge is new or under construction, or not well-covered by the literature (Pereira & Santos, 2023). This method is highly recommended in the present case, which requires further discussion on the relationship between organizational culture and epistemic structures. Notably, this study took into consideration the guidelines proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), expanded by Levac et al. (2010).

The methodological procedures used are described below and follow the structure outlined and detailed by Pereira, Lacerda & Cunha (2021):

Stage 1) Identification of the research question and definition of the study objective: This stage aims to align, clarify, and link the objective to the research question. The research question in a scoping review must be clearly defined as it plays a significant role in subsequent stages (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2020; Pereira et al., 2021). The research questions of this study are: *How do epistemic structures influence organizational culture, and how does organizational culture, in turn, affect the adoption and development of new epistemic structures?* Given the relationship between epistemic structures and organizational culture, how might this relationship influence innovation capacity and organizational knowledge management?

Stage 2) Identification of relevant studies: In this stage, relevant studies are identified along with a plan for where to search, which terms to use, which research sources, time interval, and

language. The goal is to balance feasibility with the breadth and scope of the scoping process. It is important to develop and align the inclusion criteria with the objective and research question (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2020; Pereira, Rosa & Cunha, 2021).

The search strategy for the present study was defined using the string TITLE-ABS-KEY*("epistemic structure*" OR "knowledge structure*")* AND TITLE-ABS-KEY*("organizational culture" OR "corporate culture" OR "organi?ation* culture")* in the Scopus, Web of Science, and Scielo databases. No temporal limitation was applied. The search was restricted to articles and reviews in English and Portuguese.

Stage 3) Selection of studies: The selection of publications that will compose the analysis portfolio is not linear but rather an iterative process involving searching the literature, refining the search strategy, and reviewing articles for inclusion in the study. It involves describing the planned approach to evidence searching, selection, data extraction, and evidence presentation (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2020; Pereira, Rosa & Cunha, 2021). In this stage, the abstracts, keywords, and titles of the publications were read, organizing, relating, and identifying the selected studies.

Stage 4) Data mapping: A data form/spreadsheet is developed and used to extract data from each study. A "descriptive-analytical" method can be adopted to extract contextual or process-oriented information from each study (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2020; Pereira, Lacerda & Cunha, 2021). After selecting the most suitable articles for the research objective, the main data from these studies were extracted and indexed in a synthesis matrix (Garrard, 2016).

Stage 5) Grouping, summarizing, and reporting the results: This stage involves identifying the implications of the study's results for policies, practices, or research by selecting the evidence. Grouping and summarizing the collected data and discussing the results were carried out in this stage, addressing the relevant aspects in relation to the proposed research questions, which will be discussed in the following sections.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The research findings indicated a limited number of studies that address or attempt to explain/understand the relationship between the constructs of epistemic structure and

organizational culture. However, these studies reveal a complex relationship between epistemic structures, organizational culture, innovation capacity, and knowledge management.

There is significant convergence in the assertion that organizational culture plays a crucial role in knowledge management and innovation. Studies such as those by Azeem et al. (2021) and Chung & Espinoza (2023) emphasize that a collaborative, open, and flexible organizational culture promotes knowledge sharing and, consequently, organizational innovation. Therefore, an organization's culture can be seen as a facilitator that shapes and is shaped by effective knowledge management practices, creating a cycle of mutual reinforcement.

On the other hand, some studies indicate divergences in how different organizational cultures impact these processes. For example, Aichouche et al. (2022) show that Clan, Adhocracy, and Market cultures have varying effects on knowledge management processes, while Hierarchy culture has an insignificant or negative impact. Additionally, Hung et al. (2005) suggest that although organizational culture is critical for the adoption of knowledge management systems (KMS), it is not a significant predictor of competitiveness. These points of divergence highlight the need for a contextual and specific understanding of the interactions between epistemic structures and organizational culture, indicating that there is no single, universal solution to promote innovation and knowledge management across all organizations.

Nonetheless, it is possible to identify relevant convergences concerning the proposed research questions, which will be addressed next.

A) How do epistemic structures influence organizational culture, and how does organizational culture, in turn, affect the adoption and development of new epistemic structures?

Insights from the articles and theoretical framework indicate that epistemic structures, such as knowledge management practices, can gradually shape organizational culture by promoting values such as collaboration, learning, and innovation (Cillo et al., 2022; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). As these practices become part of the organizational routine, they influence the beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors of organization members.

Moreover, the findings suggest that epistemic structures have the potential to shape and challenge the prevailing organizational culture, while also indicating that the established culture impacts the acceptance of these structures. Aureli et al. (2017) and Shea et al. (2021) suggest that structures such as work design, training, and knowledge management forge culture over time. The

adoption of new technologies and epistemic structures may require cultural changes to maximize their effectiveness, challenging ingrained cultural assumptions (Cillo et al., 2022; Schein, 2010). Successful knowledge management practices can gradually make the culture more open to sharing ideas and fostering innovation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Selznick (2010) and Benedict (2000) also provide insights into how organizations develop unique cultures based on interactions and experiences.

Figure 1 shows a chain of positive effects initiated by healthy epistemic structures, leading to innovation, better communication, adaptability, employee engagement, data-informed decisions, and ultimately, a strong corporate reputation. This reputation, in turn, feeds back into positive epistemic structures, creating a cycle of continuous improvement.

The bidirectional relationship between organizational culture and epistemic structures, such as information technology systems and knowledge management practices, is another central theme that emerges from both the theoretical framework and the obtained results. The research indicates that organizational culture influences the adoption of epistemic structures, while effective knowledge management structures tend to reinforce and shape an organizational culture that is more conducive to knowledge sharing and innovation, creating a cycle of mutual influence and positive reinforcement (Alberti-Alhtaybat et al, 2019; Cillo et al., 2022; Chung & Espinoza, 2023; Marjerison et al, 2022).

Figure 1. Impact of Positive Epistemic Structures on Innovation and Corporate Reputation

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

The cycle in Figure 2 highlights the interdependence between these elements, showing that organizational culture, knowledge structures, and innovation capacity are intrinsically linked, each influencing and being influenced by the others.

Some specific cases where changes in organizational culture led to the adaptation or revision of existing epistemic structures, providing insights into mechanisms of adaptation and change:

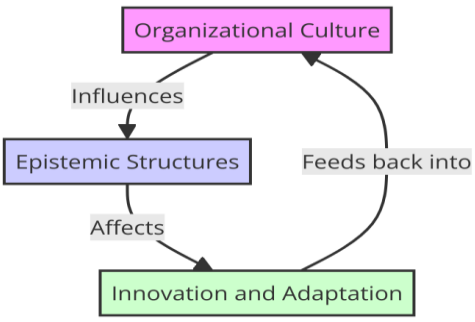
1) Companies that underwent restructuring or mergers needed to integrate different epistemic structures and often revise their knowledge management practices to align with the new organizational culture (Alberti-Alhtaybat et al., 2019).

2) Organizations that adopted remote or hybrid work models had to adapt communication channels and knowledge repositories to accommodate the new arrangements (Chung & Espinoza, 2023).

3) Digital transformation initiatives require a revision of traditional structures to incorporate new sources and formats of data/knowledge (Alberti-Alhtaybat et al., 2019).

4) Cultural renewal movements, such as an emphasis on diversity and inclusion, can lead to the deconstruction of existing epistemic structures that are considered limited or biased (Cillo et al., 2022).

Figure 2. Cyclical Relationship between Organizational Culture, Epistemic Structures, and Innovation



Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

In summary, the results obtained are largely aligned with the theoretical framework, reinforcing the intrinsic connection between organizational culture and epistemic structures, particularly regarding knowledge management and innovation within organizations.

Theoretical and empirical perspectives converge in highlighting the importance of an open,

collaborative, and learning-oriented culture, the mutual influence between organizational culture and epistemic structures, and the potential for reciprocal shaping between these elements in the context of knowledge management and organizational innovation capacity.

B) Given the relationship between epistemic structures and organizational culture, how can this relationship influence innovation capacity and organizational knowledge management?

The articles and theoretical framework suggest that there is a relationship of mutual influence between epistemic structures and organizational culture. A culture that promotes values such as openness, collaboration, and continuous learning tends to favor the adoption of effective knowledge management practices, such as the use of cross-functional teams, knowledge repositories, and communities of practice (Azeem et al., 2021; Carneiro & Streit, 2021; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Shea et al., 2021). Epistemic structures, in turn, reinforce the culture of knowledge sharing and innovation. Therefore, the relationship between culture and epistemic structures can create a virtuous cycle that drives innovation capacity and organizational knowledge management (Cillo et al., 2022; Chung & Espinoza, 2023).

Cultures open to innovation tend to have dynamic and expansive epistemic structures that allow for the growth and integration of knowledge, but they risk inefficiency if not managed. Cultures closed to innovation tend to have rigid and fragmented epistemic structures that inhibit knowledge sharing and application, leading to stagnation.

Policies on diversity, inclusion, and people development through training contribute to a culture that values knowledge sharing and ideas, which can facilitate innovation (Cillo et al., 2022).

However, even in open cultures, resistance to change and difficulty in breaking away from established practices can create obstacles to the implementation of new epistemic structures. This resistance can be caused by various factors, such as a lack of trust in new ideas, risk aversion, and difficulty adapting to new technologies.

The limitations of the research lie largely in the exclusive focus on theoretical and conceptual studies. Practical case studies using statistical methods to analyze the influence of organizational culture and epistemic structures through performance indicators could provide more precise results for these relationships.

Longitudinal studies are recommended to investigate the evolution of the relationship between culture and knowledge management over time, taking into account the impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and other innovations. Additionally, the investigation of the positive and negative impacts of this relationship should be explored in future studies, demonstrating how organizational culture and epistemic structures manifest in practice, identifying challenges and opportunities for knowledge management and innovation. These future directions will help to gain a deeper and more practical understanding of the dynamic interactions between organizational culture and epistemic structures.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to analyze the reciprocal influence between epistemic structures and organizational culture and their impacts on innovation capacity and organizational knowledge management.

The data analysis revealed that organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping and promoting knowledge management practices and innovation within an organization. Organizations with collaborative, open, and flexible cultures tend to favor knowledge sharing and innovation, creating a virtuous cycle where these practices mutually reinforce each other.

The relationship between organizational culture and epistemic structures is bidirectional and dynamic. Studies suggest that effective epistemic structures can gradually shape organizational culture by promoting values such as collaboration, learning, and innovation. Conversely, the existing organizational culture also influences the acceptance and effectiveness of these structures. Thus, successful knowledge management practices can transform organizational culture, making it more open to idea sharing and innovation.

In this way, organizational culture and epistemic structures mutually influence each other, creating an environment that can either foster or inhibit innovation and effective knowledge management in organizations. While a conducive organizational culture can significantly promote innovation and knowledge management, the specific nature of this relationship may vary depending on the types of organizational culture and the specific contexts of the organizations. Understanding these dynamics is essential for managers to develop effective innovation and

knowledge management strategies tailored to the unique cultural characteristics of their organizations.

Finally, it is highlighted that a contextual and specific approach is necessary to understand the interactions between organizational culture and epistemic structures. There is no single, universal solution to promoting innovation and knowledge management across all organizations.

Future studies should focus on practical and longitudinal cases to investigate how these relationships evolve over time, especially with the impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data, which will contribute to a deeper and more practical understanding of the dynamic interactions between organizational culture and epistemic structures, helping managers to develop effective strategies adapted to the unique cultural characteristics of their organizations.

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