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THE EFFECT OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE ON KNOWLEDGE SHARING
BEHAVIOUR IN THE AUTO INDUSTRY OF IRAN

ALI HOSSEIN KESHAVARZI

Doctor of Philosophy

ASTON UNIVERSITY

January 2007 (resubmission)

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ASTON UNIVERSITY

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Thesis Summary

This research was conducted to develop an understanding of the cultural factors that support or constrain the individual's knowledge sharing behaviour in organisations, in order to advance understanding of the link between knowledge sharing and organisational culture, to identify particular aspects of organisational culture of Iranian companies that have stronger effects on knowledge-sharing behaviour, and to identify those specific aspects that have not been identified in previous studies. The units of analysis in the study were two Iranian auto companies (one private, one public). Data was collected using a stratified random sample of 87 individuals from different levels of two companies. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews, a field-note journal, and observations were used for data collection. The technique of grounded theory was adopted for data analysis, and hypotheses were developed from interview transcripts and by making a comparison with the current literature. The research contribution to the existing literature consists of a contradiction of the belief in the organisational identification literature, which suggests that there is an association between identification and performance. Defining performance as knowledge sharing, the research findings suggest that identification is not associated with performance. The findings also revealed that a positive effect of bureaucracy was the existence of a suggestion system that reduced the effect of formal relationships. A negative effect of a low level of bureaucracy increased the effect of formal relationships, and this has led to middle managers becoming a barrier to knowledge sharing. The findings also empirically demonstrated the positive effect of bureaucracy, which transformed what had been personal conflict between managers in the absence of bureaucracy, into inter-departmental rivalry.

Keywords: Organisational culture, knowledge sharing, identification, performance, auto industry, bureaucracy, suggestion system, Iran

DEDICATION

*To My Wife Zhaleh,
My Daughter Zahra,
and My Son Mohammad Amin*

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Chapter One: Initial Statement

Introduction

In this chapter, a summary of the research topic, the contributions made by the research to knowledge, and an outline of the thesis structure, are presented.

1.1 Background to the Research

The research topic is entitled 'The effect of organisational culture on knowledge-sharing behaviour in the Iranian auto industry', and has as its purpose, the development of an understanding of the cultural factors that constrain the individual's knowledge-sharing behaviour in the auto manufacturing organisations of Iran operating in the public and the private sectors. In the study, 'the effects of organisational culture' refer to those particular aspects of the organisational culture of Iranian companies that have strong influences on the knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals (e.g. as a facilitator or barrier to knowledge-sharing) in one private company and one public company that are used as case studies. Knowledge sharing is vital for planning activities related to: reducing operation costs, arranging team working, and enhancing performance through the best use of available knowledge in the Iranian auto industry and similar industries.

Bearing in mind that Iranian culture is described as conducive to autocracy, paternalism, and distrust outside the family, these characteristics are important in terms of being ones that greatly affect individual behaviour in Iranian organisations.

The research also focuses on the effect of the level of bureaucracy on knowledge sharing in the two chosen companies. Regarding the concept of bureaucracy, this will be considered in terms of structural characteristics (e.g. hierarchy, division of labour, system of rules, selection on merit and career system), and "behavioural attributes which consist of impersonality, rationality, and rule orientation" (Narayana, 1992, p. 125).

Organisational identification is an important part of this study, and the model proposed by Alles and Datar (2002), concluding this to be related to knowledge sharing, is adopted. For the purpose of this research, identification is defined as a perceived oneness with an identification target (e.g. team, person, CEO, organisation), and the experience of the identification target's successes and failures as one's own (Mael and Ashforth, 1992).

I suggest that the application of my research finding on identification lies in the area of organisational control, which I define as 'the process of establishing standards, monitoring

and measuring performance, evaluating outcomes, recognising performance, or taking necessary corrective actions' (Bartol and Martin, 1994). This process can be 'supervisory control' or 'organisational support' (King, 2006). For the purposes of this research, in 'supervisory control', knowledge sharing is controlled through routine monitoring of workers, but 'organisational support' focuses on providing a foundation for the assessment of factors that influence knowledge sharing (King, 2006). In the two cases explored in this study, rewards are regarded as a means of achieving organisational control. Because of the man's role in Iranian culture as the breadwinner of his family and also because of high inflation and strained family resources, financial reward is the prime motivator of knowledge-sharing by individuals in Iranian companies.

Performance is conceptualised as having two separate dimensions: 'job-relevant behaviours', and 'work outcomes', which are products or services that are expected to result from employee job-relevant behaviour (Binning and Barrett, 1989; Smith, 1976). The study is qualitative and, therefore, focuses on the qualitative aspects of performance and on the individual level of performance. The one dimension of performance on which the study concentrates, is knowledge-sharing behaviour.

Because of time limitations in PhD research, this research investigates knowledge sharing as behaviour, rather than the specific type of knowledge shared, or its content and value.

1.2 The Importance of the Research

The importance of this research is found in a number of reasons. Firstly, Iranian culture is unique, having visible differences when compared to Western culture, and also to the cultures of other Islamic countries, the Middle East, and Asia. Such uniqueness means that it is difficult to generalise from literature relating to other Islamic contexts, and specifically in terms of the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing in the Iranian environment, there is a lack of empirical research. Secondly, the complexity of the auto industry increases the importance of research in knowledge management in this industry, and a study in knowledge management especially in this very complex context, is likely to generate findings that can be applicable to other knowledge-intensive industries, and thereby enhance plans related to knowledge sharing behaviour, which is seen as a key factor to increase competitive advantage in these industries. The desire to achieve such advantage stems from the transition of the auto industry from being a government monopoly to the private market, which has created an environment for the private sector in

Iran to invest in it. And the establishment of small and medium size private companies with different characteristics to public companies, increases the importance of research in the Iranian auto industry. Although there are opposing perspectives concerning organisational culture, some believing that it is static and not susceptible to change, this study takes the view that it can in fact, be changed gradually and over time, because culture is not an inherent feature, but is rather derived from what is rewarded in society. For various reasons, societies evolve and this evolution affects cultural factors. Hence, organisational culture can be re-moulded as societal values change (e.g. the Islamic Revolution in Iran). This does not mean that individuals are uninvolved in the cultural changes, but that culture can be used as a basis for studying the individual behaviours that have been affected by cultural factors in the organisations.

1.3 Why the Iranian Car Industry?

The unit of analysis in the study is two Iranian auto companies (one private, one public), the rationale being the researcher's familiarity with Iranian culture, and possession of the same language as the informants, thus minimising problems of communication during the data collection process. Language familiarity enabled a better understanding of key words and metaphors used in the interviews, and a more reliable data analysis. A second reason for choosing the auto industry among other knowledge-based industries, is the complexity of the processes in this environment, which renders it much more appropriate for research in the field of knowledge management.

1.4 Why Qualitative Inductive Methodology?

Knowledge management researchers have used a qualitative approach as their main technique for data collection, since their aim is invariably to access aspects of human behaviour that are often hidden. Hence, the semi-structured interview is considered as a valid and reliable instrument for research in this area, being flexible, accessible, intelligible, and highly illuminative of those facets of human behaviour that are not always evident when adopting a quantitative approach. In the actual event, data collection for this study was conducted in a three-month period from June to August 2004 in Iran, using face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 87 individuals (50 from the private company, and 37 from the public company).

The reason for using an inductive strategy is that this provides a convenient and efficient method for analysing qualitative data for many research purposes, and it is an approach

that is evident in much qualitative data analysis. Inductive data analysis provides a clear summary format of qualitative data and creates clear and defensible links between research objects. In the actual event, the method allowed for the identification of emergent findings from frequent and significant themes from the raw text data, which are usually obscured or which remain invisible in deductive data analysis.

1.5 The Research Contribution to Knowledge

Through this research, some new knowledge related to organisational identification and its effect on performance (defined as knowledge sharing) in organisations with different cultural environments, will emerge, primarily because, as indicated earlier, the Iranian context is unique in many ways when compared with Western, and other Islamic countries. This will make a contribution to the literature in the area, and be useful for academicians seeking to construct a theory that has applicability to the range of contexts in the globalised setting. Secondly, the research findings will make a contribution to management practice in the field of organisational control, as it will provide directions for the use of identification as a means of control within organisations.

1.6 Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into eight chapters.

Chapter One has presented an introduction to the study, provided a rationale for the research effort involved, indicated the methodology to be employed, and continues to outline how the entire thesis will unfold.

Chapter Two is devoted to an introduction to Iranian national culture, and the literature review of organisational culture and knowledge sharing. In relation to organisational culture and knowledge sharing, it focuses on the elements of organisational identification, nepotism, middle management, bureaucracy, and conflict in organisations, as the variables that influence the overall culture and atmosphere. Using the existing literature in this chapter, the main research question regarding the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing, is concluded, together with six other questions about the effect of different aspects of organisational culture, such as the worker-manager relationship, bureaucracy and suggestion system on conflict, and knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals in the two companies; and also a question about facilitators of, and barriers to, knowledge sharing in the Iranian auto industry.

Chapter Three contains the introduction to the context of the study. In the first section, the Iranian car industry is introduced in order to provide a perspective of the environments and the conditions in which the case study companies operate. The second section introduces the units of the study (the public company and the private company) in terms of their history, organisational structure, products, management practices, performance appraisal and reward systems, and their IT infrastructure; and the system they use for knowledge sharing. At the end of Chapter Three, a brief outline of the similarities and differences between the two companies, including their differences regarding the level of bureaucracy, is provided.

Chapter Four presents the methodology applied in the research process and a justification for using the qualitative method (semi-structured interview) for data collection. It also explains and justifies the process and techniques used for data analysis, and addresses possible criticisms of the data collection and analysis process.

Chapter Five produces the qualitative analysis of the findings in the private company using translated quotes from interview transcripts and the researcher's observations made while in the company. It contains the analysis of identification by workers and managers with the company, the identity of the company, description of the existing situation of idea generation and knowledge sharing in the company; and identifies and links the facilitators of, and the barriers to, knowledge sharing and their effect on knowledge-sharing behaviour of workers in that company.

Chapter Six contains the qualitative analysis of findings in the public company, using interview transcripts and the researcher's observations to establish the organisational identification by workers and managers, and to describe the prevailing knowledge-sharing environment in the public company. As a result of the analysis in this chapter, the facilitators of, and barriers to, knowledge sharing in the public company are identified. In the conclusion to this chapter, the effects of these facilitators and barriers on the knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals in the public entity are highlighted.

Chapter Seven discusses the links between the empirical findings and the literature. Using the results of the data analysis in Chapters Five and Six, the important differences between the organisational cultures of the two companies that have differently affected the

knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals in those two companies, are pinpointed and analysed. Chapter Seven continues with the introduction of three findings from the research. These are connected to the literature, using the existing research efforts in the field of identification, bureaucracy, and conflict. Additionally, the chapter introduces the implications of the research findings, focussing on the use of identification as a managerial instrument of organisational control, and the possibility that there can be a positive effect of bureaucracy in some cultural contexts (e.g. Iranian culture). The limitations regarding the generalisability of the research findings, some issues of self-awareness of limitations, and a future research agenda, are also presented.

In Chapter Eight, some concluding remarks are offered to explain how the study's findings answer the research questions that provide the motivation for the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter aims to demonstrate topics, which are related to the research questions posed in Chapter One. In the first section, the background and the main aspects of Iranian national culture that affect the organisational culture of Iranian organisations, are introduced. The second section is devoted to a review of the literature on related topics including organisational culture, knowledge sharing, organisational identification, nepotism, middle management, bureaucracy, and conflict in organisations. In the third section, concluding remarks provide the rationale for the selection of the research title, and explain the connection between the literature and the research questions generated.

2.1 Iranian National Culture

2.1.1 Iran at a Glance

Iranian culture is described as having three features: being individualistic, characterised by strong family ties, and having a powerful elite. It can be described as a culture that distrusts people outside of the family, such as those at work (as a result of strong family ties, and being protective of children), and distrusts central authorities (as a result of individualism). Iranian culture is very high on inter-group collectivism (the extent to which individuals are attached to their families and circle of friends), and low on institutional collectivism (the extent to which members of societies respect broader societal interests versus individual interests) (Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003).

In order to understand Iranian culture, it is necessary to recognise the country's historical, social, economic, and political development. Iran's history can be traced back 6,000 years (Hiro, 2005), since when the country has had a long history of monarchical and autocratic regimes consisting of an estimated 46 dynasties and more than 400 kings, all of which have affected Iranian culture in terms of power distance. This feature has also caused a reduction in people's trust and respect for the collective system, and has increased individualism through more reliance on close family and friends (Javidan and Dastmalchian 2003). Iran has adopted two main religions: Zoroastrianism, which originates from Iran, and Islam, which originates from the Arab world (Hiro, 2005). The dominant religion in Iran after the Arab Islam conquest was Sunni Islam, but this was converted to Shi'ism under the Safavid dynasty in the 16th century. During the past three decades, Iran has experienced major changes including the Islamic Revolution in 1979,

followed by US sanctions imposed on the country, and an eight-year war (1980-1988) with Iraq (Namazie, 2003). Current Iranian culture is the result of its historical changes in terms of religious and political changes. Based on the latest census in 1996, Iran's population was 60 million (49.2% female and 50.8% male). Ninety-nine percent of the population are Muslim, with a Shi'ite majority of 89%, and a 10% Sunni minority (Burke et al, 2004). Iran is a country with one of the youngest populations in the world. Its population is predicted to be 71 million in 2006 with a mean age of 26 years (Euromonitor, 2006). This situation arises as a result of the Islamic Revolution and the war with Iraq, during which population growth reached 3.9%, the highest rate for the country during the last century. Although, according to the last census, this rate reduced to 1.5% in 1996 (SCI, 2006), and was estimated to be 1.27 in 2005-6 (Euromonitor, 2006), the previous growth has, nonetheless, caused a high rate of unemployment, which has been a national problem in recent years, and has consequently affected the use of networks and relations by applicants for employment in Iranian organisations.

2.1.2 Iranian National Culture

Factors that build up collectively-shared learned values of Iranian culture include: family, religion, the educational system, and political and economic systems (Tayeb, 1981). In this research, the focus is on the role of middle managers in knowledge sharing, and in this respect the cultural dimension of power distance ('the degree to which members of an organisation or society expect and agree that power should be unequally shared'), which has been influenced by Iranian national culture, is an important factor since it influences the predisposition of people in their respect for authority and authority figures in an organisation. Family structure is another factor in Iranian culture that reduces collective trust, because individuals have learned not to trust outside the family, and when they enter an organisation, they do not trust others; consequently this diminishes the involvement of individuals in positive activities in favour of their organisation. Also in the Iranian family the father's role (i.e. 'father at the top') might be a proper base for the explanation of identification or lack of it, with the CEOs in the two case study companies. Regarding the CEO as their organisational father might affect employees' identification with him, according to his treatment of them, which they may perceive as fair or unfair. For example, when employees consider that like a good father the CEO treats them fairly, they might identify with him, and conversely when they believe the CEO treats them unfairly, they might distance themselves from him. An additional role of the father as breadwinner of the family in Iranian culture is also important in terms of his responsibility for covering the

family expenditure, an expectation that increases the importance of financial income (e.g. salary, rewards, etc) for employees in Iranian organisations, and in turn affects their behaviour, which is more likely to be motivated by monetary rewards.

Kiani and Latifi (1995) have developed a framework demonstrating the impact of Ancient, Islamic and Western cultures (pre-1978) on Iran's work-related values and management style. They suggest that Iran is best viewed as an individualistic culture. Two sources of high individualism in Iranian culture are the historical experiences, and education system of the country. Persia was the ancient name of Iran until 1934, and Reza Shah changed the country name to Iran as a part of his modernisation (Hiro, 2006). Persian history in the main witnessed autocratic monarchies that have caused a reduction in people's trust and a lessening of respect for the collective system, and more reliance on close family and friends (Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003). Tayeb (1981, p. 18-19) describes the Iranian family as "a very close and dependent child-parent relationship" with a hierarchy with "the father at the top". The highly protective behaviour of the Iranian family regarding their children has resulted in less opportunity for children to experience problems in their lives, and leads children to be defensive and become highly averse to uncertainty. The family role as a protector of its members from the hostile outside world has resulted in a lack of encouragement for teamwork activities (Tayeb, 1981).

Another reason for the existence of an individualistic culture is the Iranian formal education system, which can be described as a centralised system that works through the selection of loyal teachers, using the same text books for all students at all schools, and conducting special morning ceremonies in schools. In this system, learning is more based on memorising texts and theories, rather than on experimentation, a strategy that has resulted in less analytical thinking and less challenge to teachers and consequently, lack of active participation and discussion by students in classrooms (Tayeb, 1981). Therefore, Iranian employees, as the output of this education system, have not learned to challenge their superiors when they enter organisations; and conversely, managers do not expect to be questioned by their subordinates.

Another effect of the education system is the method of assessment at schools and universities. In Iranian education, academic work is mainly based on individual achievement rather than group work. As indicated earlier, Iran has a young population (over 70% of Iranians are under the age of 30), which is thirsty for skills development and higher education (Namazie, 2003). Thus, one of the most critical stages of life in Iran,

which shows the highest level of individualism in the education system, is the national central competition between students to enter the public universities, which are regarded as having a higher quality of education, compared to the private universities, and which moreover, are attractive because they do not charge tuition fees. For example, each year from more than one million candidates, only 10% can enter public universities. The rivalry is even greater for postgraduate courses, with limited places to be allocated based on competition among a huge number of individuals. As a result, there is little opportunity for individuals to develop collective action strategies during their education in schools and universities (Javidan and Dastmalchian 2003). This leads to the low level of intention towards team working by educated Iranian individuals, and this predisposition is intensified when they are employed in organisations with the same method of assessment in their appraisal and reward system, all of which is based on individual performance, rather than on teamwork results.

Another reason for the individualism prevalent in Iranian national culture can be seen as the government's role regarding the funding of public services by using the revenue of natural resources such as oil and gas, which has resulted in less participation of individuals in paying the costs of public services (e.g. paying taxes to the city councils). Individuals do not feel a sense of collective ownership of public services, because they pay almost no tax. This low sense of ownership increases individualism.

These features of the national culture, which are reinforced by the education system, affect Iranian organisational culture by institutionalising high power distance and marginalising teamwork. In terms of power distance, children are brought up to recognise the existence of a superior in their family ('the father at the top'), and to respect the teacher in school, and this carries through to organisational life where it is taken as natural for the manager to be superior and unchallenged. During their childhood and their education, children have not learned to question these superiors, and this outlook causes individuals to be less flexible and innovative in schools, universities, and organisations. In terms of team-working, because academic assessments at schools and universities, and reward and appraisal systems in organisations, are mostly based on individual efforts and achievements, people view team working as a threat to their personal success during their academic and organisational life.

Religion is another factor that has affected Iranian national culture. Of Iran's population, 99% are Muslim, and the rest are a minority of three other religions: Zoroastrian, Jewish,

and Christian. Islam, as the dominant religion of Iranian people, has the most important role in their society, because it covers all aspects of the social and personal life of individuals such as family structure right through to taxation policies and international relationships (Tayeb, 1981). Tayeb (1981) points out that religious beliefs and family structure have generally contributed to Iranians' attitudes towards power and authority, towards their own ability, and towards trust in others. For example, she believes that regarding power and authority, Islamic religious beliefs view God as the most powerful in the world, and a force to be obeyed. The parent-child relationship in Iran is 'the earthly model of God-man relationship' or a relationship between powerful and powerless. It leads to the parents' expectation of a child's respect and obedience in terms of carrying out the parents' decisions (Tayeb, 1981). This model of relationship emerges as the expectation of absolute submission to powerful managers in organisations.

In terms of attitudes towards one's ability, Tayeb (1981) states that it is only God who can recognise good from bad and can direct humans through his prophet, and his successors and religious leaders. Therefore, a good leader is required for Muslims to direct them towards God's direction. As individuals who know good and bad better than their children, and in order to direct their children in the best possible manner in their life, Iranian parents' expectation about children regarding their educational achievements is higher than the children's ability. It is very common in Iranian families to encourage their children to be the best in their class at school, through printing their photographs in newspapers, and giving prizes to them. These high expectations result in a feeling of inadequacy in children when they encounter a failure, and increase their dependence on their families for support.

Regarding the attitude toward trust in others, Tayeb (1981) mentions that it is only God who can be trusted, because God directs humans without any expectation in return, save submission. This results in reluctance by individuals to accept interpersonal relationships. Therefore, in the Iranian family, individuals view insiders as the faithful, and outsiders as those who cannot be trusted. Therefore, parents regard it as their responsibility to interfere in the most private affairs of their children to protect them from the hostile environment. Thus, there is no sense of co-operation, or positive intention towards teamwork activities. For example, Iranians are usually more successful in individual sports such as wrestling, Judo, and Karate, than in team sports such as Football.

The effects of religion on national values have affected organisational culture in Iran and have influenced the structural characteristics and management style of Iranian organisations (Tayeb, 1981).

Hosseini-Safa (1998) found different results from Hofstede's findings regarding the four indicators of organisational culture in Iranian organisations; and only power distance coincided with the results of the Hofstede study. In fact, when examining Hofstede's (1984) national culture dimensions, Namazie (2003) found Iran to be close to the boundaries of Western countries on most dimensions, but to differ on the collectivism and long-term orientation dimensions, suggesting that the effects of revolution and war, over two decades after Hofstede's original scores were drawn for Iran, have changed cultural predispositions in Iran. Indeed, some part of this change has been the result of what Iranian leaders called the 'Cultural Revolution', a movement aimed to guide pupils and students towards the Islamic and education culture. As part of this attempt to obtain a cultural shift, the Iranian leaders closed universities in 1980, considering these to be the principal means of sustaining culture, and a board was assigned by the revolutionary leader to guide the 'Cultural Revolution' in the education system through Islamic teachings. New books were published for schools and universities containing Islamic and revolutionary issues. After three years, universities re-opened, Islamic courses were introduced as compulsory studies for all students, and the number of religious ceremonies increased at both schools and universities.

Tayeb (1981) studied the effects of cultural values among the Iranian people in two stages before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. In the first stage, she measured organisationally-relevant values and attitudes of 62 members of an organisation, using a questionnaire on power distance, tolerance of ambiguity, commitment, and trust, and also by using documents and records to study centralisation, formalisation, and standardisation. In the second stage she involved 13 other organisations from different fields including: insurance, shipping, hospitals, manufacturing, universities, and distribution organisations. The study found that Iranian cultural values had influenced the structural characteristics and management style of the organisations studied, and their response to environmental demands. Her findings also suggest that the Iranian value system had resulted in a low range of structural forms and responses to the environment in the organisations studied.

Management style in Iran is influenced by Western culture (pre-1979), ancient Persian, and Islamic culture (Kiani and Latifi, 1995). Before the Islamic Revolution, Iran had a close

relationship with Western countries, and a Western style of management was imported to Iran via the two mechanisms of Iranian students who were educated in the West and acquired managerial positions in Iranian organisations, the huge number of Western experts (from Europe and US) who worked in Iran (Namazie, 2003). After the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian government emphasised the adoption of the Islamic style of management, underpinned by values such as justice, equality, and support, and protection of subordinates and workers. The other aspect of Iranian management style is the traditional and ancient culture, which is extremely culture specific and is affected by cultural factors such as hierarchies, family relationships, and nepotism (Namazie, 2003).

Management style in Iran is also affected by the family structure, as an important aspect of national culture. The Iranian family is characterised as paternalistic with 'the father at the top' (Tayeb, 1981), and the existence of the paternalistic family has resulted in a paternalistic organisational culture in most Iranian organisations (Bani-Asadi, 1984; Mortazavi and Karimi, 1990; Mortazavi and Salehi, 1992). In this paternalistic culture, subordinates regard their managers as compassionate fathers or caring brothers and sisters (Latifi, 1997). These attributes are important in terms of human resource aspects; for example, personnel expectations of their managers, and managers' perspectives during their planning and execution of human resource practices in Iranian organisations.

2.1.3 Iran, a Unique Persian Identity

The uniqueness of Iranian identity and religion (which situate Iran in the middle of most countries with regard to cultural variables) has a moderating effect on its national culture. Case studies are appropriate for studying unique factors, and Iran is unique regarding the subject of study, which is culture. Because of the difference between Shi'ite and Sunni regarding the interpretation of some social topics (e.g. women's role in society), Iran is also unique among other Muslim countries, which makes a difference in terms of organisational studies in Iranian culture. These elements of uniqueness (e.g. religion) moderate Iranian culture, putting Iran in a middle position with respect to other countries, and this makes it possible to generalise from Iranian case studies.

Iran has been described as having a unique geography, history and culture (Hiro, 2006). The Iranian identity is unique in terms of religion, language, and ethic, as the only non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim state in the Middle East (Cohan, 2001). There are some features that make Iranian culture different from other Muslim and Middle East countries.

For example, Iran is a Muslim Shi'ite country located in the Middle East and surrounded by Arab countries to the west and south; but because of its different culture from Arab and Middle East countries, in the GLOBE study Iran is recognised as a member of the South Asian cluster along with Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand (Javidan and Dastmalchian 2003). Among all other Islamic countries, Iran is unique, because it is a Shi'ite country, rather than a Sunni one (Cohan, 2001). Iran also has important differences from other countries such as Iraq, where the majority of the population is Shi'ite. For example, some Iraqi Shi'ites have only recently converted to Shi'ism, whereas the majority of Iranians have a long history of being Shi'ite. Because of the different development of religious faith in the two countries, Iraqi clerics did not have a powerful role in twentieth century politics, as did Iranian clerics (Cohan, 2001). The Iraqi Shi'ite beliefs have encapsulated the Arab tribal value system and are not permeated by it, but there is a strong link between pre-Islamic Persian values and Islamic Shi'ite values of Iranians (Cohan, 2001).

Another reason for the greater influence of Shi'ite clerics on Iranian national culture than Sunni clerics in other countries, is the higher number of religious rituals in Shi'ite culture. Iranians believe in 12 Shi'ite Imams after the prophet, and have special ceremonies in mosques and other community places on the occasions of both the birthdays and deaths of their Imams. As the main lecturers at those ceremonies, Iranian clerics have good opportunities to introduce Shi'ite culture and affect different social groups attending the events. One important aspect of this cultural education is the resistance against cruelty, which is taught by telling stories about the Imams and their resistance against cruel rulers of their age, and explaining the religious rationales behind their resistance. A visible characteristic of the Shi'ite viewpoint is that Shi'ite history is mostly described as having a position of anti-cruelty both in theory and practice. This feature is one of the most important factors that have increased the influence of the Shi'ite culture during its history (Jaafarian, 1996).

Another influential facet of the Shi'ite culture is the worship and personality of the Shi'ite religious leaders that created a position of respect for them in the public view (Jaafarian, 1996).

Religion has a moderating effect on Iranian culture; for example, Latifi (1997) found that Islamic traditions would place Iranians broadly on a middle point on power distance,

uncertainty avoidance, and individualism. Traditional merchants, known as 'Bazaari' have an important role in facilitating religious effects in this way via the financial support of religious clerics, who have a strong relationship with Bazaaries, which makes them independent from government financial support. Based on Islamic taxation rules, Bazaaries pay some amount of their annual income to high-level clerics or their representatives, to fund religious activities, and this arrangement helps clerics to spread religious values in Iranian society. Moreover, this relationship is expanded in social and political changes. For example, as a result of their relationship with religious clerics, Bazaaries had an important role in organising strikes and demonstrations that resulted in the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, and they supported the Iranian government financially during the war with Iraq.

The effect of Shi'ite culture on behaviour and attitudes differentiates Iranian society from other Muslim countries. For example, the religious effects on moderating power distance in Iranian culture have resulted in a lower masculinity index rating in Iran, compared to the other Muslim countries. Because of the different interpretation of women's role in society by Shi'ites, in Iran women are more equal with men. For example, contrary to the majority of Muslim countries (e.g. Sunni Arabic-speaking countries) where the formal place of women is limited to the family, Iran is characterised as a more feminine rather than masculine culture (Hofstede, 2001). Compared to their counterparts in Sunni Muslim countries, Iranian women have a different and more noticeable role in social and organisational activities. For example, in some Sunni Muslim countries women do not have the right to vote in elections, and are not allowed to drive cars or work in organisations; but in Iran, women have had an important role in societal changes (e.g. in demonstrations before the revolution) and a high percentage of employees in Iranian organisations and the education system are women. In fact, during the last five years (2002-2006) according to annual reports the number of women entering the public universities in Iran has been more than the number of men (peyksanjesh, 2006).

Another unique feature of Iran is its difference regarding subjugation by Western powers. Almost all of the major Islamic countries from Africa to Asia have experienced some form of European control; however, Iran has never been part of the Ottoman Empire as the Sunni-Islamic Empire, and has never been colonised by a European country (Cohan, 2001). As a result, contemporary Iranian culture has been less affected by Western culture compared to other Middle East and Muslim countries. One reason for this is that Shi'ite

Islam is more resistant than Sunni Islam regarding foreign influence. Iran has been described as “the most resistant of all non-European religions to European culture” (Cohan, 2001, p. 219).

A high feeling of nationalism is another reason for the resistance of Iranian culture. Regardless of their political aims, Iranians are normally very patriotic, and resist any threat towards their national interests. Although Iranian culture has been affected by other nations, and has similarly affected that of other nations, whenever there has been a debate regarding nationality, Iranians have resisted being absorbed into other nations. However, this nationalism has not led Iranians to be blind regarding the acceptance of ideas from other cultures. For example, since about 14 centuries ago Islam has become a part of Iranian life and has influenced everything, from literature, politics, law, and social aspects of the country (Motahari, 1998).

Iranian nationalism originated from mass mobilisation in the 20th century. Nationalisation of the oil was its first stage, which continued until the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and matured during the war with Iraq. There are two different forms of nationalism in Iran: religious and secular nationalism, each emphasising a specific section of Iranian society. Religious nationalism is rooted in the adoption of Shi’ism as the state religion in the 16th century, and is so deep that it is practically impossible to differentiate between Persian and Shi’ite identities. Even for secular Iranians, being Shi’ite is a part of their national identity (Ansari, 2003). Therefore, the term ‘secular’ in the Iranian context is different from its meaning in the West, where it is characterised as “tending towards atheism or agnosticism” (Ansari, 2003). In other words, Iranian secular nationalists view themselves as Shi’ite, but with a different interpretation from religious nationalists in terms of the specific role of religion in society, especially in politics. An example of the effect of nationalism on Iranians’ resistance in the national interests, was the huge number of signatures on an online petition established by an Iranian researcher in the US against the National Geography Organisation. The reason for the petition was that the National Geography Organisation had called the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Gulf in its publication. The petition resulted in the correction of that mistake by the organisation in its publications. In terms of organisational implications, nationalism can be viewed as a positive factor regarding the attitude and attachment of individuals to their organisation, as a result of their attachment to their country.

Iran consists of several ethnic groups including Turk, Kurd, Mazandarani, Baluch, Arab, and Lur peoples, each with a specific sub-culture, but the dominant culture is the Persian culture (Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003). However, from a culturalist view, organisational success depends on the extent of the match between its members' expectations and an organisation's culture and structure (Tayeb, 1998). Therefore, for organisations operating in each of the areas of Iran with a specific ethnic group and particular sub-culture, managers need to consider the dominant aspects of each sub-culture in dealing with human resource planning. For instance, in some areas, tribalism is a common feature of some ethnic groups, which leads individuals to be sensitive regarding out-group people (e.g. a manager from other ethnic groups).

According to the GLOBE Project (House et al, 2004), scores related to dimensions of culture for the Iranian sample are mostly around the average scores of the GLOBE, and also close to the average of clusters such as South Asian and Anglo countries. As a result, despite its unique features, Iranian culture is in the middle and therefore, Iran can be a good laboratory for countries of those clusters (e.g. US in the Anglo cluster, and Malaysia in the South Asia cluster).

2.1.4 Culture in Iranian Organisations

Most of the studies in the field of organisational culture in Iran have been conducted in the last decade of the 20th century in various organisations including service organisations, education organisations, industrial companies, public executive organisations, and other fields (e.g. sport, military, and research organisations). In 1997, Sadeghi (1997) studied the effect of organisational culture on job satisfaction in an Iranian auto company, finding a significant and positive relationship between organisational culture and job satisfaction. A year later, Hashemiyan (1998) in his research on a military organisation, and Torabikia (1998) in her research on academic staff in Tehran University, supported Sadeghi's results.

A few years previous, and based on Islamic values, Zareei-Matin (1995) developed an ideal model of organisational culture, which emphasised factors such as: abstinence of bad things for the sake of God, justice, loyalty to one's promise, honesty, trust in God, purity in intention and action, consultation, managerial support and leadership, feeling of responsibility, co-operation and reciprocal assistance, liberality, commitment to objectives, ingenuity and expertise, self-control, diligence, friendly and heartfelt relationships, good-temper, system of encouragement and appreciation, creativity and innovation, discipline,

and domination of regulations. Zareei-Matin (1995) found a significant difference between the existing organisational culture of executive organisations in the public sector and the ideal model. He also found that in those organisations with an organisational culture closer to the ideal model, job satisfaction was at a higher level.

Using the cross-national study of Hofstede (1980), Hosseini-Safa (1998) investigated the organisational culture of seven Iranian companies in different industries. She found different outcomes from Hofstede's results regarding four indicators of organisational culture, with only power distance confirming the outcomes of Hofstede's study.

Moradi (1998) studied the effect of organisational culture on the selection of management style of 85 managers in public organisations in the Ilam province of Iran. He found that organisational culture affects the selection of management style; and managers in the research population preferred an employee-oriented style of management.

An important common characteristic of all the studies mentioned is that they used a quantitative method, which can be regarded as a weakness, since the study of culture is complicated. Moreover, amongst these studies there has been none in the field of the relationship between knowledge management and organisational culture in Iran.

Therefore, it seems that during the last three decades, following the Islamic Revolution in Iran, there have been some changes in Iranian culture, which because of less contact between Iranian society and Western societies, is still unknown in some of its aspects, to Western researchers. Hence, there is much room for research to identify different aspects of Iranian culture that affect individual behaviour in the workplace. Although the GLOBE study (House et al, 2004) is an important effort in this respect, it has involved only the managerial level of Iranian organisations and for an inclusive study of Iranian culture, there is a need for a comprehensive sample of individuals from all existing ranks, especially representing the workers, who form the majority of the population in organisations.

In conclusion, features of Iranian national culture are likely to affect the organisational culture of Iranian organisations. For example, the strong tie with family and close friends in Iranian culture might lead to low personal trust between individuals at work given that such individuals are relative strangers, and also to the creation of networks between

managers and their friends, which is likely to lead to nepotism. The Iranian national culture of autocracy is likely to cause middle managers to disrespect their subordinates and respect the hierarchy. The paternalistic feature of Iranian culture (e.g. 'father at the top') might result in the emphasis being on the role of the person at the pinnacle of an organisation (e.g. CEO), rather than those in the middle; which can affect the way subordinates identify with high-level managers. The individualistic feature of Iranian national culture is expected to affect the workers' efforts to promote themselves, and to lead to fewer teamwork activities, and thus, to a higher potential for conflict in organisations. Altogether, the above-mentioned effects of Iranian national culture might influence the behaviour of individuals at different organisational levels, including shop floor workers and managers with varying degrees of authority.

2.2 Organisational Culture

Interest in the study of organisational culture as one of the two important metaphors for studying organisations (Morgan, 1998), originated from the suggestion made by Geertz (1973) that cultural studies should focus on the "native's point of view" (Brown, 1998, p. 4), and became fashionable in the 1980s. Since the 1990s, it has been a part of the research agenda in the field of business studies (Griffiths, 1997). Attention towards organisational culture was the result of a shift away from the studies of national cultures in the 1980s (Brown, 1998) that resulted in intellectual focusing on people in organisations and a hand-in-hand evolution with human resource management, so that some people view organisational culture as the territory of the human resource manager (Brown, 1998). Generally, researchers have used different methodological approaches (conceptual, quantitative, and qualitative) for culture studies at different levels of analysis (e.g. department, division, company, and country). There are three perspectives in organisational culture research: integration, differentiation, and fragmentation. The most common research perspective is the integration perspective that recognises organisational culture as something that is shared by all members in an organisation. This viewpoint assumes that the attributes of an organisational culture are "representative of both the organisation as a whole and also the individuals within the organisation" (Kwantes and Boglarsky, 2004, p. 336). In general, an explanation or definition of 'common variations of behaviour within organisations' is what researchers seek in this approach (Kwantes and Boglarsky, 2004; Martin, 1992, 2002).

The differentiation perspective accepts the existence of differences within organisations, consisting of a series of common characteristics that bring organisational sub-cultures

together (Martin, 1992). These sub-cultures are recognised as the existence of shared meanings, and are mostly regarded as being “under the umbrella of the organisational culture” (Alvesson, 2002).

Although consensus and shared meanings between sub-cultures in an organisation might occur, from this perspective, research focuses on where variations and contradictions in organisational cultures take place (Kwantes and Boglarsky, 2004). The fragmentation perspective suggests that shared meanings in organisations naturally tend to be short-lived, and revolve around issues rather than being raised from similarity in perspectives (Martin and Frost, 1999). From this perspective, individuals within an organisation can at the same time be part of several sub-cultures; this makes them transfer between different groups and the ideas, attitudes, and proper behaviours of each of them. Research from this perspective looks for the differences and ambiguities, and focuses on variations within organisational culture, finding and understanding multiple meanings in organisations (Martin, 1992).

2.2.1 Definition of Culture

The definitions employed for understanding organisations are important, because they influence the way of thinking about the referred to phenomena (Brown, 1998). The way culture is defined has considerable implications for the way in which it is examined and studied (Brown, 1998). Organisational culture is a unifying heading for a rich mixture of previous ideas and theories (Brown, 1998). For example, four schools of thought that have contributed to the study of organisational culture are: human relations, modern structural theory, systems theory, power and politics (Brown, 1998). The term ‘culture’ was introduced for the first time by Edward B. Tylor in 1841, and he defined culture as referring to “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Brown, 1998, p. 4). Central concepts of culture in different definitions include ideologies, a coherent set of beliefs, basic assumptions, a set of shared core values, important understandings; and the collective will, and the collective programming of the human mind (Sackmann, 1992); but the literature has focused more on cognitive components of culture such as assumptions, values, beliefs, or perspectives as the most important part of culture (Sackmann, 1992). Three layers of organisational culture are basic assumptions, values, and artefacts or overt behaviours (Brown, 1998; Schein, 1990). Assumptions and values are usually generated by the founder, cultivated by stories and myths, enacted and shaped by the organisation’s actual members, propagated by actual leaders, and taught to

newcomers (Martin, 1992; Schein, 1990). Organisational culture “ultimately reflects the group’s efforts to cope and learn and is the residue of learning processes” (Schein, 1992, p. 68). These learning processes are assumed to determine cognitive processes, out of which grow values that are enacted in behaviours, policies, and practices (Hofstede et al, 1990). As a result, cultural practices can be psychometrically measured, since they are represented in the cognitive schema of organisations’ members that guide their daily work practices.

Different people have defined organisational culture in different ways. Lack of consensus on organisational culture is rooted in the different definitions of culture. For example, there were 164 definitions of culture in 1952, and there are even more definitions of organisational culture that reflect very different understandings of culture (Brown, 1998). Culture has been described as “a learned pattern of behaviour that establishes behavioural norms and values that are shared throughout the organisation”, and its role is the same as “the glue that holds an organisation together as a source of identity and distinctive competence” (Parry, 2000). Van Muijen et al. (1992, p. 250) define organisational culture as “a set of core values, behavioural norms, artefacts and behavioural patterns which govern the way people in an organisation interact with each other and invest energy in their jobs and the organisation at large”. Organisational culture has also been defined as “relatively stable beliefs, attitudes, and values that are held in common among organisational members” (Williams et al, 1993, p. 11), and “shared normative beliefs and shared behavioural expectations” (Cooke and Szumal, 1993, 2000). Brown (1998, p. 9) defines organisational culture as “the pattern of beliefs, values and learned ways of coping with experience that have developed during the course of an organisation’s history, and which tend to be manifested in its material arrangements and in the behaviours of its members”.

Denison (1996, p. 654) declares that culture is “the deep structure of organisations, which is rooted in the values, beliefs and assumptions held by organisational members”, and House et al (2002; p. 5) define it as “shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events; common behaviours, institutional practices, proscriptions, and prescriptions, that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across generations”. Schein (1990, p. 111) defines organisational culture as “a pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore

is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems”.

Although there is no consensus in definitions, it is more common for organisational culture to be described in terms of ‘values, norms, and practices’ (De Long, 1997). Values indicate “what an organisation’s member believes is worth doing or having”. Norms are “the shared beliefs about how people in the organisation should behave”. Practices are “the formal or informal routines used in the organisation to accomplish work” (De Long, 1997, p. 6). Practices can also be labelled as “conventions, customs, habits, mores, traditions, and usage” (Hofstede, et al. 1990, p. 311). Almost every organisation has some core values and modal practices that are widely shared and expressed (Van Maanen and Barely, 1984; Chatman and Jehn, 1994). Values and practices are clearly expressed and understood by the majority of people identifying themselves with the culture (Martin, 1992). Griffiths (1997, p. 684) attributes culture as “something an organisation has rather than is” which “can be managed over time”. Values, norms and practices are used for defining organisational culture. There are at least two ways of viewing organisational culture: one is to view culture as a metaphor for what the organisation has. The other regards organisational culture as a set of behavioural and cognitive characteristics (Brown, 1998, p. 9). In order to avoid ambiguities created by different frameworks regarding the definition of culture, this study adopts the De Long (1997) definition of organisational culture as ‘values, norms, and practices’.

There do remain some important unanswered questions regarding culture, for example, is culture homogeneous or heterogeneous? Is it both? If both, what aspects are homogeneous and what aspects are heterogeneous? Another question is that if culture is formed of sub-cultures, where do they come from and what activates them to emerge? Organisations are purposive, and demonstrations of ideas in their practices are important, because comparing ideas and actual practices as perceived by others can provide precious information about the worldview of organisational members and the degree of its common features with the reality perception and experience of others (Sackmann, 1992). Therefore, in cultural studies, the interpretation of manifestations such as artefacts and behaviours is a source of data to be triangulated with information gathered about cognitive components.

There are two perspectives regarding the concepts of culture: functionalist and interpretative (cognitive). The interpretative (cognitive) perspective is particularly

interested in the mechanisms for collective sense-making. At the individual level, individuals employ their cognitive structure and structuring devices to recognise situations and to understand their perceptions.

Four important cognitive structuring devices (cognitions) include: the labels used for description or naming of things or events, the explanations about the structure of an event, lessons in the form of recipes and instructions for repair, and the basis for the causation of events (Sackmann, 1992). These four cognitions form an integrative and interconnected gestalt or a cognitive map for individuals. The difference between individual cognitions and cultural cognitions is that cultural cognitions are commonly held by a group of people in a given organisation. Cultural cognitions are rooted in the group and are independent of individual group members who are part of the culture. Based on four structuring devices, cultural cognitions accumulate in the form of four kinds of cultural knowledge: dictionary knowledge, directory knowledge, recipe knowledge, and axiomatic knowledge that together, as part of the core of culture, create a cognitive cultural map (Sackmann, 1992). Dictionary knowledge refers to the 'what is of situations' and their contents, and includes commonly held descriptions such as labels, sets of words or definitions that are used in a particular organisation. Dictionary knowledge replicates the semantics or signifiers that are gradually acquired step by step in a specific cultural setting. The same manifestation might signify different meanings in different cultural contexts; for example, holding and shaking your thumb high in British culture means appreciation, while in Iranian culture its meaning is offensive. Directory knowledge is descriptive and refers to the 'how is' of things and events; and commonly held practices and knowledge about chains of events and their cause and effect relationships. Recipe knowledge is closely related to the norms and expresses the 'shoulds' of certain actions and, based on judgements, refers to the prescriptions for repair and improvement strategies. Axiomatic knowledge refers to the 'why' things and events happen, and explains the final reasons perceived to trigger a particular event (Sackmann, 1992).

2.2.2 Typology of Organisational Culture

Although it is not possible to talk about all cultural typologies here, it is important to mention some of them because classification of cultures provides ideal models that can be used for examining actual organisations (Brown, 1998). Four main types of organisational culture are introduced as power culture, role culture, task culture, and person culture (Harrison, 1972). Power culture is described as having a single source of power, which is

spread through the rays of influence in the organisation, and it has a web structure. This culture is highly dependent on trust, empathy and personal communication, a low amount of rules, low level of bureaucracy and central control via key personnel and edict. The exercise of authority is based on resource power and charisma, and individuals perform their tasks with few questions asked.

Although power culture is able to react quickly, its success depends on the abilities of people at the centre. The amount of activities and the great geographical span can be a problem for this culture. Employees are viewed as 'political animals' and because of the use of power in this culture; they do not take risks with their job security (Brown, 1998). Role culture is bureaucracy, whose principles are logic and rationality, and which functions by specialities. Rules, procedures and job description dominate, and individuals are promoted based on their satisfactory performance. Authorities function on the basis of position power and expert power. The reaction of role culture regarding change is slow (Brown, 1998). In task culture, power is based on expertise rather than position or charisma and develops in organisations with specific job or team projects. This culture focuses on doing the job successfully, by bringing proper people and resources together (Brown, 1998). Organising principles include: flexibility, adaptability, individual autonomy, mutual respect based on individuals' ability, and constant innovation. The problem with task culture is that it is heavily dependent on the quality of individuals. When control is needed, this culture can quickly change into a role or power culture with rules and procedures or political influence, which results in a decline of morale (Brown, 1998). A personal culture develops as a result of a decision made by a group of people based on their own best interests to organise on a collective rather than an individual basis, for example, doctors and architects who band together and share the costs of office space, equipment, and secretarial assistance. This culture is characterised as having autonomy for the individual, shared influence, and expertise-based power (Brown, 1998).

2.2.3 Dimensions of Organisational Culture

In general, two groups of researchers have introduced dimensions for organisational culture, these being managerial theorists and cultural researchers. Managerial theorists (e.g. Gordon et al, 1991; Denison and Mishra, 1995; Cunha and Cooper, 2002) have usually focused on those dimensions of organisational culture that might be related to the organisations' performance; as a result, the number of dimensions of organisational culture found by managerial theorists are smaller, and look different from those found by cultural

researchers (e.g. Hofstede, 1990; O'Reilly, 1989; Chatman and Jehn, 1994; House et al, 2002). As cultural researchers, Hofstede et al. (1990) studied 1,250 middle managers of 20 firms and introduced six dimensions of culture. Chatman and Jehn (1994) studied 1,121 middle managers of 22 firms in the service industry and found seven cultural dimensions, which were introduced in previous research (O'Reilly, 1989). Table 2-1 contains a brief summary of the cultural dimensions.

The latest and the most comprehensive work in the field of cultural dimensions is the GLOBE project (House et al. 2004), which investigated 17,000 middle managers in 951 firms in telecommunications, food processing, and finance industries, in 62 countries and which introduced nine dimensions representing firms' cultural practices. These nine dimensions considerably overlap with dimensions introduced by previous researchers (Hofstede et al, 1990; Chatman and Jehn, 1994), but two dimensions (gender egalitarianism and institutional collectivism) are not displayed in the two previous taxonomies. GLOBE dimensions are defined as the following (House et al, 2002, p. 5):

1. Uncertainty avoidance is defined as “the extent to which members of an organisation or society strive to avoid uncertainty by reliance on social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices to alleviate the unpredictability of future events”.
2. Future orientation is “the degree to which individuals in organisations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviours such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying gratification”.
3. Power distance is defined as “the degree to which members of an organisation or society expect and agree that power should be unequally shared”.
4. Group collectivism “reflects the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organisations or families”.
5. Institutional (societal) collectivism “reflects the degree to which organisational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action”.
6. Performance orientation refers to “the extent to which an organisation or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence”.
7. Humane orientation is “the degree to which individuals in organisations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others”.
8. Assertiveness is “the degree to which individuals in the organisations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationship”.

9. Gender egalitarianism is “the extent to which an organisation or a society minimizes gender role differences and gender discrimination”.

Table 2-1: Dimensions of culture

Author (s)	Culture dimensions
Gordon and Di Tomaso (1991)	Stability, adaptability, and strength
Denison and Mishra (1995)	Adaptability, mission, involvement, and consistency
Cunha and Cooper (2002)	Organisational orientation, performance orientation, people orientation, and market orientation
Hofstede et al (1990)	Open system vs. closed system, normative vs. pragmatic, loose control vs. tight control, parochial vs. professional, process-oriented vs. result oriented, and employee-oriented vs. job-oriented
O'Reilly (1989); Chatman and Jehn (1994)	Stability, detail orientation, innovation, team orientation, outcome orientation, respect for people, and aggressiveness
GLOBE project (House et al, 2004)	Uncertainty avoidance, future orientation, power distance, group collectivism, institutional collectivism, performance orientation, humane orientation, assertiveness, and gender egalitarianism

According to Table 2-3, when compared to the mean of the GLOBE Project (House et al, 2004), Iranian culture is high in inter-group collectivism (6.03), power distance (5.43), and performance orientation (4.58); but low in institutional collectivism (3.88), and gender egalitarianism (2.99). Also compared to the mean of the GLOBE Project, Iranian culture is around the mean for the other dimensions such as humane orientation (4.23), and assertiveness (4.04), future orientation (3.70), and uncertainty avoidance (3.67).

Table 2-2: Comparison between the cultural dimensions of Iran and Western countries

SP = Society practice SV = Society values

The number in each box is the average of scores out of 7

Cultural dimension	Iran	USA	Canada	England	France
Performance Orientation (SP)	4.58	4.49	4.49	4.08	4.11
Performance Orientation (SV)	6.08	6.14	6.15	5.90	5.56
Future Orientation (SP)	3.70	4.15	4.44	4.28	3.48
Future Orientation (SV)	5.84	5.31	5.35	5.06	4.96
Gender Egalitarianism (SP)	2.99	3.34	3.70	3.67	3.64
Gender Egalitarianism (SV)	3.75	5.06	5.11	5.17	4.40
Assertiveness (SP)	4.04	4.55	4.05	4.15	4.13
Assertiveness (SV)	4.99	4.32	4.15	3.70	3.38
Institutional collectivism (SP)	3.88	4.20	4.38	4.27	3.93
Institutional collectivism (SV)	5.54	4.17	4.17	4.31	4.86
In-Group collectivism (SP)	6.03	4.25	4.26	4.08	4.37
In-Group collectivism (SV)	5.86	5.77	5.97	5.55	5.42
Power Distance (SP)	5.43	4.88	4.82	5.15	5.28
Power Distance (SV)	2.80	2.85	2.70	2.80	2.76
Humane Orientation (SP)	4.23	4.17	4.49	3.72	3.40
Humane Orientation (SV)	5.61	5.53	5.64	5.43	5.67
Uncertainty Avoidance (SP)	3.67	4.15	4.58	4.65	4.43
Uncertainty Avoidance (SV)	5.36	4.00	3.75	4.11	4.26

Higher scores indicate greater performance orientation, future orientation, assertiveness, in-group collectivism, institutional collectivism, power distance, humane orientation, uncertainty avoidance.

For gender egalitarianism, lower scores indicate greater male domination.

Table 2-3: Comparison between the cultural dimensions of Iran and the mean of some clusters in the GLOBE Project

Cultural dimension	Iran	GLOBE Project (Mean)	Desert cluster (Mean)	South Asia (Mean)	Anglo countries (Mean)
Performance Orientation (SP)	4.58	4.10	4.02	4.33	4.37
Performance Orientation (SV)	6.08	5.94	5.84	5.99	6.03
Future Orientation (SP)	3.70	3.58	3.18	3.98	4.08
Future Orientation (SV)	5.84	5.48	5.66	5.86	5.33
Gender Egalitarianism (SP)	2.99	3.37	3.31	3.28	3.40
Gender Egalitarianism (SV)	3.75	4.51	4.14	4.10	4.91
Assertiveness (SP)	4.04	4.14	3.75	4.65	3.89
Assertiveness (SV)	4.99	3.82	4.20	3.86	4.14
Institutional collectivism (SP)	3.88	4.25		4.35	4.46
Institutional collectivism (SV)	5.54	4.72		5.03	4.32
In-Group collectivism (SP)	6.03	5.13		5.87	4.30
In-Group collectivism (SV)	5.86	5.66		5.77	5.84
Power Distance (SP)	5.43	5.17		3.77	4.23
Power Distance (SV)	2.80	2.75		2.78	3.31
Humane Orientation (SP)	4.23	4.09	4.15	4.71	4.20
Humane Orientation (SV)	5.61	5.42			
Uncertainty Avoidance (SP)	3.67	4.16	4.02	4.10	4.42
Uncertainty Avoidance (SV)	5.36	4.62	4.78	5.16	4.09

Source: House, et al (2004), Culture, leadership, and organizations [GLOBE Project]

The common problem regarding the generalisability of the above-mentioned dimensions and their results, is that some of them (Hofstede et al, 1990; Chatman and Jehn, 1994; House et al, 2004 [GLOBE project]) have studied middle managers as their samples; meanwhile it is argued in this study that a sample of middle managers can not be a comprehensive representation of all the members of the organisation. For example, the majority of members in the organisations are subordinates, and excluding them from data collection in the research can reduce the value of results. Therefore, to identify proper dimensions of organisational culture, the sample must include all ranks in the organisation from shop-floor workers to high-level managers. Also in some studies, data from different periods of time have been used for the analysis. For example, the finding of Denison and Mishra (1995) regarding the correlation between cultural dimensions and previous performance of an organisation, can be interpreted that culture is predicted by performance. In the other case, Gordon and Di Tomaso (1991) correlated cultural dimensions with the firm's performance measured in the five years after culture was measured. Their findings are ambiguous, because they found a positive and significant correlation for some years and no significant correlation for other years. Therefore, because culture might change over time, using data from two different periods of time can be problematic for cultural studies.

2.2.4 The Effect of Organisational Culture on Knowledge Sharing

Organisational culture, as a complex issue in organisations (Sackmann, 1992) is the expression of the past and the memory of organisations, which shapes the present and transfers the organisation's past into future (Iivonen, 2004). The role of culture is important for the success of a knowledge management effort, and also can be the key inhibitor of effective knowledge-sharing (McDermott and O'Dell, 2001). Organisational culture has been posited as the main barrier to the success of knowledge management initiatives. A supportive one can enable the successful implementation of knowledge management technology initiatives (Park, et al. 2004). Organisational culture is important because, as several researchers have shown, it determines both individual and collective behaviour in the organisation. O'Dell and Grayson (1998) identify culture as one of the four major enablers of knowledge transfer alongside infrastructure, technology, and measurement. Managers' perceptions of the existing organisational culture in their workplace are the key determinants of their work attitudes, and as noted by Subramaniam and Ashkanasy (2001, p.36) they are an important basis for understanding their decisions and behaviour at work. Indeed, some researchers have named organisational culture "the

water in the fishbowl of any business”; suggesting that employees are immersed in it, live in it, but are unconscious of it (Featherly, 2005, p. 25). There is a consensus among scholars and practitioners that, for the success of knowledge management initiatives, organisational culture must support knowledge sharing in organisations (Park, et al, 2004), but for many companies, it is hard to shift to a sharing and collaboration culture. Culture is often considered as the foundation of behaviour and centre of human factors in an organisation that has a deep impact on shaping the organisation. Despite this importance, there is a lack of research into the effect of organisational culture on the behaviour of people in organisations (Goodman et al. 2001), especially behaviours related to knowledge sharing.

O'Reilly, et al (1991) developed the original version of the Organisational Culture Profile that includes a number of measures of organisational culture, and has been used in some previous studies. A study of companies with a knowledge-sharing culture found that they did not change their culture to match their knowledge management initiatives, but rather modified their knowledge management approaches to fit their culture (Mc Dermott, and O'Dell, 2001). This result could not be generalised because in the long term, culture can be changed in order to transform the organisation; for example, in the situation of merging two companies. Overlooking the critical importance of the organisational culture on organisational issues is the reason for failed attempts toward changes in organisations. “To transform current culture to a desired culture, we need to understand the current culture, but because of its elusive nature it is difficult to do so” (Goodman et al, 2001, p. 58). Skyrme (2002) has suggested three important Cs of knowledge sharing, these being Culture, Challenging through co-opetition (a blend of co-operation and competition), and Commitment to knowledge sharing throughout the organisation. He suggests that changing organisational culture is never easy and takes time, but is possible, and indicates some activities that can assist a culture shift, and support knowledge sharing. These include a culture audit, challenging improper hoarding behaviour, involvement of employees' knowledge in decision-making, publicising knowledge-sharing people, and reallocating them in the organisation units. To encourage knowledge-sharing behaviour in the organisation, Skyrme (2002) also suggests rewards and recognition, using psychologists and behavioural experts in the organisation, and changing some superiors who behave improperly in the context of knowledge sharing.

De Long (1997), discussed four ways in which organisational culture influences behaviours in relation to knowledge creation, sharing, and use: shaping individual assumptions about what knowledge is, affecting relationships between individuals who are important for knowledge sharing, creating a context for social interaction, and affecting the processes in the organisation. On the basis of an extensive analysis of 88,000 responses to a survey questionnaire of IBM employees in 66 countries, Hofstede (1980) concluded there were four dimensions of culture: namely individualism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity. However, there are always sub-cultures in organisations, which are sometimes different from the organisation as a whole, and sometimes in opposition to it. Even in organisations that strongly support sharing knowledge, sub-cultures have been found that were more and less supportive (Mc Dermott, and O'Dell, 2001).

In this study, the focus is on organisational culture as a whole, and its effect on knowledge-sharing behaviour in the two case organisations, rather than on sub-cultures. Some researchers have found that organisational culture affects employees' knowledge-sharing and work-related behaviour between organisational departments (Stoddart, 2001; Chow et al, 2000; Chow et al, 1999a; Chow et al, 1999b; Hofstede, 1998; De Long, 1997; Holmes and Marsden, 1996). Chow et al. (1999) studied cultural influences on informal information sharing in Chinese and Anglo-American organisations, and identified several systematic differences in the factors underlying information-sharing behaviour in Taiwan and Australia. McDermott and O'Dell (2001) have found that overcoming 'cultural barriers' to knowledge sharing relies more on the method of designing and implementing knowledge management efforts than on changing organisational culture, requiring a balance between the visible and invisible dimensions of culture. For example, it needs a visible demonstration of the importance of sharing knowledge and at the same time must build on the invisible core values.

Studies have found a relationship between organisational culture and knowledge management activities. For example, Gruber (2000) studied the culture of knowledge sharing in the R&D department of a high-tech firm, by conducting in-depth interviews with 29 individuals. He identified five factors of organisational culture that influence the construct 'culture of sharing knowledge'. These five factors are: openness, trust, availability and use of communication channels, top management support of knowledge sharing, and a reward system linked to knowledge sharing. He also found the reward system in the organisation to be a key element of a culture, which supports knowledge

sharing. Ruppel and Harrington (2001) found that intranet implementation, as a facilitator of knowledge sharing is assisted by an ethical culture that emphasises an environment of trust and concern for other people, and also by a developmental culture featuring flexibility and innovation, and by a hierarchical culture with policies, procedures, and information management. McKinnon et al (2003) studied organisational culture in a manufacturing company in Taiwan using survey questionnaires for data collection from 996 employees. They found a strong relationship between organisational culture dimensions (respect for people, innovation, and stability) and affective commitment, job satisfaction, and information sharing. They also found that the organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and information sharing were higher when there was a closer fit between an individual's preferred and perceived organisational culture. This finding is important for knowledge sharing, because it takes the association of organisational culture to the behavioural outcome of knowledge sharing. Park, et al (2004) studied the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge management technology. Data was collected from 26 US organisations from different industries including: consulting, software development, manufacturing, government, education, IT and Telecommunications, financial, banking, and accounting. They found a positive correlation between the successful implementation of knowledge management technology and cultural attributes such as trust, sharing information freely, working closely with others or developing friends at work.

Little empirical research has been conducted to define the key organisational culture attributes that support more effective application of knowledge management (Park, et al, 2004). Due to the increasing importance of organisational culture and knowledge sharing, studies have suggested further research, especially empirical research in those fields (Bock and Kim, 2002; Chow et al, 2000; Chow et al, 1999; Lachman, 1985; Park et al, 2004). It is important to note that there is no evidence about studying the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing in Iranian companies. The main reason is that knowledge management is not common in Iran, especially in companies; and cultural studies in Iranian organisations have focused more on the effect of organisational culture on issues such as job satisfaction, management style, and performance (Zareei-Matin, 1995; Sadeghi, 1997; Hashemiyan, 1998; Torabikia, 1998; Hosseini-Safa, 1998; Moradi, 1998).

In this study it is assumed that values, norms, and practices are elements of organisational culture, which affect knowledge-sharing behaviour. Some cultural factors including trust,

status and reward, and intolerance for mistakes, affect (negatively or positively) knowledge-sharing behaviour (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Previous studies in the field of knowledge sharing have been undertaken in the context of Japanese, East Asian, and Western companies, and because of the lack of research in the field of knowledge sharing in Iranian companies, the current study is the first in Iran to explore the relationship between culture and knowledge sharing in Iranian companies.

2.2.5 Four Dimensions of Organisational Culture

Based on two earlier frameworks of organisational culture (Harrison, 1972; Cooper, 1988), Cunha and Cooper (2002) have developed four cultural dimensions: organisational orientation, performance orientation, people orientation, and market orientation. Characteristics of the organisational orientation dimension include openness of internal communication and co-operation between individuals and units. Clear rules and regulations, objectives for jobs, information exchange, and internal co-operation between individuals and units, are characteristics of this culture. Responsibility for meeting objectives and results, and a merit reward system, are dimensions of the performance orientation, and team working, reward system, performance evaluation are characteristics of this dimension. People orientation reflects the extent of organisational concern for its members and their development, individual feelings of belonging to a team, and power distance. Criticisability of management, concern for personal problems, and concern for personal development are factors, which reflect the people orientation dimension. Market orientation reveals the responsiveness of an organisation to market opportunities and threats. Market development, product development, and concern about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats involving the market, are factors related to this dimension. This model has not previously been used in research on organisational culture in Iranian companies, and is being adopted as the basis for the interview structure in the current study for the first time.

2.2.6 Organisational Culture in the Public and Private Sectors

Before starting to discuss the differences between the public and the private sector, it should be recognised that it is possible that some reported differences between these two sectors may not be the result of differences in ownership, but rather the result of differences in functional or task environments of the studied companies (Lachman, 1985). Public and private sector organisations have different responsibilities and restrictions and

therefore, usually display different types of culture (Parry, 2000). The public sector has more social interest while the private sector is geared more toward profit and self-interest in goal setting. This basic difference leads to variations in the organisational environment, internal structure, and in the management process between the public and private sectors. However, some studies have shown lower market exposure and formal constraints as characteristics of the public sector (Lachman, 1985). Public sector organisations are different from private sector organisations on a number of dimensions including the diversity of their goals, access to resources, attitude toward risk, discretionary authority, flexibility, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and the nature of organisational restrictions, which are economic in the private sector versus political and formal in the public sector. Some authors describe the characteristics of private organisations as having market controls such as competition, consumer constraints, and shareholder interests, and attribute public organisations as having political authority, political activities, and being constrained by legislation (Parker and Bradley, 2000; Lachman, 1985). The public sector is usually a political sector and managerial teams in public companies change when political changes occur at the government level. Therefore, stability of management in private companies is greater than in public companies.

It has been confirmed that the values of founders and key leaders of private companies shape organisational culture, and organisational culture affects employees through practices (Hofstede et al, 1990). Some authors believe that the organisational culture of private companies may be expected to change over time (Cunha and Cooper, 2002). Parker and Bradley (2000) conducted research on the organisational culture in six Australian companies in the Queensland public sector. They used the competing values framework of organisational culture to publish a survey instrument that used a mail-out survey to collect data from 530 managers, and analysed 191 questionnaire responses, finding that the traditional hierarchical model of public administration was dominant within the cultural framework of the majority of organisations (four of the six departments). This result means that changing organisational culture is difficult. Griffiths (1997) suggests that it is possible that culture is at its strongest level in owner-controlled businesses. Cunha and Cooper (2002) studied the effect of the change processes from public to private on the organisational culture of three companies in the cement and paper pulp industries in Portugal. Based on the framework of previous work (Harrison, 1972; Cooper, 1988), they developed and used a postal questionnaire to assess four dimensions of organisational culture: organisational integration, performance orientation, people orientation, and market

orientation. They collected data from 296 employees before and after privatisation of the companies. The results confirmed that after privatisation, companies tend to develop a different organisational culture, with stronger emphasis on organisational integration, performance orientation, and people orientation. No significant differences were found between private and public companies in their market orientation. Whilst the study has a major weakness in terms of its small sample size (5.1% of population, 296 out of 5,800) which reduces the generalisation of the results, the replication of its framework would be useful in different areas of industry and in different countries. The use of postal questionnaires is often the reason for small samples. However, using questionnaires as a valid method to collect quantitative measures of organisational culture has been confirmed in previous research (Hofstede et al, 1990). Nowadays, the Iranian government is pursuing privatisation of public companies, especially in the manufacturing sector. Hence, the results of this research may be useful in providing some suggestions about differences in the organisational culture of public and private sector enterprises, and involving these differences in the change process plan from public to private. There remains a limited empirical understanding of the organisational culture in public and private companies, and further research has been suggested into the differences (Parker and Bradley 2000).

2.3 Knowledge Sharing

Varying interpretations of knowledge management and cultural issues have been articulated by scholars. For example, at least 25 different frameworks of knowledge management have been introduced (Liebowitz, 2003). In this section, some key terms associated with knowledge sharing are defined.

2.3.1 Definition

Knowledge is defined differently according to the context, but for this study, knowledge is considered within an organisational context. In this respect, knowledge is defined as “actionable information” (McFadden, 1999, pp.4-5) or “information in action” (O’Dell and Grayson, 1998, p. 5). It has also been defined as “a dynamic human process of justifying personal belief toward the truth” (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995, p. 58). Davenport and Prusak (1998, p. 5) define knowledge as “A fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information”. In this study, it is defined as ‘actionable information and experience of organisational members’.

2.3.1.1 Types of Knowledge

There is a dichotomous conceptualisation of knowledge. For example, Davenport and Prusak (1998) articulated it in two levels of viscosity: 'low viscosity and high viscosity'. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) introduced tacit knowledge, and explicit knowledge. Some authors have used different words such as 'knowing that' and 'knowing how' (Kogut and Zander, 1992), articulable and observable knowledge (Winter, 1987), codifiable and complex knowledge (Rogers, 1980). In the current research there is no emphasis on any difference between these kinds of knowledge, rather any kind of knowledge which is being shared by employees in organisations, is included. Here it is necessary to consider this in relation to Knowledge Management (KM), because the understanding of knowledge sharing adopted in this study, is one where it is a process of knowledge management. Based on different frameworks, KM has been described in many ways, but a common definition is that it is "a system that gives workers easy access to company information, which then encourages that information to be turned into knowledge" (Choy, 2002, p. 1). Despite varied definitions, there are basically the four processes of knowledge creation, knowledge organisation, knowledge distribution, and knowledge application are most frequently used (Alavi, 1997). In this study, the definition of O'Dell and Grayson (1998, p. 6) who defined KM as "a strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and helping them to share and put information into action to improve organisational performance" is adopted. What KM should achieve is a dynamic management of the process of creating knowledge out of knowledge (Davenport et al, 1998), and knowledge sharing is vital in this case. The cultural aspect of knowledge management is one of the sub-sets of the human/organisational aspect (p. 98) investigated in this research study. Knowledge management experts believe that the social aspect of knowledge management is 80% to 90% and the technological aspect is 20% or less (Liebwitz, 2003). Thus it is crucial to investigate culture and knowledge-sharing behaviour as two social topics of knowledge management in the organisation.

2.3.1.2 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing has also been defined in different ways. Skyrme (1999) explains it as a kind of knowledge development cycle. In the knowledge sharing cycle there are eight processes: identify, collect, classify, organise/store, share/disseminate, access, use/exploit, and generate (p. 61-62). This definition appears to be ambiguous because it defines knowledge sharing in isolation, whereas a common characteristic of different definitions is

the transfer of knowledge from owner to receiver, both of which may be an individual, group, or organisation. Therefore, in this study, knowledge sharing is conceived as “the activity of transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person, group or organisation to another” (Lee, 2001, p. 324). Three types of knowledge sharing have been introduced (Huysman, and de Wit, 2003, pp. 31-32). The first is knowledge sharing from the organisation to the individual, and is called knowledge retrieval. The second is knowledge exchange, which means “knowledge sharing from an individual to other individuals, and has the purpose of exchanging existing individual knowledge”. The third type is knowledge creation through knowledge sharing among individuals with the purpose of generating new knowledge. This research study focuses on the individual level in terms of knowledge-sharing behaviour in the organisation. Although people share knowledge without having a formal knowledge management system, in formal and academic terms, knowledge sharing is perceived to be the most essential process of knowledge management (Bock and Kim. 2002). This importance has two different features from a managerial viewpoint. The first is to encourage people to share knowledge that supports performance positively in the organisation. The second is to constrain sharing the kind of knowledge that is harmful and would affect organisational performance negatively. However, although creating a culture that encourages useful knowledge sharing through a human network is vital in organisations, it is the hardest task facing organisations (Geraint 1998). Effective knowledge sharing between organisational members leads to reducing redundancy in knowledge production, securing diffusion of best practices, and enables problem-solving in organisations (Husted and Michailova, 2002).

2.3.2 The Nature of Knowledge-Sharing Behaviour

There are different viewpoints about knowledge-sharing behaviour which some call natural and others unnatural. Davenport (1997, p. 189) for example argues that “sharing knowledge is often unnatural”, and people will not share their knowledge, because they think it is important and valuable. On the contrary, Skyrme (2002) calls knowledge sharing a natural tendency of knowledgeable people. He also declares that knowledge sharing is natural in some organisations, and unnatural in other organisations, which have been affected by the motto ‘Knowledge is power’. Nevertheless, he adds that this is not the primary reason for a lack of knowledge sharing. It remains the case that in today’s organisations, work is dependent on so much teamwork and collective knowledge that this motto is no longer applicable. Therefore, rather than just encouraging people to share knowledge, it seems to be a prior step to identify the affective factors involved in

knowledge-sharing behaviour (McDermott and O'Dell, 2001). Based on the current situation, each cultural factor (e.g. trust) has two different effects on knowledge sharing. If an individual who is a knowledge transmitter trusts the receiver, this facilitates and increases knowledge sharing, and if not, it inhibits it.

2.3.3 The Importance of Knowledge Sharing

Senior knowledge management practitioners have described motivating individuals to share knowledge as one of their most important priorities (King, 2006). Although some people believe that knowledge is power, it seems that knowledge does not have power in itself, but that it is what individuals share about what they know that gives them power (Mc Dermott and O'Dell, 2001). If we imagine valuable knowledge in the minds of people as being like gold in a box, its value would be revealed when the owner shares it, as well as when the owner of the gold opens the box to show the value of its contents. Two different approaches to motivating knowledge sharing are 'supervisory control' and 'organisational support'. In supervisory control, employees are monitored and observed closely and they are routinely monitored through compulsory meetings and deadlines, which are used by management to ensure that employees are working in the best interests of the company. In the organisational support approach, a foundation is provided to assess the factors that influence individuals to share their knowledge through a knowledge management system (King, 2006). King (2006) in his study of a public (joint civilian and military) organisation, found a stronger relationship between supervisory control and two variables of knowledge sharing (sharing frequency and sharing effort) than the relationship between organisational support and the same two sharing variables (frequency and effort). He also concluded that user perceptions about the usefulness and ease of use of the knowledge management system were the second most important element in promoting knowledge sharing through a knowledge management system. This finding demonstrates that the theory that emphasises the importance of a knowledge sharing culture might not be valid in some types of organisations such as military organisations that have a top-down commanding culture. The role of knowledge sharing in knowledge management is so important that some people have declared that "knowledge management is about the support of knowledge sharing" (Huysman and de Wit, 2000; Davenport et al. 1998, quoted in Hlupic, et al. 2002, p. 93). As an essential process of knowledge management, knowledge sharing is important in order to reduce cost, enhance performance, improve customer service, reduce the development time for products, reduce the delivery delay of products, and reduce the cost associated with finding and accessing different types of valuable knowledge in the

organisation (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Skyrme, 2002; Dyer and Nobeoka, 2000). It has been reported that in the Ford Company the development time for cars was reduced from 36 to 24 months simply by sharing knowledge, and through knowledge sharing with dealers, the delivery delay reduced from 50 to 15 days (Alavi and Leidner, 2001). This claim seems to be doubtful in terms of limiting the reduction of the development time and the delivery delay as the result only of knowledge sharing, and it is arguable that there may have been other factors that affected these time reductions and which have not been recognised in the research. Additionally this statement is based on other research, rather than on the research results from the study conducted by Alavi and Leidner (2001). Thus, we cannot be sure whether this is personal interpretation or the result of empirical efforts. The Toyota Company, as a pioneer in the auto industry, used a high performance knowledge-sharing network to solve fundamental dilemmas with regard to knowledge sharing, including motivating members to openly share valuable knowledge, and reducing the cost associated with finding and accessing different types of valuable knowledge (Dyer and Nobeoka, 2000).

2.3.4 Knowledge Sharing Barriers

There are some barriers that constrain knowledge sharing in an organisation (Huysman and de Wit, 2002; Skyrme, 2002). Firstly, lack of trust in the context of the mis-application of knowledge affects the willingness of knowledge owners to share their knowledge. The second barrier is lack of awareness of the usefulness of particular knowledge by its owner. This means that an individual may have knowledge used in one situation, but be unaware that other people may be able to use that knowledge at other times and in other places or circumstances. Lack of time to share knowledge has been introduced as another barrier, but some people (e.g. Skyrme, 2002) suspect it is a major reason for low knowledge sharing. Other obstacles to knowledge sharing include relinquishing knowledge as power, solitariness of knowledge, individualism, functional silos, inadequate technology (e.g. Intranet), internal competition, and top-down decision-making. Due to product complexity and uncertainty in the auto industry, there is a high value related to knowledge sharing in this context (Dyer and Chu, 2003).

Using the previous literature, Riege (2005) has classified potential barriers to knowledge sharing into three groups: individual barriers, organisational barriers, and technological barriers. Individual barriers consist of lack of time to share knowledge, fear of reducing job security, low awareness of the value and benefit of possessed knowledge, dominance in

sharing explicit knowledge over tacit knowledge, formal relationship and position-based status, insufficient tolerance of mistakes, difference in experience levels of individuals, lack of contact between the sources and recipients of knowledge, and poor communication (e.g. verbal or written). Other individual barriers include differences in age, gender, education, lack of social network and trust in people, lack of trust in accuracy and credibility of knowledge source, and differences in national culture, ethnic background and its associated values and beliefs (Riege, 2005).

Potential organisational barriers include lack of integration between KM strategy and the company's goals and strategies, lack of leadership in terms of benefits and values of knowledge sharing, lack of formal or informal spaces for sharing and generating new knowledge, lack of a motivating reward system, and lack of sufficient support by the existing organisational culture for knowledge sharing. Other organisational barriers comprise lack of proper infrastructure supporting sharing, high level of rivalry between departments, restriction of knowledge flow direction (e.g. top-down), improper layout of work environment, hierarchical organisation structure, and size of business units that is not small and manageable enough to facilitate sharing (Riege, 2005).

The existence of necessary interactions between people and technology facilitates sharing practices (Davenport, 1996). Potential technology barriers to knowledge sharing include lack of integrated IT system, lack of internal or external technical support for existing IT systems, unrealistic expectations of employees regarding the abilities of technology, lack of compatibility between diverse IT systems and processes, and mismatch between individuals' needs and IT systems and processes. Some other technological barriers comprise individuals' reluctance to use IT because of lack of familiarity and experience with IT, lack of IT training, and lack of demonstration of advantages of new systems over existing ones (Riege, 2005).

2.3.5 The Knowledge-based Theory

The resource-based theory of the firm views the transferability of the firm's resources and capabilities as a critical determinant of competitive advantage (Barney, 1986). As an outcome of the resource-based view, knowledge-based theory focuses upon knowledge as the most strategically important resource of firms. Defining knowledge as "that which is known", a fundamental assumption of this theory is that "knowledge creation is an individual activity" (not an organisational one), that individuals are the primary actors in knowledge creation and the main repository of knowledge, and that firms are the integrator

(not creator) of the existing specialist knowledge of multiple individuals for producing goods and services (Grant, 1996, p. 112). This suggests that the primary task of management is establishing the co-ordination necessary for knowledge integration, and it views organisational capability as the outcome of knowledge integration; e.g. in production firms, knowledge is the critical input and the primary source of value; and all human productivity is knowledge-dependent, and machines are embodiments of knowledge. This theory views the ability to transfer and aggregate knowledge as a key determinant of the optimal location of decision-making authority within the firm (Grant, 1996). Knowledge-based theory has introduced four mechanisms for integrating specialised knowledge: rules and directives, sequencing, routines, and group problem-solving and decision-making. This theory believes that efficiency in organisations is associated with maximising the use of those mechanisms that economise on communication and knowledge transfer. Additionally, it points out that different types of common knowledge (those elements of knowledge common to all organisational members) affect knowledge integration in firms differently. Types of common knowledge comprise language, other forms of symbolic communication, commonality of specialised knowledge, shared meaning, and recognition of individual knowledge domains. Regarding the internal structure of firms, this theory has implications for hierarchy and the location of decision-making. Compared to the traditional bureaucratic systems that are associated with top-down organisational hierarchies and rely heavily upon rules and directives as vehicles for the exercise of authority, in the knowledge-based view, rules and directives exist to facilitate knowledge integration, and their source is specialist expertise, which is distributed throughout the organisation. The knowledge-based view suggests that hierarchy diminishes the quality of higher-level decision-making, because higher-level decisions are typically reliant upon lower-level knowledge; therefore it suggests horizontal and team-based structures for organisations. Regarding decision-making, this theory challenges the theoretical foundations of the shareholder value approach. This is because of linkage between decision right and ownership, and because knowledge which is the primary productive resource of the organisation resides in individual employees who own the collection of the firm's resources, and the quality of decisions depends on relevant knowledge that can only be exercised by the individuals who possess it. This theory suggests decentralised decision-making based on tacit knowledge, and centralised decision-making based on statistical knowledge ('that knowledge which can be aggregated and analysed in statistical form'). Adopting a knowledge-based view, Fang et al (2005) argue that in order to share knowledge effectively, service teams need to create knowledge-sharing routines both in

service time and non-service time to achieve efficient communication and conflict resolution. Routines for knowledge sharing not only create opportunities for members to share their knowledge, but also increase opportunities for mutual understanding (Bechky, 2003). Lack of knowledge-sharing routines can be said to decrease the knowledge-sharing intention between organisational members. For example, in a situation of high work pressure, workers' knowledge-sharing routines are limited and this can influence workers' behaviour so that they do not share knowledge with each other, even when they have time for sharing. Knowledge sharing within a firm is not an easy task, especially in industries with a higher level of complexity. For example, in car and computer industries it is reported that companies have faced a problem regarding knowledge sharing between divisions and business units (Szulanski, 1996), which has been considered as internal stickiness of knowledge transfer (Szulanski, 1996). In knowledge-based organisations, knowledge sharing is more important, because those organisations need to rely on knowledge workers to exploit their knowledge for innovative solutions as they respond to a changing environment and to customer demands in a competitive market. Thus, in knowledge-based organisations, knowledge integration is the most important activity, and therefore knowledge-sharing behaviour can be regarded as an important type of performance.

A question that knowledge-based theory (Grant, 1996) has not answered is 'what type of organisation best integrates the knowledge?' The current research aims to investigate and answer this question in two organisations (e.g. private and public) with different characteristics (e.g. age, size, ownership, level of bureaucracy, etc), and which are expected to have different organisational cultures.

Clearly, knowledge sharing is important in every organisation, but because of different national and organisational environments, different types of facilitators and barriers might be found in organisations, based on their national and organisational culture. What the present research aims to identify are facilitators of, and barriers to, knowledge sharing in the public and private companies in the auto industry as a knowledge-intensive industry in an Iranian context.

2.4 Organisational Identification

The Iranian paternalistic culture emphasises the role of ‘father at the top’ of the family, which leads to the importance of organisational members’ identification with the person at the top of the organisation (e.g. the CEO as the organisational father). Therefore, it is important to investigate whether subordinates in Iranian public and private organisations, identify with their organisation in general, and with the leader of the organisation in particular, and whether such identification affects their behaviour regarding knowledge sharing, and if so how?

The foundation of many socio-psychological theories is based on “how an individual sees him or herself in relation to social groups” (Tajfel, 1981). Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) provides a useful framework for the discussion of organisational identification, because according to this individuals categorise themselves into different social groupings (e.g. gender, race, age group, etc.). In their group studies, Tajfel and colleagues (1971) created groups using meaningless distinctions, such as a preference for certain abstract paintings. It was expected that individuals evaluate members of their in-group differently from the members of other groups. Although there was no interdependence, future interaction or material self-interest for doing so, it was demonstrated that individuals evaluated in-group members more positively, distributed more money to in-group members, and enlarged differences between in-group and out-group if given the chance to do so. Social Identity Theory explains these effects by the following main assumptions. The first is that “individuals strive for a positive self-esteem” (Van Dick, et al. 2004, p. 172). The second is that parts of an individual’s self-concept originate from his/her ‘social identity’, that is ‘membership in certain social groups’. The third assumption is that comparisons with relevant out-groups are the way of maintaining or enhancing a positive social identity. Social Identity Theory argues that individuals develop multiple attachments to describe themselves in their environment (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Dutton et al, 1994).

Social identification is defined as “self-descriptions based on a perceived overlap of individual and group identities” (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p. 1). There are three basic intra-psychological processes for group-based social identity. The first is social categorisation that is the cognitive tool that assists the individual to classify social information. The second is social comparison that provides meaning by evaluating the individual’s own group in comparison to related groups, and that leads to the third process,

which is social identification, comprising the emotional involvement of the individual with that particular group (Van Dick et al, 2004). Turner and colleagues (1987) presented Self-Categorisation Theory and expanded the assumptions of Social Identity Theory about behaviour within the group. Self-Categorisation Theory assumes that individuals can categorise themselves at different levels including the personal level (as distinctive individuals), the intermediate or group level (as group members different from members of other groups), or the super-ordinate level (as a human in comparison to other species). On a personal level an individual might identify him/herself with his/her own job, and on a group level, individuals might identify with different sub-units within their organisations (e.g. work groups, departments), or with the organisation as a whole. The present research focuses on the group level, and identification with the organisation as a whole, or with the CEO as the symbol of the organisation. Recently, ideas from the social identity approach have been translated into organisational contexts (Dutton et al, 1994; Haslam, 2001; Hogg and Terry, 2000; Kramer, 1991; Ouwerkerk et al, 1999; Tyler, 1999; Tyler and Blader, 2000; van Knippenberg, 2000). In recent years the ways people define themselves in terms of their relationships to organisations has attracted organisation theorists to examine the concept of social identification with the workplace (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton et al, 1994; Elsbach, 1999; Haslam et al, 2003; Pratt, 2000). Over the last decade, there has been a growing trend of interest in identification within the organisational context; and it has emerged as an important variable in organisational behaviour research (Pratt, 1998; Rousseau, 1998; Whetten and Godfrey, 1998; Foreman and Whetten, 2002). Management academics are showing a renewed interest in the area that contains research activities in organisational behaviour, human resources, strategic movement, graphic design, public relations, marketing, and communication studies (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997). For example, most studies in the field of identification have been done in the 1990s, using questionnaires and considering intra-organisational sources of identification; but only a few have used qualitative data, and taken into account multiple sources of identification (Morgan et al, 2004). Postmes et al (2001, p. 228) summarise social identification as “a principal determinant and process variable for many of the outcomes and issues that have been studied”. Therefore, a deeper knowledge of the consequences of social identification in organisational contexts is of particular interest.

2.4.1 Definitions of Organisational Identification

Although some differences exist in the way identification has been defined, most of the conceptualisations agree that “identification involves an individual coming to see another

(individual, group, object) as being definitive of one's own self" (Pratt, 1987). For example, Tajfel (1982, p. 2) asserts that "in order to achieve the state of identification, two components are necessary ... a cognitive one, in the sense of awareness of membership; and an evaluative one, in the sense that this awareness is related to some value connotations". Identification is defined as "a response to social influence brought about by an individual's desire to be like the influencer" (Aronson, 1992, p. 34); and also as "the perception of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, p. 21). Cheney (1983a, p.342) defines identification (with organisations or with anything else) as "an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social sense". Organisational identification is viewed as a "cognitive link, when a person's self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organisational identity" (Dutton et al, 1994, p. 239). Pratt (1998, p.172) suggests that "organisational identification occurs when an individual's beliefs about his or her organisation become self-referential or self-defining"; in other words, when an individual integrates his or her beliefs about his or her organisation into his or her identity. To make sense of controversies and confusions surrounding the concept of organisational identification, Pratt (1998, p. 175) suggests two paths for the process of identification: "when an individual's beliefs about an organisation become self-referential or self-defining". The first path is called 'affinity' which means inducing one's self-concept in the recognition that an individual shares the same values with an organisation. The second path is 'emulation', that means changing the individual's self-concept so that his or her values and beliefs become more similar to those of the organisation. Organisational identification is defined as "a perceived oneness with an organisation, and the experience of the organisation's successes and failures as one's own" (Mael and Ashforth, 1992, p. 103). Others describe organisational identification as "a cognitive connection between a person and an organisation" (Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2002, p. 1). Organisational identification is also viewed as "a desirable attachment made by individuals to their employing organisations" (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p. 1). Morgan et al (2004, p. 365) define organisational identification as "the degree to which a member defines himself or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organisation". Organisational members might identify with the organisation "when they define themselves at least to some extent in terms of what the organisation is thought to represent" (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p. 2).

Organisational identification has been described as a turbulent process, which can be affected by personal and organisational change (Albert et al, 2000; Gioia et al, 2000). The

foundation of this process is the communication of organisational values and goals, which are established as desirable guidelines for actions (Vaughn 1997). Employees perceive themselves as representatives of those values; and larger cultural values influence the nature and the strength of extra-organisational sources on the employee identification (Morgan et al, 2004).

There are different dimensions of identification (e.g. cognitive, affective, evaluative, and behavioural), which are inter-related (Van Dick et al, 2004b). The first necessary step of identification is the cognitive dimension involving the knowledge of being a member of a definite group within a certain category. Affective dimension is the emotional attachment to that specific group, and the evaluative aspect describes the positive or negative value implication allocated to that group from inside and/or outside. The behavioural dimension of identification is the step which an individual is prepared to take for the group or collective, and involves behaving in a way that is supportive to that group or collective (Van Dick et al, 2004b).

There is always at least one 'source' or 'target' with which individuals identify in the identification process, but some argument exists regarding the use of these two terms (target and source). Some researchers believe that using the term 'target' means that identification is a purposeful choice by individuals (Morgan et al, 2004), while others suggest that identification is not always thoughtfully considered or directed, but sometimes made unintentionally through daily interactions (Larkey and Morrill, 1995; Scott et al, 1998). Morgan and colleagues argue that the term 'source' is more appropriate to describe the identification process, because they believe that it demonstrates the multiplicity of identification, without denying the rational mindful ways that individuals connect to the organisation; and shows that individuals choose some sources and not others, and that the term 'source' signifies an identification locality that is dynamic and mutual (2004). Employees have many other sources of identities that they balance, separate from, or link with their workplace identities (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). These sources can be extra-organisational or intra-organisational (Morgan et al, 2004). For example, four different identities that an individual might have at work are: individual (personal interest), work group (the team or department one works in), organisational (the interests of the employer), and professional (interests of professional organisations, unions, or industry) (Scott et al, 1998). Therefore, multiple sources of identification result in multiple identities that might be in concert or in conflict with each other (Cheney, 1991; Scott, 1997; Scott et

al, 1998; Scott et al, 1999). Although some people view identification, commitment, and loyalty, all as attachment processes (Scott, 1995), some others believe that identification is the foundation of the attachment process that causes individuals to be loyal or committed to a social collective (Morgan et al, 2004).

Cheney (1983a) has introduced loyalty as one of the dimensions of identification. Similarly, Larkey and Morrill (1995) assert that commitment involves some degree of identification. For researchers who do grounded research into identification in an integrative manner, it makes sense when they put different aspects of employees' identification together. When employees talk about their organisation, they expose the sources of inspiration for those identities that they talk about and it helps researchers make an assessment of the identification process (Morgan et al. 2004), and they show their association and disassociation to the social collectives through personal reflections. When employees identify with co-workers, there is a greater chance of identification and commitment to the company (Scott et al, 1999). Moreover, a good relationship with a supervisor, especially one who provides personal support, reinforces the employee's sense of identification (Hopkins, 1997) and these interactions make up the employee's feelings about the organisational environment and encourage positive attachment to the organisation (Ashforth and Mael, 1989).

Characteristics like 'self-concept' (Pratt, 1998) and 'perception of oneness' (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Mael and Ashforth, 1992) distinguish identification from related constructs, such as person-organisation fit and organisational commitment that might be conceived interchangeably with organisational identification. For example, when an individual identifies with a particular organisation, s/he would feel a very important loss if forced to part from it, whereas that individual may distinguish a good fit with a set of similar organisations and could have a feeling of commitment to any of them (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). Individuals may identify with their organisation at the global level, and also might identify with specific aspects of their organisation (e.g. the organisation's innovativeness). For example, Dukerich and colleagues (2002) found that physicians' identification with their own medical systems was predicted by the perceived attractiveness of specific aspects of those systems (e.g. quality care for patients, bottom-line focus, and state-of-the art medical technology).

2.4.2 Dimensions of Identification

Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) in their expanded model of identification, introduced four dimensions of identification: identification, dis-identification, ambivalent identification, and neutral identification. Their exploratory research, on 330 alumni who had graduated from a major public university during the years 1981-1990, supported the discriminability of these four dimensions.

2.4.2.1 Dis-identification

As opposed to identification that is “defining oneself as similar to an organisation”; dis-identification regards the definition of oneself as being dissimilar from an organisation (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p. 7), and is defined as “a sense of separateness between a person and an organisation” (Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2002, p.1). Dis-identification takes place when a person describes him/herself as lacking the characteristics or principles that he/she believes define the organisation (Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001). Similar to identification, an individual might dis-identify with an organisation as a whole or with particular features of the organisation. Elsbach (1999, p.167) describes dis-identification as “an active separation from the organisation”, not just an accidental kind of mismatch of characteristics. This might involve disgust with different aspects of the organisation such as culture, mission, or those aspects of the organisation’s identity and reputation from which a person intentionally separates his or her identity. In this situation, an employee might conceal his or her place of employment from others (e.g. through lying or deception) or might not talk about offensive aspects of the organisation, or recognise those characteristics that make him or her different from other members of it (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004).

At first glance, identification and dis-identification seem to represent a bipolar, uni-dimensional variable, but there is a delicate complexity in their relationship. While the most important purpose of both identification and dis-identification is protection of a positive social identity, there are visible differences in terms of the path to this goal and also the phenomenology of the experience in these two processes. Although some researchers in the area of dis-identification have argued for, and demonstrated unique aspects and contributions that take the concept beyond a simple opposite of identification (Dukerich et al, 1998; Elsbach, 1999, 2001; Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001) it is important to note that dis-identification and identification are not purely opposites. Rather dis-identification is a particular variable and a distinctive psychological state (Kreiner and

Ashforth, 2004). Whereas identification is typically a connection between an individual and positive organisational aspects, dis-identification is usually a disconnection between negative facets of the organisation and an individual (Ashforth, 2001; DiSanza and Bullis, 1999; Dukerich et al, 1998; Elsbach, 1999, 2001; Pratt, 2000). Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) in their qualitative exploratory study in the field of dis-identification, have developed and tested an introductory framework of organisational dis-identification. Their findings suggest that organisational dis-identification is a self-perception based on a cognitive separation between an individual's identity and the organisation's identity and on a negative relational classification of the individual and the organisation. The basis for organisational dis-identification is an individual's motivation regarding the confirmation of a positive dissimilarity and the evasion of a negative similarity by distancing him or herself from different values and negative features attributed to an organisation. The findings also suggest that, as a result of their perceived parting from their organisation's identity, individuals can be directed to take action (e.g. express their views) if they experience dis-identification. Elsbach (2001), in her study on California Legislative Staff, examined how long-time staff working in the organisation coped with the dual nature of the Legislature's identity. The study describes how staffs are able to split their professional identities so that they recognise themselves as members of the policy-making part, but not members of the political part of the legislature. Elsbach (2001) showed that staff used 'self-identification tactics' to construct both identification and dis-identification with the legislature's organisational identity, while separating themselves from the political aspect. As dis-identification signifies the consequences of deep conflicts felt between the individual and the organisation, organisations would be likely to recognise members' dis-identification as harmful, because both the retention and the turnover of a highly dis-identified workforce can be damaging to organisations. It is important to note that although most managers would not want their employees to experience dis-identification, such a phenomenon is not always harmful to the organisation (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004), as it may lead to some helpful behaviour; for example, whistle blowing, and innovation (Ashforth and Mael, 1998).

2.4.2.2 Ambivalent Identification

There is an extensive amount of research on ambivalence in interpersonal relationships, for example, in the field of friendship and marriage. Such studies have found that individuals are able to intentionally attend to both positive and negative aspects of another individual, and to maintain that state of ambivalence over the long term (Thompson and Holmes,

1996). Ambivalent identification (or conflicted identification) is the state in which an individual simultaneously identifies and dis-identifies with his/her organisation or aspects of it. In this situation, the individual is simultaneously pulled toward some dimensions of identification, and toward other dimensions of dis-identification. For example, regarding a firm's emphasis on cost cutting, an individual might identify with the recognition of efficiency but dis-identify with the disregard for quality. Based on the degree of the ambivalent identification felt by employees, they are likely to use valuable cognitive and emotional resources that could be used for helpful activities in the organisation. Employees also might be disinclined to go further than the necessary level of job performance. Most organisations encourage the component of ambivalence that reveals the constructive associations, while they discourage the negative component. This mixed message can cause pressure and isolation for ambivalent individuals and result in perceptions of insincerity and pressures to follow the organisation's rules (Meyerson and Scully, 1995).

2.4.2.3 Neutral Identification

An individual's self-perception might be based on the clear absence of both identification and dis-identification with an organisation, entering a state named 'neutral identification' (Elsbach, 1999). For example, like a judge whose job is to remain impartial toward both parties involved in a dispute, an employee might perceive neither identity overlap nor identity separation from his/her organisation. Elsbach (1999, p. 175) points out that while the individual "neither identifies nor disidentifies with the organisation", the weakness of his or her association might be important. Factors such as past experiences with organisations, management styles, or self-descriptions might lead individuals to deliberately avoid excessive attachments (either positive or negative) to the organisation. For example, the degree of attachment of a person who has had bad experiences with an organisation might be affected by the 'once bitten, twice shy' tendency. Also an individual's self-descriptions (e.g. 'I am a loner, I am my own person') or management styles (e.g. 'I don't take sides; I just do my job') might affect the degree of attachment to the organisation. Therefore, the lack of organisational identification and dis-identification can be regarded as "self-defining to individuals". Neutral identification is "a suboptimal state" in which an individual defines him/herself as neutral toward his/her organisation, its values, goals, and mission; and this results in less possibility for the individual's contribution to the organisation via extra role behaviours (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p. 5).

2.4.3 Organisational Identification and the Individual's Needs

An important question is 'What benefits do individuals hope to gain through identification?' In response to this question, Pratt (1998) has discussed fulfilment of needs as the motivation for identification, and has illustrated the relationship between identification and four types of individual needs: safety, affiliation (belonging), self-enhancement (self-esteem), and holistic meaning. The first need introduced as an encourager of identification is safety needs. Pratt (1998) asserts that the need to identify is likely to be as much for psychological safety as physical safety. Feelings of safety and trust underlie both of these needs as individuals try to "experience some control over their environment through perceptions of competence or through perceptions of redundant and predictable patterns" (Pratt, 1998, p. 181). Safety needs may be encouraged by feelings of vulnerability or uncertainty regarding the external environment. For example, Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggest that threats from external groups might increase identification with one's own group; whereas some others believe that identification may result from members trying to resolve tensions or ambivalencies raised within the organisation by organisational elites (Pratt, 1994). Safety concerns might encourage identification in situations where individuals feel some coercion to become or remain an organisational member. For example, organisational members might feel restriction regarding their membership when they have few employment options and, therefore, feel compelled to remain with an organisation; or when they are strongly encouraged to join a new organisation because of a merger, acquisition or partnership (Pratt, 1998). For example, Nair and Pratt (1997) found that physicians expressed a feeling of being trapped by the managed care organisations; but some of them strongly identified with these organisations.

The second need, as the most frequently discussed reason for identification, is belonging and affiliation needs which Pratt (1998, p. 182) refers to as "the heart of the drive to organisational identification". Identification is described as "a natural response to the sense of separateness" that workers feel in today's organisations (Connaughton, and Daly, 2004, p. 92), and a response to the divisions of society (Cheney, 1983b). These social needs can be seen in the format of liking a person or group (Kelman, 1961), a satisfactory relationship with the person identified with (Aronson, 1992); or "perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, p. 21).

As the third reason for identification, Pratt (1998) suggests that individuals may identify with organisations as a means of enhancing their own sense of self-worth. Identification is driven by self-enhancement, and individuals are motivated to perceive groups in which they are members (their in-group) as being more positive than out-groups (Hogg et al, 1995). Identification might occur when an individual tries to enhance his/her own sense of self by modelling him/herself after someone who is respected or admired. For example, a less competent middle manager may try to increase his sense of worth by copying the behaviour of the company's CEO (Pratt, 1998). The company's identities are said to enhance an individual's feeling of self-image by providing status and prestige (Cheney, 1983b). Attractiveness of organisational images and identities are likely to encourage identification in members (Dutton et al, 1994).

The fourth reason for identification is introduced as a holistic need, called 'self-actualisation', or 'spiritual need'. Organisational members are increasingly facing the uncertainty and anxiety that comes from the external environment such as work-family tensions, market, global competition, organisational downsizing, and other organisational changes. Because of these changes, members might feel that their lives are more fragmented and often more meaningless, and thus they search for a transcendent meaning. Therefore, individuals who are feeling incomplete may sometimes seek to identify with organisations in an attempt to feel whole (Pratt, 1998). It seems that a decrease of attention to religious values in the modern world is one of the reasons for a feeling of meaninglessness in life. For example, individuals often deepen their identification with an organisation through the adoption of religious values (Pratt, 1994). Organisational identification helps organisations to retain their control over members who are satisfied with their work and are committed to their organisation, because of their identification.

2.4.4 Effects of Organisational Identification

Individuals in different societies and also in different ranks of organisations have different kinds of needs, which can be satisfied through identification. The economic situation of Iran, plus men's role as breadwinner of the family in Iranian culture, has intensified the importance of safety needs for Iranian workers. Thus, the question is: If identification is viewed as a means of satisfaction of human needs in Iranian organisations, does it mostly satisfy safety needs of workers in those organisations?

Identification is introduced as a way of human needs' satisfaction. According to Pratt (1998), identification with collectives satisfies a variety of human needs, for example, safety needs or affiliation needs. Pratt (1998) also declares that identification with organisations satisfies the individual's holistic need, because identification provides a meaning for the identifier and helps him/her to make more sense of his or her life. Therefore, an individual who identifies with the organisation is regarded as a whole being and this influences the individual's cognitions, emotions, and behaviours. This view of identification as a holistic concept is visible in the initial development of Social Identity Theory. For instance, Tajfel (1978, p. 63) defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his or her membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership". There are important findings related to the impacts of identification at the individual, group, and organisational levels (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). Specifically, a positive relationship has been found between organisational identification and performance, and organisational citizenship behaviours; and a negative relationship is evident with turnover intentions and actual turnover (Abrams et al, 1998; Bartel, 2001; Bhattacharya et al, 1995; Haslam, 2001; Mael and Ashforth, 1995; Pratt, 1998; Tyler, 1999; van Knippenberg, 2000; Wan Huggins et al, 1998). Organisational identification has also been argued to assist in promoting of a sense of meaning, belonging, and control at work (Ashforth, 2001). In addition to exploring the positive effects of organisational identification, some researchers have examined the negative effects of identification on both individuals and organisations (Dukerich et al, 1998; Elsbach, 1999; Michel and Jehn, 2003), and there are several of these. For example, an 'over-identified' person might become entirely consumed by work and hence lose his/her own individual identity, or may be less able to distinguish or reveal the problems of the organisation. Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) found identification to be negatively correlated with ambivalent and neutral identification, whereas dis-identification was positively correlated with these variables. They also found identification to positively associated with the need to identify and positive affectivity, but not with organisational reputation and strength of organisational identity. Their findings also suggest that identification is negatively related with cynicism. They found the need for organisational identification to be the strongest antecedent, suggesting that individuals may identify because in a real sense they have to.

Alles and Datar (2002) have proposed an analytic model of the implications of high commitment on organisational control of human resources, where workers identify with

the success of their organisation. They conclude that workers' identification with the organisation's success reduces the control problem by encouraging information sharing, even when that is at the expense of low managerial control of workers (Alles and Datar, 2002).

2.4.5 Antecedents of Organisational Identification

Organisational identification is rooted in some antecedents, which can be considered at two different levels: the organisational level, and the individual level. Organisational reputation is described as one of the common antecedents of identification, and is defined as "an overall evaluation of a company by stockholders over time" (Gotsi and Wilson 2001, p. 29). Because of the glory of the organisation, a positive reputation is expected to result in members' wish for self-enhancement (Dutton et al, 1994). Positive organisational reputation has been found to be associated with identification among members and former members (Dukerich et al, 2002; Reade, 2001; Smidts et al, 2001; Iyer et al, 1997; Mael and Ashforth, 1992). In the same way, positive reputation functions as a social resource, which is likely to immunise members against dis-identification, encouraging members' goodwill and confidence. Thus, the organisation will overcome different challenging issues that may arise, and enable its members to put difficult issues 'in perspective' relative to the organisation's effectiveness (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). On the contrary, a negative reputation may weaken the members' desire for self-enhancement and as a result encourage dis-identification. In this situation, individuals maintain and insist on a positive sense of self by separating themselves from the unattractive reputation of the organisation (Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001). Another variable associated with identification is organisational identity strength. Strong organisational identity is defined as "one that is widely shared and deeply held by organisational members" (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p.8).

In Iranian organisations whose culture is affected by a paternalistic national culture with 'the father at the top' of the family, identification is an important field of investigation. This culture may affect the members' identification in terms of the selection of those at the top of organisation as their identification target, and consequently influence their behaviour.

2.4.6 Identification and Individual Performance

Nowadays, performance is considered as an important topic within organisational studies, and human resources are significant in influencing performance (Cuthrie et al, 2004). There is no consensus about a single definition for performance because it is a multi-level and multi-discipline concept. For example, performance can be measured at different levels, including the individual, team, department, company, and also financial level (Vanhala and Tuomi, 2006). It can also be measured over the short or long-term. A general definition has introduced performance as “a measure of attainment achieved by an individual, team, organisation or process” (EFQM, 1999), and it has also been defined as “the outcomes of behaviour” (Nickols 1977, p. 14). Variables that are usually used in performance studies for individual-level outcomes include: “improved employee abilities, knowledge and skills, increased motivation and commitment”. For organisational level outcomes, measures comprise sustained competitive advantage and productivity. Profits and market value are performance indicators for financial outcomes (Vanhala, and Tuomi, 2006, p. 243). Most of the performance studies are quantitative, and are interested in economic indicators, but the present research is qualitative and focuses on the qualitative aspect and the individual level of performance (e.g. knowledge sharing). Performance is conceptualised as having two separate domains, including job-relevant behaviours, and work outcomes, which are products or services that are expected to result from employee job-relevant behaviour (Binning and Barrett, 1989; Smith, 1976). Individual factors affect job-relevant behaviour of employees in organisations (Campbell, 1990; Hunter, 1986). For the purposes of the present research, one of the important individual factors is the amount of individual motivation for knowledge sharing in the organisation. Environmental factors can also significantly influence job-relevant behaviours of individuals. For example, the existence of a system for knowledge sharing can affect individual performance by making it easier for employees to share knowledge, which in turn affects the organisational performance by reducing costs, and influences other factors that lead to a better performance.

For this study, the definition of performance is taken as the level of knowledge sharing, and knowledge-sharing behaviour is used as an individual level indicator of performance, because this is believed by the researcher to be the first domain of performance (job-relevant behaviour) of individuals in organisations.

In exploring knowledge-sharing behaviour, the thesis will consider the particular aspect of 'performance', in which respect a question which might be raised is 'why can knowledge sharing be seen as an aspect of individual performance?'

One aspect of performance is introduced as 'the capabilities that create success' (Hill and Tande, 2006), and variables such as enhancement of knowledge, skills and abilities of employees, and increases in employee motivation and commitment, have been used in performance studies at the individual level (Gerhart, 2005).

Knowledge sharing is a way of enhancing individuals' capabilities, and it has direct and interactive effect on individual performance (Quigley, et al. 2007), because, when individuals share knowledge with each other, they transfer skills, which have been accumulated through their previous learning and experiences, and in fact they share those capabilities that have been successfully examined in the previous circumstances. Therefore, knowledge sharing can be seen as an aspect of individual performance, because to accomplish their job, individuals use their own knowledge and also that knowledge which has been shared by others in the knowledge-sharing process. Individual factors affect job-relevant behaviour of employees in organisations (Campbell, 1990; Hunter, 1986). Thus, as a result of knowledge sharing, the increase in individuals' skills affects the outcomes of 'job-relevant behaviour' of individuals as one domain of their performance (Binning and Barrett, 1989; Smith, 1976).

The common notion in performance studies is that improving method of management through better human resource practices enhances organisational performance (Ulrich, 1997). The important role of human resource practices is to reinforce the types of behaviours required by the organisation (e.g. knowledge sharing behaviour in knowledge-intensive companies). The effectiveness of human resource practices depends on their interrelationship. Participative management is a key factor in the package of human resource practices (Wright et al. 1999); and knowledge sharing practices (e.g. suggestion system) is a type of participative management system.

Recent theoretical developments towards knowledge-based theory suggest the crucial importance of knowledge sharing as a key dimension of performance. In order to obtain and sustain competitive advantage by organisations, the ability of effective implementation of knowledge-based activities such as creation, integration, accumulation, and utilization, learning and sharing knowledge has become increasingly important (Fang, et al. 2005;

Grant, 1996). Among the activities already mentioned, knowledge sharing/flow is 'the cornerstone of knowledge management' in organisations (Szulanski, 1996; Gupta and Guindarajan, 2000). Knowledge sharing has benefits such as making more accurate knowledge available to decision makers in organisations (Song, 2002), which leads to competitive advantages for organisations through enabling managers to make the most beneficial use of available knowledge in organisations (Keans and Lederer, 2003). Those competitive advantages assist the organisation to achieve its goals.

Similarly, recent theoretical developments towards social capital theory again suggest the crucial importance of knowledge sharing as a key dimension of performance. The knowledge sharing process also helps organisations to attain advantages of social capital that lead to the reduction of transaction costs by economising on knowledge, and coordination costs (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital is defined as 'a broad set of elements in multiple dimensions, which benefit social actors in their social actions through internal and external mechanisms'. These mechanisms comprise shared values, interpersonal relationships, and structural features that are rooted in social networks (Putnam, 1993; Adler & Kwon, 2002). Organisations with a higher ability to create and use social capital are likely to be more successful and have a better performance (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).

Current literature suggests a link exists between identification and performance. There are imperative findings related to the helpful impacts of identification at the individual, group, and organisational levels (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p. 2), which result in the promotion of 'a sense of meaning, belonging, and control at work' (Ashforth, 2001). Different aspects of organisational identification are differentially linked with work-related attitudes and behaviours (Bamber and Iyer, 2002). A positive relationship has been found to exist between organisational identification and performance, and organisational citizenship behaviours, and also a negative relationship has been found to exist with turnover intentions and actual turnover of employees (Abrams, et al. 1998; Bartel, 2001; Bhattacharya, et al. 1995; Haslam, 2001; Mael & Ashforth, 1995; Pratt, 1998; Tyler, 1999; van Knippenberg, 2000; Wan Huggins, et al. 1998; Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). For example, organisational identification contributes to the willingness of local managers to apply extra effort toward organisational goals (Reade, 2001). Identification increases cooperation in the lack of any anticipation of existing rewards or punishments, or any expectation for reciprocity in future, or even reputational consequences (Daws, et al. 1990) and leads to more effective processes and outcomes (Kramer, et al. 1996). Organisational identification has been found to be a significant determinant of employees' willingness to

exercise effort on behalf of the organisation (Haslam, 2001; Haslam et al, 2000; Ouwerkerk et al, 1999; van Knippenberg, 2000). Organisational identification has a strong and positive influence on the continuous improvement efforts of employees (Lee 2004) and is positively related to the level of citizenship behaviours for permanently employed employees; but not significantly correlated for contract employees (Feather and Rauter 2004). Van Der Vegt, and Bunderson (2005) measured team performance using five performance criteria including productivity, mission fulfilment, efficiency, quality, and overall achievement; using a 7-point scale. They concluded that identification with the group plays an important role in facilitating cooperation and team performance.

Identification encourages knowledge sharing and increases workers' commitment to the organisation. For example, Alles and Datar (2002) have proposed an analytic model of the implications of high commitment on organisational control of human resource, where workers identify with the success of their organisation. They conclude that workers' identification with the organisation's success reduces the control problem via 'encouraging information sharing, even when that is at the expense of worker slack' (Alles and Datar, 2002).

Identification has other beneficial organisational effects on general performance. Identification with the group reduces the level of intra-group competition (Dawes and Thaler, 1988, P.195). Identification increases individuals' commitment to their organisation (Sass and Canary, 1991), and highly identified individuals are more likely to behave in ways that are associated with the organisation's identity, interests and beliefs (Cheney, 1983; Button et al. 1994; Simon, 1976; Tajfel, 1981, 1982; Tompkins and Cheney, 1985). The strength of organisational identification is positively related to individuals' cooperative and organisational citizenship behaviour (Duckerich, et al. 2002).

To summarise, the extant literature assumes only positive performance effects come from identification. The common notion in the identification literature is that identification always leads to helpful results, which benefit the identifying individual and which also benefit the object of identification (e.g. the team, department, or organisation). For example, when a particular person identifies with an organisation, then this leads to an increase in his/her individual performance, which benefits the organisation (e.g. through commitment, citizenship behaviour, extra effort on behalf of organisation, and increasing knowledge sharing).

Because of the differences between Iranian context and other contexts (e.g. Western, East Asian, and Chinese) in terms of cultural factors, economical situation, and existence of government monopoly, it is expected that the outcome of my research in the field of

relationship between identification and individual performance to be different from what has been found in previous studies.

2.5 Nepotism

The emphasis on trust in family members and close friends in Iranian culture, and the existence of high unemployment and low income compared to expenditure, provide the rationale for asking the question: Do Iranians use nepotism to employ friends and relatives in their organisations? And if so, does the level vary between private and public companies?

The term 'nepotism' is derived from the Latin word 'nepot' meaning nephew. Nepotism is defined as "the employment of relatives in the same organisation" (Abdalla, et al, 1998, p. 555). Webster's International Dictionary (1976, p. 1510) defines nepotism as "favouritism shown to nephews and other relatives, by giving them positions because of their relationship rather than their merit". Hagen et al (1998, p. 555) define it as "the employment of relatives in the same organisation or the use of family influence to employ them in other organisations". As a practice, nepotism has grown throughout the world over numerous generations. Although some researchers believe that nepotism is diminishing in contemporary organisations, others argue that it is still alive and flourishing in different organisations in the world (Kiechel, 1984), and moreover, is regarded as a central concern in less-developed countries (Hagen and Amin, 1994). The largely negative implication of the word nepotism dates back to the inclination of popes during the Renaissance age for finding "high level clerical offices for their nephews", without considering their qualifications (Hagen et al 1998, p. 555). This practice played an important part in destroying the efficiency of the church and the morale of the non-nephew clerics, the same problem as occurs in modern organisations (Ford and McLaughlin, 1985). Because of the existing negative perception of nepotism, it is expected that organisations would have forbidden it years ago; therefore, there is only a small amount of published work on this issue (Ford and McLaughlin, 1986). However, regardless of the fact that nepotism is generally described as a 'dirty word', or as a 'problem', it has also been considered as a 'solution'. In fact, some people believe that, depending on the way we interpret it, nepotism can be harmful or helpful to organisations (Nelton, 1998). The focus in the literature on the topic is on family-owned businesses, which are studied to identify the advantages and disadvantages brought by nepotism to organisations. Some studies (Ewing,

1965; Dailey and Reuschling, 1980; Ford and McLaughlin, 1986; Barmash, 1986; Lentz and Leband, 1989; Lutz, 1992) have identified some advantages of nepotism as follows:

1. It is an efficient way to identify cheap, loyal and committed personnel for small family-owned firms.
2. It considers all potential employees who might be helpful contributors, including relatives of owners and existing employees.
3. It creates a positive family-oriented environment, which increases morale and job satisfaction, and improved communications for all employees (e.g. relatives and non-relatives).
4. It allows for consistency and smoothness of executive transactions, and acceptance of a family-led organisation by customers and the community.
5. It provides at least a counter-weight to sustained entrepreneurialism in an age of corporate takeovers.
6. It produces competition between the family members that, in its best state, guarantees the benefit of the organisation.
7. It reduces difficulties by keeping the younger generation off the streets.

However, in contrast, nepotism has been criticised as a management practice by many researchers (Kiechel, 1984; Ichniowski, 1988; Ford and McLaughlin, 1986; Toy et al, 1988) who identified the following disadvantages:

1. It has a negative influence on employees' morale. It causes low morale for employees including those who are superiors and colleagues of relatives of high-level managers, and also those who feel that rewards and promotions are given unfairly to a relative.
2. It puts relatives of high-level managers under unfair and incredible pressure because they are unsure if they receive organisational rewards for their performance or only because of their relationship with managers.
3. It combines family problems with organisational decisions, creates family conflicts and sibling competition over managerial succession, and results in inappropriate mixtures of business with the decision-making processes in organisation.
4. It harmfully affects the morale of hardworking employees and competent managers who think that individuals are promoted or rewarded because of their shared last name with the superior.
5. It discourages ambitious qualified managers from joining the company, because it blocks their progress in family-owned companies.

The importance of the issue has caused the establishment of anti-nepotism policies at different levels, including firm level, country level, and even continental level. Nepotism is of legal concern for governmental institutions in different societies and organisations. The Harvard Business Review survey of 8,000 American executives found that approximately 50% of the surveyed organisations had an anti-nepotism policy (Ewing, 1965). The 1978 Bureau of National Affairs survey also showed that the majority of employers disagreed with the idea of hiring relatives of current employees. Wexler (1982) found that the majority of 500 studied companies had either informal or formal written policies regarding the employment of relatives. The survey indicated that most of the companies had formal rules, which banned relatives from working in the same department or prohibited supervision of employees by their relatives. For example, 29% of 45 large companies were found to have informal policies, and 64% had formal policies, which had banned or limited the employment of relatives in the company. Such statistics provide ample evidence that anti-nepotism rules are a common feature in large companies (Kiechel, 1984), and a number of empirical studies regarding the effects of nepotism practices in organisations have been conducted. In their study, Ford and McLaughlin (1986) found that a greater percentage of the surveyed human resource managers (HRMs) agreed that the disadvantages of nepotism outweighed its advantages. Moreover, the majority of the managers also declared that nepotism affected their jobs and policies, and hence negatively influenced their entire HRM in their organisations. These results were supported by Hagen and Amin (1994).

Hagen, et al (1998) revealed the major reasons for the presence of nepotism in Arab countries as follows:

- 1- Socio-cultural structure and behaviour, which originates from tribal and kinship relations.
- 2- Poor economic structure, high unemployment rate and competition for inadequate white collar job opportunities encourage the use of family links as a key factor in the employment of new employees.
- 3- The structure of the education system, which emphasises getting a degree rather than learning technical skills needed in the industry, leads to an imbalance in the labour market and triggers nepotism.
- 4- The political structure. Public sectors in Arab independent states are the main employers and there is only a small space for the activity of the private sector. These governments use

The study also found that cultural differences between the two groups of managers had little effect on their perceptions of nepotism. It revealed different experiences by the responding HRMs in both countries, which included bad experiences, no experiences, and also good experiences regarding the practice of nepotism in their organisations.

2.6 Middle Management

The concept of a middle manager is unclear in the literature and in practice, and there is no consensus of opinion. Some consider middle managers mainly as professionals rather than managers. Despite little interest towards research in middle management in the past, during the last few years, academics have become more interested in this field (Davis and Fisher, 2002). Some researchers have labelled middle managers, as “managers below the level of divisional executive officer and above the level of foreman” (Larsen, 1993, p. 164). Middle managers are identified as “those managers who carry out a managerial role rather than the supervision of people on an hourly basis” (Larsen 1993, p. 164), and also defined as “managers who operate at the intermediate level of the corporate hierarchy, operating two or three levels below the CEO” (Dutton and Ashforth, 1993, p. 398). Middle managers are also regarded as “those who occupy positions between the strategic apex and the operating core of an organisation” (Morgan, et al, 1996, p. 360). In local government, they regularly “occupy the hierarchical space between first-line supervisors and department heads” (Morgan et al, 1996, p. 360).

The importance of middle managers in organisations is seen in their role in the development and translation of the organisational vision and ideas into practice and change (Bennis, 1989; Schein, 1999). The change process permits employees to understand their contribution in terms of organisational progress in the future, and also its effect on the customers, and the employees themselves (Valentino and Brunelle, 2004). Because of the increased use of information technology in the 1980s there were predictions of the termination of middle management in organisations (Dopson and Stewart, 1993, 1994). Such predictions did not happen, however, and because of the existence of hierarchy alongside the new forms of organisations, middle managers still exist within the new organisations with features such as group working (Palmer and Dunford, 1999), because in large organisations, middle managers execute some difficult tasks, which computer-based information systems cannot do efficiently (Hilmer and Donaldson, 1996). Some researchers support the importance of middle managers in modern organisations, and some accentuate the critical role of middle managers much more than in the past (Morgan et al,

1996). For example, alongside top managers, middle managers have an important role in knowledge management in contemporary organisations (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) and are also important in “knowledge-focused service organisations” (Davis, and Fisher, 2002, p. 406)). Middle managers are also interesting from the viewpoint that they have greater access to organisational resources compared to lower levels, and less control over resources compared to upper level managers (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). Over recent years, the middle managers’ role in decision-making has increased (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1990). Middle managers are named as providers of competitive advantage, because competitors can not easily replicate their skills (King et al, 2001). For the success of a quality programme there is a need for the effective participation of middle managers, and studies support the positive view of their role in organisations (Davis and Fisher, 2002). Middle managers help organisations to be more responsive because they facilitate intra-organisational collaboration, and translate the values of community to employees in the organisation. Middle managers also represent the organisation to constituency groups, and increase the capacity of the organisation to deliver good service (Morgan et al, 1996). Another important integrative role of middle managers is that they link activities and ideas between institutional levels and technical levels in the organisation (Van Cauwenbergh and Cool, 1982). Moreover, they are also recognised for their fundamental role in the successful generation and the use of resources around new ideas (Fulop, 1991; Kanter, 1982). Because middle managers supervise organisational operations, they can play an important role regarding new ideas that higher managers might not have thought about (Kanter, 1982). The level of middle manager affects the implementation of innovation. For example, middle managers who are placed at a higher rank in the organisation have more opportunity than lower level middle managers to implement business innovations which have been put into practice (Larsen, 1993).

As a result, middle managers have an important role in facilitating knowledge sharing in organisations. But in the Iranian autocratic culture with high power distance, middle managers are likely to play a different role regarding the facilitation of knowledge sharing. The present study aims to investigate this role in Iranian companies.

2.7 Bureaucracy

For the study of public and the private companies, which are expected to be different in terms of bureaucratisation, it is important to answer this question: Does bureaucracy affect behaviour in organisations?

During the 20th century Bureaucracy has been the main topic of a large amount of social science literature, and has been labelled as a “pervasive”, “widely accepted” and “inevitable phenomenon for governmental administration” (Narayana, 1992, pp. 123-124). Literature predominantly refers to Max Weber as the founder of the systematic study of bureaucracy, and his ‘ideal type’ of bureaucracy, which is usually associated with ‘rule-governed hierarchy’, and is known as the standard reference point in bureaucracy (Hopfl, 2006). Some researchers use Weber’s model to recognise his ‘formulative ideas’, and also take them as the main object of their criticism on bureaucracy (Dyer and Dyer, 1965). In systematic bureaucratic management, the organisation operates at the optimum point of “precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs” (Weber, 1946, p. 214). Based on Weber’s model the conditions of purely bureaucratic organisations are as follows:

1. A fixed procedure as the official responsibilities, for accomplishment of particular activities.
2. Systematic division of labour based on ‘specific spheres of competence’.
3. The bureaucrats’ behaviour is dependent on fixed and systematic discipline and control to complete their official duties.
4. All operations in the organisation are administered by a reliable system of abstract rules, and these ‘rules are applied to particular cases’.
5. There is a hierarchical structure in the organisation in which each lower office is supervised and controlled by a higher one.
6. Impersonality is dominant and individuals’ power is only based on official obligations.
7. Technical qualifications are the basis of the selection of applicants for bureaucratic positions, and this is guaranteed by examinations, or certification of technical training, or both.
8. An official bureaucrat is the representative of a career, and there is a promotion system in the organisation that works based on seniority or the success of individuals or both (Blau, 1969, pp. 1-2).

Therefore, the concept of bureaucracy can be defined in terms of five structural characteristics including; “hierarchy, division of labour, system of rules, selection on merit and career system”; and three behavioural attributes which consist of “impersonality, rationality, and rule orientation” (Narayana, 1992, p. 125). Hierarchy is regarded as an

essential characteristic of bureaucracy that refers to “a firmly ordered system of superordination and subordination”, the hierarchical level of power in organisations, the link between authority and other topics such as competence, the location of responsibility, the requirements of roles, co-ordination and communication, and control (Prethus, 1962, p. 34). In Weber’s model, the hierarchical feature of organisation is regarded as the only proper form of structure that can assist authority to acquire the highest amount of efficiency, rationality, and discipline (Narayana, 1992).

Although critics of bureaucracy have rejected its association with the concepts of rationality and efficiency, some believe that a careful reading of Weber’s model reveals the tendency of bureaucracy towards contributing to administrative efficiency (Merton, 1968). Weber views those criticisms that complain about the evils of bureaucracy, as ‘sheer illusion’. He proposes bureaucracy as an “inevitable and necessary condition of modernization” and declares that “continuous administrative work can not be carried out in any field except by means of official working in offices” (Weber, 1969, p. 320). Another important feature of Weber’s bureaucracy is the division of labour. ‘A specified sphere of competence’ includes three conditions: obligations to carry out the tasks in respect to the systematic division of labour, the existence of the necessary power for individuals to perform those functions; and a clear description of the required means of coercion and conditions in the use of authority. Some researchers believe that the organisation’s size is a predictor of its division of labour. For example, the larger organisations, which perform a large amount of work, would usually distribute their work among their personnel (Narayana, 1992).

In Weber’s bureaucracy, the selection of applicants for positions is on the basis of their technical qualifications. This characteristic can be seen more in large organisations where personal relations are not dominant. In small organisations it is not respected as much as in large organisations. The other feature of Weberian bureaucracy is the existence of a career for the bureaucratic official, and individuals are promoted based on their seniority or achievement or both. The nature of a career system is influenced by different conditions such as occupation, size of organisation, individuals’ personal interests, methods of compensation, status and prestige, and tenure (Narayana, 1992).

The first behavioural attribute of bureaucracy is impersonality which means “the dominance of a spirit of formalistic impersonality without hatred or passion”, and

therefore, a lack of enthusiasm or affection (Weber, 1969, p. 340). This impersonality eliminates the effect of personalised relationships and irrational consideration of enmity (Merton, 1968). Some researchers regard impersonality in management as the major means for providing regularity, calculability, lack of involvement, and other positive features of bureaucracy (Bendix, 1960). At the ideal level impersonality leads to the same service to all customers without any bias and consideration of personal feeling (Narayana, 1992).

As the second behavioural feature of bureaucracy, rationality is “the most important of all social processes”. This is because bureaucracy is regarded as a major basis of rationalisation of the contemporary world. Rational bureaucracy tends to be the most efficient form of organisation (Narayana, 1992, p.132).

The third behavioural feature of bureaucracy is rule orientation, in which the governance of the organisation’s members is by a set of rules that are “necessary for the efficient conduct of day-to-day administration” (Sills, 1970, p. 229). According to Weber “this set of rules provides objectivity, calculability, and impersonality to bureaucratic actions” (Weber, 1946, p. 215).

There is a viewpoint that for Weber, bureaucracy was an “emerging form of organisation” (Hales, 2002, p. 52), but some others disagree, declaring that exemplary bureaucratic organisations were established centuries before Weber’s age (Hopfl, 2006, p. 18). Some authors believe that Weber’s ideal type of bureaucracy is not completely appropriate for the current purposes of existing organisations. This view refers to watchwords such as project, mission, team, virtuality, network, information, knowledge, flexibility, adaptability, and empowerment in order to argue that bureaucracy has been replaced by post-bureaucracy (Hales, 2002). However, Hopft (2006) believes that some attributes of bureaucracy such as hierarchy can not be removed from complex modern organisations, and concludes that instead of replacement, “bureaucracy can be re-theorized” (Hopft, 2006, pp.8-9). For the fundamental organisational changes, organisations need to practise basic features of bureaucracy such as hierarchical control, centrally endorsed rules, and responsibility and answerability of managers, which is called a “more efficient version of bureaucracy” (Hales, 2002, p. 52).

2.7.1 Disadvantages of Bureaucracy

At the same time bureaucracy has also been regarded by some scholars as an inefficient phenomenon. Indeed, negative terms for the description of bureaucracy have been developed such as 'iron cage' (Martin et al., 1998) and 'bureaucrats as bean counters', 'pen pushers'. Bureaucracy is also described as having tortuous procedures, a narrow outlook, being inefficient, surrounded by red-tape, and high-handedness, especially by government officials (Friedrich, 1963). Some actually regard bureaucracy as a problem that must be cured by debureaucratization (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). However, whilst it might be true that in some aspects such a process is desirable in public services, in several other functions of public services debureaucratization can be harmful (Gajduschek, 2003). A bureaucratic organisation is usually described as having low standards of consumer service, being unresponsive to complaints, being inflexible in decisions, and as being inclined to reject consumer requests. In a bureaucratic organisation officials are governed by rules and they do not use their own discretion for finding the appropriate solutions (Prendergast, 2003).

Some people believe that the importance attached to the items of bureaucracy is inconsistent, because they are abstracted from examples, and Weber has no explanation for their benefits; and there are no criteria for excluding or including components from the ideal type of bureaucracy (Hopft, 2006). However, others believe that a mistranslation of Weber's text into English is a reason for the misunderstandings that have occurred about Weber's bureaucracy (Gajduschek, 2003). For example, Gajduschek (2003) argues that Weber's term 'rationality' is not equal to efficiency, but it includes uncertainty reduction regarding organisational procedures and outputs. Rationality might in several cases contain numerous advantages, where efficiency cannot be a proper explanatory factor. Another reason for the existence of a negative view about bureaucracy is that in some texts bureaucracy has been used as a synonym of government, and the deficiencies of the democratic process have usually been regarded as bureaucratic inefficiency (Gajduschek, 2003). Although in the current literature bureaucracy has been mostly regarded as a negative issue and a 'historical object', some believe that critics of bureaucracy are wrong (du Gay, 2000). In the positive view of bureaucracy, it is seen as a "carrier of formal rationalization" (du Gay, 2000, p. 4). Bureaucracy has been criticised as an unethical form of organisation for controlling the private citizen by its regulations, and for having idle bureaucrats who spend their days at the taxpayers' expense. However, besides bringing frustration to when dealing with state bureaux, bureaucracy does also have valuable

achievements such as ensuring fairness, justice, and equality in the treatment of citizens (du Gay, 2000).

Criticisms have targeted the specialisation of function as a feature of bureaucratic organisation that splits individual subjectives and social being by fostering only a rational and instrumental human sense (du Gay, 2000). The problematisation of the public bureau has led to a new form of public government called entrepreneurial governance that focuses on performance (outcome) and empowers citizens by pushing control into community rather than bureaucracy. In this form of management, organisations are driven by their goals (missions) not by their rules and regulations, and they treat clients as customers, who have choice. They prevent problems before they emerge. They earn money rather than spending it, and decentralise authority via participatory management. They “prefer market mechanisms to bureaucratic mechanisms”, and their activities are not limited to the public sector, but cover public, private and voluntary sectors to solve the problem of their society (Osborne and Gaebler 1992; pp. 19-20). Du Gay (2000) argues that there is no universal managerial approach, and even if an approach like that exists it is always applied in a particular context, such as a value context which is related to the organisational objectives. He points out that the significant difference between the value context of public and private sector organisations leads to a situation where public organisations can not perform as commercial (private) organisations. In today’s management, “change is a necessary factor” (du Gay, 2000, p. 136) and because of that, entrepreneurial management is the dominant paradigm in organisations (Moe, 1994). Most managers in business and industry are mobilising and co-ordinating resources to carry out the established policy made by senior managers (Parker, 1993); but in government, managers are dealing with broader administration activities including framing legislation, and dealing with other governments. Although the private sector has developed and is vastly greater than in the past, the importance of continuous aspects of public services which are necessary for the benefit of states, and which are not provided by private organisations, should not be neglected (du Gay, 2000). In democratic countries, the legitimacy of the public bureaucracy as an institution of governments comes from its institutional role via election (du Gay, 2000). Du Gay (2000) claims that political acts are not necessarily efficient towards the public interest. He views the role of the public bureaucracy as a ‘constitutional and ethico-political role’ not a simple managerial role. This legitimacy continues by means of a permanent public service system, which is independent from political desires, and opinions. Public bureaucrats are seen as ‘servants of the public interest’. Public bureaucrats

have ethical responsibilities of public interest that are more complex than meeting only the bottom line of management (du Gay, 2000).

Finally, du Gay (2000) concludes that contemporary critics against bureaucracy, by philosophical and managerial/political reformists who view bureaucracy, as a 'historical object' that has failed to register a certain kind of morality, are incorrect. Philosophical critics regard "the lack of distinction between personal and collective morality" as the failure of bureaucracy. Managerial critics see bureaucracy as being incapable of conducting essential action for the survival and growth of organisation in the present dislocated environment, without regarding its ethico-political role. Du Gay (2000) points out that bureaucracy might be seen as inefficient in terms of new public management, but representative democracy still needs some key features of bureaucracy, such as the possession of enough skill, status and independence, being impartial, and being energetic to achieve public purposes. These remain essential to the provision of good government. There are contradictory results regarding the relationship between bureaucracy and performance. Some people believe that bureaucracy increases performance and some disagree. For example, Smith and Meier (1994) conclude that a reduction of bureaucracy in schools could lead to diminishing performance, because it reduces the number of available experts to deal with executive matters. In contrast, Bohte (2001) found a negative relationship between bureaucracy and student performance across different grade levels.

Regarding both mentioned perspectives about bureaucracy, it is the view of this study that no social phenomenon can be considered in a strict good or bad categorisation. Every social phenomenon (e.g. bureaucracy) has advantages and disadvantages, and based on the other environmental factors in a specific period of time, one of those aspects (positive or negative) might be more visible. Therefore, bureaucracy should not be judged as completely positive or entirely negative. In order to reach an accurate understanding about bureaucracy in two different organisational cultures (e.g. public and private sector) in the Iranian context, there is a need for empirical research, which might find different results regarding the effects of bureaucracy than those previously found in other contexts (e.g. Western societies).

2.7.2 Suggestion System

A feature of bureaucracy is the governance of operations by a reliable system (Weber, 1946), and a suggestion system is a consistent system for knowledge sharing in organisations. Thus, it is important to investigate the effect of the existence or lack of a suggestion system in terms of the knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals in organisations, in order to answer the question 'does the existence of a suggestion system make a difference regarding the level of knowledge sharing of individuals in organisations?'

In the present competitive environment, organisations need continuous improvement to survive. Employee involvement is an old idea continuously being revitalised by organisations and practitioners throughout the world. A suggestion system is one of the most powerful tools in creating a feeling of belonging for employees, and a feeling of contributing to the welfare of their organisations (Reuter, 1977) via "tapping into all employees' creativity and brainpower" (Jeromos, 2005, p. 19). A suggestion system is defined as "a formal, definite procedure established and controlled by management to actively solicit voluntary constructive ideas from employees towards improving various aspects of the company operations, services, or products, and then to ensure the implementation of acceptable ideas while giving a suitable reward to the suggesting employee" (Reuter, 1977, p. 78). A suggestion system may cover tangible ideas (e.g. on procedures, methods, equipment, and materials) and intangible ideas (e.g. on safety, customer, or industrial relations).

The basic purposes of suggestion systems are: to encourage creative and constructive thinking among all employees, to enhance employer-employee relations through getting the employee involved in respect of improvements in work conditions, job security, and growth of opportunities; and to increase the organisation's competitive advantages through enhancement in the quality of products and services supplied. The other purposes of a suggestion system include: increasing the satisfaction of employees, the vitality and the growth of the organisation, rewarding or recognising employees, and motivating and reinforcing employee interest in the progress of the company via making employees conscious about cost, quality, and safety (Reuter, 1977).

The characteristics of the company, such as its size, number of locations, and culture, dictate the design of its suggestion system. Common characteristics of an ingenious

suggestion system include: having a system (not a programme), ensuring that suggestions have value via a screening process, requiring suggestors to examine the value of ideas. This system recognises employees for making enhancements to their own work, and puts the weight of proof on the suggestor rather than on staff employees. In a well-made suggestion system, the employee's supervisor is the first person who reviews the suggestion. The reward for a suggestion system can be monetary or non-monetary and the type of reward must be given based on the company's culture. A well-designed suggestion system makes employees feel valuable and needed, and the monetary aspect of reward is a secondary consideration. A suggestion system should encourage teams to submit suggestions, and should include employee recognition (Jeromos, 2005). A suggestion system is regarded as an effective managerial tool, which has a history of over a century. For example, the oldest employee suggestion system was established in the Eastern Kodak Company in 1898 (Reuter, 1977). The basis for most suggestion systems was the use of a suggestion box as a traditional process by American industry (Savageau, 1996). Procedures, standards and policies of suggestion systems were formally introduced and used as a general method for company improvement in the 1940s (Layne, 1944). The National Association of Suggestion systems (NASS) was established in the US in 1942, and now more than 6,000 formal employee involvement systems exist and continue to develop throughout the world, and facilitate opportunities for all nations to benefit from the experience and techniques being collected worldwide. In order to reflect the increasing acceptance of the continuous and worldwide evolution of suggestion systems to involve employees in all types of activities, in 1992, the new name 'Employee Involvement Association (EIA)' was adopted for NASS (E I A, 2006). There is renewed energy for implementing suggestion systems in contemporary organisations (Savageau, 1996). Many suggestions lead to significant enhancements in quality and quantity of production (Womack and Jones, 1996), and many organisations have benefited from the establishment of a suggestion system, by improving their operations, reducing costs, and increasing their productivity.

The auto industry is an important ground for the implementation of suggestion systems, one successful example being the Californian joint venture between Toyota and General Motors that operates under the control of Toyota. Whereas the annual average figure for employees who make any suggestion in the US is 8%, with only one out of four of those suggestions adopted, workers in Californian joint ventures make around six suggestions per year, and over 90% of these are implemented (Adler, 1999).

Japanese companies are well known for implementing successful suggestion systems, and according to Womack et al (1990), each Japanese automobile worker made 61.6 suggestions per year, in comparison to 0.4 suggestions made annually by European car workers. The most successful car manufacturer in terms of suggestion systems is the Toyota Company that patterned its 'Creative Idea Suggestion System' on Ford's suggestion system in 1951. This form of employee involvement mushroomed in Toyota and resulted in the submission of over twenty million suggestions over 40 years. For example, in Toyota the number of suggestions per employee annually in 1955 was 0.2, but this had increased to 45.6 in 1985. The proportion of employees participating in the Toyota suggestion system increased from 10% in 1955 to 95% in 1985. The number of adopted suggestions comprised 43% in 1955, and increased to 96% in 1985 (Yasuda, 1990). These statistics demonstrate the improvement in workers' participation and also in the quantity and the quality of suggestions in Toyota. The reason for the greater success of suggestion systems in Japanese companies compared to in American companies, is that in Japan, suggestion systems inspire employees and Japanese workers experience the pleasure of creative ideas through active participation in their suggestion system, whereas in the US, the company buys the idea from the employee (Yasuda, 1990).

Although computerised suggestion systems seem to be more effective than manual ones, it is reported that some companies that used automated suggestion systems in 1990, have faced some problems such as low speed of feedback, meaning that some suggestions were in the pipeline for between 8-12 weeks. Such automated systems have achieved poorer results than manual systems. For example, the participation rate has been below 5% in companies with automated systems, and the contribution rate is 8 ideas per person per year, with only a 20% implementation rate which is lower than the average (Savageau, 1996). Frese et al (1999) examined predictors of suggestion scheme participation and the quality of schemes, by studying a well-developed suggestion system in a large Dutch steel company. They developed a general model with person variables, work characteristics, motives, self-efficacy, and system factors that affect the writing and submission of suggestions by workers. Those factors were found to be related to three important process variables, these being: having ideas, submitting suggestions, and the quality of suggestions. They found the quantity of suggestions to be influential on the quality of suggestions. This indicates that in order to obtain good ideas, a company needs to promote the conditions

that encourage an increase in the number of suggestions. Indeed, other studies have also found the quality and quantity of ideas to be highly related (Deihl and Stroebe, 1987).

It was found by Frese, et al (1999) that the reward motive was less important than system inhibitors and other motives (e.g. better work). This finding implies that companies should not try to use financial reward as the main way of increasing participation in any suggestion system, but should instead use other ways of encouraging individuals such as training employees. Bonache (1999) studied the impact of national value differences on the transferability of human resource practices, by analysing the case of a highly standardised suggestion system developed in the U.S. that was implemented in five foreign subsidiaries. They found that national culture did not affect the efficiency of the system, and that the programme was highly efficient in all contexts. However, this result cannot be generalised because only a few countries (e.g. Latin countries: Brazil, Mexico, and Portugal; and Anglo countries: the US and Canada) were involved, and there was no representation from countries with highly diverse cultures such as China, Japan, and Islamic countries. And as previously mentioned, there are findings from other research studies that demonstrate very different outcomes in different cultures (e.g. American and Japanese). Another problem is that the study of Bonache (1999) was based in one company and its subsidiaries, and the same results might not emerge from company to company, or from industry to industry. Therefore, for a generalisable result, a comprehensive study is needed that includes different countries, dissimilar cultures, and different industries.

2.7.2.1 Problems and Developments in Suggestion Systems

The use of suggestion systems involves human beings, human judgement, and human motivation. Thus, its success depends mainly upon the managers who conceive and administer it (Reuter, 1977). Old suggestion systems had some defects such as lack of focus, bottlenecks in the flow of ideas because of the large number of employees, the disempowerment of management by review groups that might make managers feel that they have been left out of the process, and the “lack of management responsibility for making employee involvement happen as a day-to-day reality”, where managers have no responsibility regarding the idea generation process (Savageau, 1996, p. 86). In new ‘world-class suggestion systems’ those defects have been removed by making employees aware of the improvement goals (focus) and the decentralisation of the suggestion system so that the direct line manager or supervisor is the first recipient of ideas, which result in high-speed feedback, typically in three working days. As a result, all managers are

responsible for reviewing ideas and reviewing the work of committees, as support teams that protect the system against abuse (Savageau, 1996). There have also been behavioural barriers from different working ranks (e.g. supervisors, foremen, and workers) that have affected the performance of suggestion systems. For example, suggestion systems have always been regarded negatively by supervisors and foremen, because they felt that a good suggestion from a worker could be considered a threat to their position. To eliminate this behavioural barrier, new suggestion systems have guaranteed for everyone that the existence or lack of an idea will not lead to any kind of penalties for anyone in the company. Also foremen and supervisors are given credit for the number of ideas coming from workers under their supervision.

Additionally, workers have mostly felt that the submission of a good idea can result in more work, less pay and dismissal for them or for some colleagues. To overcome this problem, organisations have used some solutions such as involving workers' representatives in the suggestion committee, accepting anonymous proposals, standardising reward methods, giving an assurance that a suggestion will not result in any loss of employment or income for the workers involved in making suggestions (Layne, 1944).

Companies involved in Total Quality Management (TQM) use suggestion systems because of a number of reasons. Firstly, world-class suggestion systems create more than 40 ideas per person annually; indeed, the Toyota Company recorded a figure of 50 ideas per person in 1996. Secondly, even organisations with excellent improvement teams do not get total employee involvement on a regular basis, and suggestion systems help to increase the level of involvement. Furthermore, suggestion systems can also be used to focus on the areas that teams do not. For example, improvement teams and self-management teams mostly focus on process control and enhancement. However, besides the improvement of the current situation, suggestion systems focus also on idea generation regarding new products or services (Savageau, 1996).

Consequently, in addition to the general importance of research into suggestion systems, it is also important to study the effects of the existence of suggestion systems in two different types of organisations (e.g. public and private), which are expected to have varying organisational cultures. Furthermore, in the Iranian context with its autocratic culture, managers are likely to abuse their power and workers might suffer from this. Hence, it is

important to investigate the effect of the existence of a suggestion system on the potential abuse of power by middle managers.

2.7.3 Reward System

The national economy in Iran produces high inflation and low incomes compared to expenditure. Moreover, the lack of a proper credit system in the country leads to the importance of monetary incentives in Iranian companies. Therefore, it is important to ask: 'How can the existence or lack of monetary motivation affect the knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals in Iranian companies?'

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, reward is defined as "something given or received in recompense for worthy behaviour or in retribution for evil acts".

Reward can be categorised as intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic reward is "a pleasure derived from performing the task itself", whereas extrinsic reward can be monetary (e.g. bonuses, cash reward) or non-monetary (e.g. praise and public recognition) that "does not have a monetary equivalent value" (Bartol and Srivastava, 2002, p. 66). One type of monetary reward is a profit sharing plan that links the individual's behaviour to the organisation's profits. Gain sharing is an area related to profit sharing that has been used for more than a hundred years (Welbourne and Gomez-Mejia, 1995). It is "a compensation plan in which the organisation shares a portion of the added earnings obtained through the collective increase in productivity, with employees" (Bartol and Srivastava, 2002, p. 70) and typically includes all the organisation's employees or a large portion of employees (Bartol and Sivastava, 2002). The study has found a positive effect of gain sharing on productivity in organisations (Welbourne and Gomez-Mejia, 1995). Employee stock ownership is another type of monetary reward that "gives employees the choice to purchase a precise amount of stock at a particular period of time" (Bartol and Sivastava, 2002). The basic reason for offering this type of reward is to involve workers more in the long-term success of the organisation, via increasing a sense of ownership in employees (Rubinfeld and Morgan, 1991) and organisational commitment (Van Dyne and Pierce, 1993). Many companies have used this option, because of its possible positive effect on performance (Mohrman and Ledford, 1995).

Kerr and Slocum (2005) view a reward system as a powerful means for influencing organisational culture. They justify this by arguing that culture is largely concerned with

controlling individuals' behaviours and attitudes in the organisation and that the reward system is a crucial method of achieving this goal. Some researchers have argued that extrinsic rewards will have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation. They believe that engaging the extrinsic reward with the target behaviour will make the individual perceive the causality of behaviour as external and will reduce the 'self-determination feeling' derived from intrinsic reward (Deci and Ryan, 1985). However, research has found that extrinsic rewards positively affect the feeling of self-determination that is beneficial for intrinsic motivation (Eisenberger et al, 1999). Some specific forms of extrinsic motivation can be linked with intrinsic motivation in a synergistic way to enhance creativity (Amabile, 1993). Therefore, it seems to be possible to apply rewards in ways that support intrinsic motivation towards target behaviour. Some important aspects of organisational reward systems that can be useful for motivating individuals to perform targeted behaviours include perceived fairness of rewards, employees setting challenging goals in order to achieve rewards and practices that assure high self-efficacy of employees for performing the tasks. In order to have an effective reward system that can meet these criteria, the reward giver should observe or record the target behaviour and assess its value (Bartol and Locke, 2000).

2.7.3.1 Reward System and Knowledge Sharing

Perceived fairness of the system (e.g. fairness of reward system) is an important factor for the development of trust between an individual and the organisation; and trust is the enabling factor for knowledge sharing by individuals within the organisation (Bartol and Srivastava, 2002). Different types of rewards are likely to be most effective with different mechanisms of knowledge sharing at different levels of interaction. For example, in formal interactions, the individual who allocates the reward (e.g. team leader) can monitor the knowledge-sharing behaviour of employees and the organisation, and can use that behaviour as part of individual performance appraisal. Team-based rewards can encourage co-operation among team members. This is because individuals consider knowledge-sharing behaviour as influential in reaching team-based rewards. Company-wide incentives, for instance profit sharing, gain sharing, and in particular employee stock options, are likely to encourage knowledge sharing across teams and work units in organisations. Despite the importance of knowledge-sharing behaviour and the existence of the reward system in almost every organisation, there is a lack of research on the potential impact of rewards on knowledge-sharing behaviour (Bartol and Srivastava, 2002).

As a concluding remark, suggestion systems and reward systems are two expressions of bureaucracy in organisations. Bureaucratic hierarchies, procedures, and staff can function in two different ways which each have their own effects on the organisation and its members. The first way serves the purposes of coercion and compliance, while the second serves the purpose of enablement. In coercive bureaucracy, employees are viewed as potentially intractable, incompetent, or irresponsible, and “the role of the authority hierarchy, procedure manuals, and staff is to make sure that those employees do the right thing” (Adler, 1999, p. 38). This type of bureaucracy works against creativity and motivation, whereas in an enabling bureaucracy, the structure and systems function to support the work of individuals rather than to encourage hierarchy. An enabler bureaucracy views the hierarchy as a range of collaborative expertise, rather than a system of positional power, and staff work as partners with line workers. In this type of bureaucracy, “procedures are designed with the participation of the users and are intended to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement”. Employees regard this type of bureaucracy as a tool, which helps them to perform their task better, rather than a weapon used by superiors against them (Adler, 1999, p. 38).

Reward systems are generally important in terms of motivating the behaviour. Therefore, the present study has an interest in the effect of financial reward in a national context with a high level of unemployment, a lack of a comprehensive credit system, and a culture in which the man’s role is to be the family breadwinner. These factors will undoubtedly play a critical role in the knowledge- sharing behaviour of employees in Iranian organisations.

2.8 Conflict in Organisations

Iranian autocratic culture, and high power distance, in the context of a national economic situation which is characterised by high unemployment and high inflation, might well precipitate conflict between individuals, especially when middle managers act as autocrats in Iranian organisations. Therefore, the question arises as to whether this conflict affects the knowledge-sharing behaviour of employees in Iranian organisations.

Different interpretations of ideas by different individuals or departments in the same organisation can result in serious organisational communication problems (Brown, 1998). Whilst a precise definition of conflict is not agreed (Thomas, 1992; Xie et al, 1998), common attributes are introduced in the literature as the existence of two or more social entities (e.g. individuals, or groups), the existence of actual or perceived incompatibility of

goals of those entities, and perception of the obstructing role of the other entity regarding one's own goals (Wilmot and Hocker, 2001; Raven and Kruglanski, 1970; Xie et al, 1998; Dyer and Song, 1997). For example, Dyer and Song (1997, p. 476) define conflict as "task related disagreements arising whenever the goals of a person or group are perceived to be incompatible with those of another person or group with the express intention of denying the other's goals". Raven and Kruglanski (1970, p. 70) define conflict as "tension between two or more social entities which arise from incompatibilities of actual or desired responses", and some researchers have stressed the inevitability of conflict (Hakansson and Gadde, 1992). The literature has focused more on the harmful effects of conflict on performance (March and Simon, 1958; Pondy, 1967; Blake and Mouton, 1984). A personal conflict among the various hierarchical levels is one of the factors that make personnel management more complicated. Therefore, the existence of a negative image of conflict has resulted in the necessity of preventing and resolving the conflict in organisations (Stone, 1995). Recent studies however, have examined the benefits of encouraging a productive type of conflict (Tjosvold, 1991; Jehn, 1994, 1995, 1997; Pelled, 1996; Amason and Schweiger, 1994).

2.8.1 Types of Conflict

Many studies have identified two types of conflict, these being 'affective conflict' and 'substantive conflict' introduced by Guetzkow and Gyr (1954). Affective conflict indicates "conflict in interpersonal relations", and substantive conflict refers to conflict that involves group tasks (Jehn 1997, p. 531). One of the latest models of conflict (Jehn 1997) has been developed based on perceived and actual behavioural displays of conflict. It introduced three types of conflict, 'relationship conflict', 'process conflict', and 'task related conflicts'. This model has also identified four dimensions of conflict consisting of importance, negative emotionality, acceptability norms, and resolution potential. Relationship conflict is defined as a perception of "interpersonal incompatibilities among group members" and "typically includes interpersonal tension, annoyance, or animosity" (Jehn, 1995, p. 258). Task conflict is defined as "disagreements among group members about the content of the task being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions" (Jehn, 1995, p. 258). Process conflict is "conflict about how task accomplishment should be carried on in the work unit, who is responsible for what, and how things should be delegated" (Jehn, 1997, p. 540). Task related conflict might transform itself into relationship conflict and vice versa (Jehn 1997, p. 532), but these two types of conflict are actually experienced differently from each other by individuals

(Pinkley 1990; Jehn 1992), and have varying outcomes upon group or organisational efforts (Kabanoff, 1991; Jehn, 1994, 1995). For example, relationship conflict decreases goodwill and hinders organisational task completion (Deutch, 1969), whereas a moderate level of task conflict can be constructive by stimulating discussion of opposing ideas that enhance group performance (Jehn, 1995). Within the organisation there might be “relationship, process, and task-related conflict and this can be highly emotional, can have little potential for quick resolution, and can have high (or low) importance to the group’s members” (Jehn, 1997, p. 554). High levels of process conflict are harmful to group performance, and the highest performing groups might have “moderately high levels of task conflict and little or no process conflict” (Jehn, 1997, p. 551). The existence of a flexible social setting, and less bureaucracy, for example, “more varied work roles and greater opportunities for close face-to-face relations” in small firms, lead to a high possibility for conflict between individuals (Roberts et al, 1992, p. 242). Therefore, workplace relations in small and medium size companies may be informal, complex and contradictory (Ram, 1991, p. 601). An informal system and a low company size causes more encounters between individuals, which results in relationship conflict between individuals and that sometimes transforms itself into task conflict (Jehn, 1997).

The features of organisations might affect the level of their potential for conflict, and are likely to lead to different consequences when conflict does occur. For example, public and private sector organisations have different characteristics (e.g. higher formalisation and bureaucracy in the large public company, and informal system in the small private company), which are expected to affect the level of conflict in different ways. The present research investigates this possibility through the use of two companies in the different domains.

2.8 Conclusion and Research Questions

In this chapter a review of Iranian national culture, organisational culture, knowledge sharing, organisational identification, nepotism, middle management, bureaucracy, and conflict, has been produced in order to outline the theoretical underpinnings of the empirical work in the present study.

It was indicated that the study is concerned only with knowledge sharing as behaviour, and not with the actual knowledge being shared, or the types of knowledge being shared. Knowledge-sharing behaviour is a complex and time-consuming topic, which could not be

done justice in the time available, if efforts were directed to the other aspects of knowledge sharing mentioned.

Generally, culture is understood as a phenomenon that affects behaviour. National culture affects organisational culture, and as a result, influences individuals' behaviour in organisations. Culture is developed over time and tends to be manifested in the behaviour of organisational members (Brown, 1998). Organisational culture is the foundation of behaviour and the centre of human factors that determines both individual and collective behaviour in the organisation (O'Dell and Grayson, 1998). Some features of culture might have more effect on specific types of behaviour. For example, the existence of trust and a friendly relationship facilitate knowledge sharing as behaviour. Bearing in mind that Iranian national culture is described as being autocratic, paternalistic, having high power distance, individualistic, and showing low trust outside the family, these features will precipitate certain effects. The study will enquire whether, as a result of national autocratic culture, middle managers in Iranian organisations are autocrats, and whether they abuse their power in the way they treat workers. The abuse of power by middle managers, can affect work related activities (e.g. the process of knowledge sharing) in organisations.

Additionally, the study will pursue the question of whether the paternalistic feature of Iranian culture affects individuals' identification with high level managers in the organisation, using the possibility that they might consider the CEO as their organisational 'father'. This effect might be different based on the treatment of the high level manager in Iranian organisations. For example, when the treatment of the CEO is considered as fair, individuals will be asked whether they identify with the CEO, and when the treatment of the CEO is considered as unfair, they will be asked if they dis-identify with the CEO.

The paternalistic feature also might produce different expectations from middle managers and their subordinates and may influence the superior-subordinate relationship in Iranian organisations. Middle managers might expect a high level of obedience from subordinates, who in turn might expect a very caring role to be adopted by their managers towards them. However, it is possible that the high power distance and the managers' formal manner, influence workers' perceptions, such that managers are considered as a separate group. The Iranian management style is affected by cultural factors such as hierarchies, family relationships, and nepotism (Namazie, 2003). These features might affect managerial practices in Iranian organisations. For example, respecting hierarchy might affect the

managers' attitude regarding their relationships with subordinates, resulting in a highly formal relationship between managers and subordinates, and in a reduction of trust. Such an atmosphere destroys the necessary conditions for knowledge sharing.

Another aspect of Iranian culture (low trust outside the family) might affect the level of trust in colleagues and superiors. For knowledge sharing, trust is important, and low collective trust might intensify the effect of the other barriers and diminish the level of knowledge sharing in Iranian organisations. In consequence of low trust outside the family, workers might regard managers as outsiders, fail to place their trust in them, and be reluctant to share knowledge with them.

Moreover, family relationships and trust in the family and close friends, might influence the employment system in the form of nepotism. This situation can be a basis for raising interpersonal or interdepartmental conflict in organisations, as people come to view colleagues as outsiders, and hence, enemies. The existence of conflict can negatively affect the process of knowledge sharing in the organisation.

Individualism is another aspect of Iranian national culture, which can be intensified in organisations by economic factors such as a high rate of unemployment, and high inflation, which means a lack of balance between incomes and expenditures. Therefore, because of high unemployment, workers try to keep their jobs safe, and low income increases the importance of financial rewards to workers. Another factor is the role of men as family breadwinners in Iran, which increases the amount of pressure on Iranian workers and consequently affects their behaviour. As a result, it is expected that the reward system can be used as an important mechanism for motivating workers in Iranian organisations. For example, the existence of a suggestion system can increase the level of workers' participation in idea generation and knowledge sharing. On the other hand, it can negatively affect the level of knowledge sharing, since individuals might try to preserve their knowledge for their own benefit, and conceal it from colleagues and the organisational as a whole.

The auto industry operates in a competitive environment with rapid changes in customers' demands, and a successful response to such market changes depends on the compatibility of organisational culture with several necessary practices. However, this culture sometimes acts as a barrier to the effectiveness of such practices, and at others it can be a facilitator. It

might become more visible when some organisational activities such as knowledge sharing engage interpersonal interactions.

The Iranian economy, which is described as a government monopoly is shifting towards the growth of the private sector through the privatisation of public organisations and the support of new private enterprises. Therefore, it is important to study the differences between organisational culture in the public and the private companies in Iran. At the same time, it is important to examine the effect of different organisational cultures on knowledge-sharing behaviour in Iranian organisations because no research to date has attempted to do this. The present study addresses both these gaps in the literature.

The success of knowledge sharing depends on the collaborative behaviour of organisational members. Thus, it is necessary to involve the human aspects of organisations in order to analyse how knowledge is shared. Although in general organisational culture affects behaviour, the sort and the amount of its effect can be altered for different types of behaviours and in different organisations. Knowledge-sharing behaviour is complicated because it can be influenced by various cultural factors, which can be manifested in managers' decisions and their behaviour at work, that in turn can affect the establishment of organisational rules and routines. The execution of those rules influences the behaviour of organisational members. Therefore, as a part of an investigation into organisational culture, the present study of the knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals is important.

Knowledge management is new and there is much room for research in this field. Additionally, there is a lack of empirical research regarding the relationship between knowledge management processes (e.g. knowledge sharing) and human resource management. Therefore, studying knowledge-sharing behaviour in the private and the public companies with potentially different organisational cultures and with different levels of bureaucracy, represents a new field of study. Moreover, knowledge management is new in Iran, and there is a gap regarding the relationship between the organisational culture and the knowledge management fields (e.g. knowledge sharing) in Iranian organisations. Due to the product complexity and uncertainty in the auto industry there is a high value to be derived from the study of knowledge sharing in this industry (Dyer and Chu, 2003, p. 67). The absence of research on the effect of organisational culture on knowledge sharing in the

Iranian context is a hindrance to practitioners, and a knowledge gap, sufficient to justify the present study in this field, which seeks to answer the following question:

Main question: What is relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing in the two companies?

From an organisational and managerial perspective, identification is viewed as being in the forefront of organisational control theory; and as a social process with two key players including the individual and the organisation that work together to answer the question 'who are we?' (Barker, 1998). To reach its goals, values and objectives, the organisation naturally needs its members to identify with those goals, values, and objectives that will result in behaviours that are functional for the organisation (Barker 1998). Today's managers try to control employees' behaviour by getting them to participate more in the fields that affect the organisation, via articulating values that employees can identify with, to shape their behaviour (Barker 1998). In the literature on knowledge-intensive companies, coercion and incentives are not feasible or effective and therefore, identification is an alternative means of controlling knowledge workers. In the study, performance in knowledge-intensive companies is defined as knowledge sharing. Alles and Datar (2002) suggest that identification is linked to knowledge sharing.

In a western context, workers might choose to identify with those managers who are in a position to facilitate knowledge sharing. However, because of paternalism ('father at the top'), Iranian culture emphasises the role of the person at the top of the organisation (the CEO) rather than stressing the need for identification with those in the middle (e.g. middle managers). Therefore, in such a paternalistic Iranian national culture, it is expected that workers will identify with a good CEO as 'father' rather than with those in the middle (e.g. middle managers), even if this identification is not helpful. This lack of helpful identification may occur if the CEO is not able to facilitate knowledge sharing. This leads to the following question:

What is the association between identification and knowledge sharing in the two companies?

Iranian national culture emphasises the family, so that interpersonal trust is low in non-family settings (e.g. at work). Low personal trust at work is intensified by the effects of the

national economy, which is characterised by high unemployment in Iran. This plus the higher level of competition between individuals for superiors' attention leads to conflict in Iranian organisations.

A pure form of bureaucracy is described as having a "fixed way as official duties", and emphasises competence, the establishment of a "consistent system", "respect [for] impersonal official obligations", and the selection of employees "on the basis of technical qualifications", and "systematic division of labour" (Weber, 1946). All these features of bureaucracy can reduce the emergence of conflict in organisations. For example, bureaucracy is likely to regulate conflict, by specifying rules of human behaviour via the governance of operations by a 'consistent system' of rules (Weber, 1946). The existence of a job description in the organisation as 'official duties' can decrease the ambiguities of individuals about their duties and leads to less overlap in individual and departmental jobs, resulting in reduced conflict. One of the reasons for conflict between individuals in organisations is a lack of competence-based trust, especially in superiors who are not selected according to their qualifications. A feature of bureaucracy is that it can increase the level of competence-based trust and thus reduce conflict because bureaucracy supports selection 'on the basis of technical qualifications'. The features of Iranian national culture (e.g. lack of trust outside the family, strong ties with family and friends) and high rate of unemployment and inflation which are basis for interpersonal competition in Iranian companies, and the effect of cultural factors such as hierarchies, family relationships, and nepotism on Iranian management style (Namazie, 2003), are all likely to increase the level of conflict. Thus, there is much room for the study of the relationship between bureaucracy and conflict in Iranian organisations. But there is a lack of study in this field in Iranian organisations. Therefore, the research question is:

Does bureaucracy moderate work conflict in the two organisations?

Different environments exist in public and the private organisations, resulting in a different structure, management style, and other characteristics of the two case study companies. One of the most obvious differences between the public and the private sector is the level of bureaucratisation, which is usually high in the public sector and low in the private sector. Besides having a negative aspect, bureaucracy also has a positive feature, as it can be used in an enabling way through the establishment of reliable systems (e.g. system for knowledge sharing) that can have a protective role in terms of managers' abuse of their

power, in order to prevent or moderate the autocratic management style arising from Iranian culture. Therefore, it is important to investigate the effect of bureaucracy in the form of the existence or lack of any system for knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals in organisations to answer the following question:

Does the existence of a suggestion/reward system influence the degree of knowledge sharing in the two organisations?

The Iranian national culture of autocracy leads to middle managers not respecting workers and acting as a barrier to workers' efforts to promote themselves through knowledge sharing. This Iranian predisposition respects and grants power to subordinates only by their superiors. Thus, it would be expected that workers try to promote themselves through knowledge sharing but that middle managers would exploit this by claiming the workers' knowledge as their own.

Bureaucracy has many justifications (e.g. increasing efficiency). But another possible justification that is worthy of exploration is whether bureaucracy (e.g. rule following, and existence of systems) acts as a means of protecting workers from managers' autocratic abuse of power. Therefore, the research question is:

Are middle managers a barrier to knowledge sharing and can bureaucracy be a means of protecting workers from middle managers' abuse of power in the two companies?

Studying the facilitators of and barriers to, knowledge sharing, is important in every organisation whether public, private, large or small because identifying those facilitators and barriers can improve the quality of plans regarding knowledge management practices. Additionally, such a study is important for particular groups of organisations with specific cultures.

As a part of organisational culture, practices ('formal and informal routines used in the organisation to accomplish the work') are related to the knowledge-sharing behaviour of members. This is because those 'formal and informal routines' have a positive role as a facilitator or a negative role as a barrier to knowledge-sharing behaviour. Based on the type of culture that is to be found in the organisation, the effect of each of these formal or informal routines on knowledge sharing will be different. For example, in a company with

a low level of bureaucracy, a formal relationship between managers and workers might negatively affect the workers' behaviour in terms of sharing knowledge with the company. Similarly the existence of a parallel system (e.g. suggestion/reward system) in a company with a higher level of bureaucracy might decrease the effect of formal relationships between managers and workers, enabling workers to submit their ideas to a suggestion system and to get a reward. As a result, organisational culture can be a facilitator or a barrier to knowledge sharing. In order to study this possibility, the present research effort chooses a private and public company, with potentially different cultures. This leads to the following research question:

What are the main facilitators of, and barriers to, knowledge sharing in the two companies?

Generally, public and private organisations have different organisational cultures. Private organisations are described as having a high goal-oriented culture, and public organisations are described as having a low goal-oriented culture. Also in the same national context, culture sometimes has the same effect in both private and public organisations, and at other times it has different effects. For example, the existence of relationship conflict decreases job satisfaction and the well-being of workers in both private and public organisations. However, task conflict affects the level of job satisfaction and well-being of workers in the private organisations, although it has no effect on job satisfaction and well-being of workers in public organisations (Deutch, 1969). Thus, it is expected that the study will discover different influences emanating from the organisational culture in the public and private sector companies, in terms of the employees' knowledge-sharing behaviour.

The existence of different organisational cultures in the public and the private sector leads to different organisational environments, organisational structures and management processes. Some other differences between public and private organisations, such as the level of access to resources and the nature of organisational restrictions, affect the establishment of different systems, which influences those organisations in varying ways. For example, because of less access to the resources, restrictions in private organisations are more financial, whereas in public organisations, the easy access to resources and dependence on government, renders the restrictions as more political and formal. Hence, public organisations are more influenced by politicians and also are more formal and bureaucratic, and have more ability to establish the systems that are needed to accomplish

the organisation's goals. However, private organisations are less formal, and have financial limitations, which result in their having less ability to establish some of the systems that are needed. These features are expected to affect differently the managerial decisions and members' behaviour, and that includes their knowledge-sharing behaviour. Knowledge sharing is one of the important processes of knowledge management, which can be affected by the methods of organisational control, which can be 'supervisory control' or 'organisational support'. In 'supervisory control', knowledge sharing is controlled through a routine check up on workers, while 'organisational support' focuses on providing the foundation for assessment of factors that influence knowledge sharing (King, 2006). The use of each type of these controls depends on the organisational culture. Thus, it is important to investigate the knowledge-sharing behaviour of workers in two different environments to answer the following question:

Do workers demonstrate different knowledge-sharing behaviour in public and private companies?

Chapter Three: Context of the study

Introduction

This chapter aims to present the context of the study, which is that of two Iranian car manufacturing companies (one public, one private). The detail offered provides background knowledge that will facilitate the understanding of the data analysed from both organisations. In the first section, the Iranian car industry is briefly introduced, in order to give a perspective about the environment and the conditions in which the companies are operating. The second section is devoted to the introduction of the units of the study in terms of their history, organisational structure, their products, their situation among Iranian car manufacturers, management practices, performance appraisal and reward systems, and their IT infrastructure; and the method they use for knowledge sharing. This section is divided into two separate sub-sections; the first relating to the public company and the second concerning the private company. At the end of this section, the similarities and differences between the two companies, and their differences regarding the level of bureaucracy apparent in each, are summarised in two separate tables. The last section is devoted to some concluding remarks.

3.1. The Iranian Car Industry

Iranian industry is supervised by the Industrial Development and Renovation Organisation of Iran (IDRO), which was established in June 1967, in order to develop and modernise the Iranian industries and mining, via technical support, using scientific and technical research, and the formation of new industries, and investment in existing companies. The new mission of IDRO is “to promote the industrial and technological capabilities of the country by establishing new high technology companies” (IDRO, 2006), and one of its new strategies is to develop private sector capacity in national industrial fields through participation in their investment. In May 1994, IDRO established a joint venture with Renault in order to produce the Logan passenger car with an initial capacity of 300,000 units per year with the participation of the two leading public Iranian car manufacturers (IDRO, 2006).

The Iranian car industry is one of the major industries of Iran alongside the oil, gas, chemical, food, textile, electric and electronic equipment industries (SCI, 2006). Since 1955 when the first car assembly plant was established in Iran, the car industry has evolved through three different stages. The first stage (1955-1981) included the development of a car assembly industry by the private sector, and participation of foreign companies. The

second stage occurred after the Revolution (1982-1994), and was accompanied by a US boycott, and the war with Iraq. During this particular stage the car industry was nationalised and it experienced a considerable recession. The third stage (1994 and after) has seen the development of the car industry with an emphasis on national self-sufficiency, which has led to less of a focus on some factors such as product quality, fuel consumption, pollution, and price in the industry (IDRO, 2006).

Before 1979, Iran was one of the major markets for American cars. However, after the Islamic Revolution, the revolutionary leaders nationalised the Iranian car industry and the US boycott was supported by many other foreign car manufacturers, a situation that heavily affected the Iranian car market. As a result, the only available product for Iranians was a passenger car named the Paykan, which was a discontinued copy of the British Hillman Hunter from the 1960s. After about 40 years of production, as the national best-selling car, the Paykan was phased out of production in 2005. Because of the large, young and wealthy population that has increased demand in the Iranian car market, and the lack of a competitive environment for foreign companies in Iran, the Iranian car industry has become one of the major industries in recent years, as the largest in the Middle East employing about 500,000 people (150,000 directly in car manufacturing, and 350,000 in related industries). About 4% of Iran's GDP is allocated to the Iranian car industry, which produced nearly one million vehicles in 2005 (Ellis, 2006), in comparison with only 12,000 in 1989 (Business Week, 2004). Compared to the other Asian car industries (e.g. in China, India, and Malaysia), the Iranian car industry is very slow in its growth, and experiences very low competition. However, despite those weaknesses, the low level of expectation of Iranian customers, the unanswered extra demands in the Iranian car market after the Revolution, and the supportive policies of the Iranian government, have resulted in a monopoly for Iranian automakers (Bararpour, 2004). Because of the high tariff (about 100% of the car price), car imports to Iran are limited to less than 8% of the whole market demand in Iran (IDRO, 2006). More than 180 countries have joined or are in the process of membership in World Trade Organisation (WTO), but because of the US boycott, Iran's application for membership in the WTO has been rejected more than 20 times. Considering two characteristics of the Iranian car industry - its very slow growth rate, and lack of competitiveness, Iran's membership in the WTO will be a big challenge for this industry.

In the main, the Iranian car industry operates under licence to the foreign companies, and various political problems have decreased the intention of such companies to invest in Iran. However, from the 1990s, because of the diminishing government monopoly, the Iranian car market has welcomed foreign companies through the establishment of joint ventures,

mostly relying on European and East Asian technology. Examples of European companies who are involved include Peugeot and Citroen (France), Volvo (Sweden), and Mercedes Benz (Germany). East Asian companies include Nissan and Mazda (Japan), Daewoo and KIA Motors (Korea), and Proton (Malaysia), producing different groups of car including passenger cars, light trucks, vans, minibuses, buses, and trucks (Taghavi, 2005).

3.2. The Public Company

The public company in the case study was founded in August 1962 as a private family-owned enterprise in Tehran, under licence to a British company to produce a passenger car named Paykan (Hillman Hunter). After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the company was nationalised by the Iranian government, and operated as a public joint stock company, and a member of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organisation of Iran (IDRO, 2006) under the Ministry of Industries and Mining. In 1990 the company started production of the Peugeot passenger car (ikco, 2006). As the largest car manufacturer in Iran, the market share of the company is at least 70% of the Iranian car market (Bararpoor, 2004). After the Revolution and during the war with Iraq, like other industrial companies in Iran, the company suffered from the US sanctions and its results. Since 1994 the company has been the focal point in terms of the new government policies regarding the development of the car industry, aiming at national self-sufficiency. This resulted in the development of the company through the establishment of its 7-year master plan, the main goals which were to enhance the technical knowledge necessary for designing and manufacturing vehicle parts, and for entering the global market. For those purposes, the company created new organisations for the design and production of vehicle parts, equipment, tools, and machine tools for supporting the company's assembly lines; and for providing sales and after sales services to customers. In the year 2002, another 43-year-old vehicle manufacturer named Khavar, with the annual capacity to produce 5,500 buses and minibuses, merged with the company. Since 1994 the company's main products have been passenger cars (Paykan and Peugeot), vans, commercial vehicles buses, and minibuses (after 2002). As a result of the 7-year master plan, the company reached a high level of domestic manufacturing of passenger car units including the Paykan (98.5%), Peugeot 405 (87%), Peugeot Pars (80%), Peugeot RD (493 parts), and Samand (national car). In 2005, because of the failure to pass emission tests, the company stopped production of the Paykan, and now the main products of the company include the Peugeot 206, and the Samand (the replacement for the Paykan). The company's production departments operate around the clock, in three shifts, but the clerical departments work days only.

3.2.1. Organisational Structure of the Public Company

The company has a tall and large organisational chart, with a formal hierarchy. For example, between workers at the assembly line and the CEO, there can be as many as ten ranks, and seven at the minimum.. The company is a highly bureaucratic and formalised organisation, with a huge number of rules and regulations, and a high level of specialisation. Departments are divided according to their activities. For example, there are 16 directors' deputies, and 59 departments operating under the management of the CEO, each responsible for its professional activities. The company also uses the professional skills of 34 consultants in the different departments, and the expertise of seven dependent organisations. There is a high level of specialisation at the assembly lines, with for example, Assembly line number 4 being divided into ten zones, each consisting of different workstations (more than 140 in total), and 270 workers working at the workstations in each of three production shifts. Job descriptions are provided in detail for each department, and task, and employees and workers have access to clear job descriptions.

3.2.1.1. Department and Units of the Public Company

The company has 18,551 employees, 59% of whom work in the production departments, and 41% in clerical, and support departments. The main departments of the company are as follows:

1. Independent Management Deputy President with 14 independent departments (Communications, Security, Shares and Stocks, Prevention, Treatment and Welfare, Internal audit, Judicial, Special Inspection, Managers' services, Energy, Trim and Complementary Units, Human Resources Development Centre, Studies and Strategic Planning, International Operation of Technology Transfer, and Projects Planning and Control).
2. Export Deputy President with one department
3. Sales Deputy President with one department (Sales).
4. Human Resources Deputy President with four department (HR Security and Welfare, Employment, HR Productivity, Training)
5. Finance Deputy President with one department (Finance)
6. Quality Deputy President with two department (Quality Control, Quality Assurance)
7. Engineering Centre Deputy President with five department
8. Total Production System Deputy President (with two department)

9. Research Centre Deputy President with seven department (Innovation, Planning and Resources Development, Engineering and Development, Product Engineering, Prototype, Body and Trim design, Platform design)
10. Research and development Deputy President with one department (Strategic Project Department)
11. Economical and Finance Deputy President with three department (Negotiable papers, Finance and Strategic Resources, Supervision on Dependent Firms)
12. Officials Deputy President
13. Power Train Executive Deputy President with three departments (Engine Production No. 1, Engine Production No. 2, Gearbox Production). This deputy president has four factories these being, two engine manufacturing factories, one gearbox manufacturing factory, and one axle manufacturing plant.
14. Moulding Executive Deputy president with two departments (Cast Iron Moulding, Aluminium Moulding)
15. Systems and Management Services Deputy president, which has four departments (Management Services, Automation Services, Systems Design and Improvement, and Project Planning and Control).
16. The Passenger Car Deputy President

This Deputy President has the responsibility of passenger car production, production activities and engineering, equipment repair, planning and lines feeding. Regarding the amount and range of passenger car production, its activities are implemented in various assembly lines. The processed parts in the press and cutting unit use a different process. The car is transformed to a passenger car in the body shop, then there is dressing, painting, and at last there is the trim assembling shop. More than 49% of the employees of the company (9,193 individuals) work in the five departments of this deputy, which are: cutting and Press Department, Body Manufacturing Department, Painting Department, Assembling Department, and Production Planning Department. The workflows of the activities related to the final production of the company are as follows:

The Cutting and Press Department has the responsibility for cutting sheets into the required dimensions and for the pressing and the production of the vehicle's body parts according to the production plan. There are four shops under this department, which are two press shops, one cutting, bending and press form shop, and one coil cutting shop.

The Body Manufacturing Department is responsible for welding and assembling the body parts (from the Cutting and Press Department or from manufacturers and importers outside the company), and delivering completed bodies to the Painting Department. There are four shops in this department.

The Painting Department has two painting shops, and is responsible for painting the manufactured bodies. The main activities in this department are preliminary degreasing, furbishing grease, Parkerising, Electrophoreses, scattering PVC, honing scattering surface paint, baking surface paint, finishing, facing, shell watering, scattering and baking surface paint and polishing.

The Assembling Department is responsible for the final assembling of vehicles (both trimming and mechanical). There are four assembly lines in this department including; Assembling line No. 1, for Paykan, and Peugeot RD; Assembly Line No. 2, for Peugeot 405, and Peugeot Pars; Assembly Line No. 3 for Paykan; and Assembly Line No. 4, for the company's two new products (Samand and Peugeot 206). The degree of specialisation in the assembly lines is high, and work is divided into small tasks for each workstation, which has resulted in a high number of workstations at the assembly lines. The number of employees in this department is 967, which comprising 820 workers, 75 foremen, 25 supervisors, 10 clerical employees, 38 technicians and experts, and one manager. The assembly line is a mobile rail line, which carries the car body and each worker has to assemble his part during the time the car body passes the workstation. The speed of the assembly line is high and tiresome, and has a negative impact on the ability of workers to share knowledge in two ways (lack of time, and fatigue). Because of the high speed of the assembly line, there is no time for knowledge sharing among workers, and even if there is the opportunity to do so, workers who are physically tired do not have any intention to share knowledge with their colleagues.

The Production Planning Department is responsible for planning production, and for the control of the plan with the assembling departments.

3.2.1.2. Dependent Companies of the Public Company

There are nine dependent companies, which operate under the Economical and Finance Deputy of the company, and these are indicated in Table 3-1.

3.2.2. Management Practices in the Public Company

The employment policy of the company has resulted in the engagement of three types of workers. The first group consists of those who are permanently employed by the company, the second group are workers who have annual contracts with the company, and hence can be dismissed at the end of their contracts, and the third group consists of those workers who are hired through an external company to work in the public enterprise. The payment and fringe benefits in respect of each of these three groups are different, thereby causing a sense of discrimination among those employees who do the same job as other workers, but who receive less salary and fewer benefits. Another problem related to the company's reward system is that despite the three-shift pattern, no shift differentials are paid; and because of the absence of a labour union in the company, workers can not do anything to remedy this problem. Governmental and parliamentary politicians influence the appointment of managers in the company.

The dominant style of management in the company is hierarchical and formal, with a low level of communication between managers and workers. The relationship between managers and subordinates is generally formal, but more so in the production departments than in the clerical departments. Managers spend most of their time in their offices, which are located in separate buildings from the production lines, or in meetings with the other managers or outside the company. They do not communicate a great deal with workers, visiting the assembly lines for a few minutes only and not usually talking with workers during such visits. Daily meetings take place between foremen and workers at the start of each shift, and between foremen and supervisors during each shift for discussion of work-related problems.

This formal relationship also exists between managers at different managerial levels. For example, access to higher-level managers is difficult for lower-level managers. Consequently, there is a lack of communication, and much distance between the managers and workers, and in this situation, an environment of fear has been created. This has decreased trust between workers and managers, such that the former do not feel sufficiently secure to air their problems to the latter.

Table 3-1: Dependent Organisations of the Public Company

Row	Company Name	Year of Establishment	Field of activity	Product(s)/ service(s)
1	SAPCO	1993	Designing auto parts and consulting the company's suppliers	Part design, and consultancy
2	TAM	1998	Exporting and importing of technical and engineering services and know-how; designing, manufacturing, and production of equipment, tools, and machine tools for the automobile production lines	Tools, and machine tools
3	IK Diesel	1959 Merged-2002	Production of buses, minibuses, and trucks	Buses, minibuses, and trucks
4	Industrial Development Company	1999	Identifying and taking environmental opportunities, for the company development	Research and consultancy
5	ISACO	1977	Providing services for the company products including guarantee services, maintenance and spare parts supply, throughout a countrywide network of repair shops and authorised agents.	Maintenance and spare parts supply
6	IKO Trading Company	1994	Supporting the company and dependent companies regarding feasibility studies on the export of Iranian automotive industry products, searching new sources of supply for parts and production lines, making direct contacts with potentially interested parties in investments and joint venture projects in Iran	Research and consultancy
7	IK Sazeh Company	2000	Implementation of the development plans of the dependent Industrial group of companies.	Construction
8	The Paykan Sport Club	1967	Sport (Football, volleyball, basketball, grass ski, cycling, handball)	Sport teams
9	Ashkabad subsidiary	1998	Assembling passenger cars	Passenger car
10	Khorasan subsidiary	2001	Assembling passenger cars	Passenger car

3.2.2.1. Training System in the Public Company

The Training Department of the company was established in 1969, for the promotion of employee skills and knowledge, and has been active in the field of technical and professional courses, including engineering, commercial, and administrative, language, computer, and management programmes. It is responsible for the identification of training needs and for planning educational courses inside and outside the company, and sending

employees for training. There are technical and administrative training courses for employees before the start of their work in the company and some managerial courses for managers at different levels. Workers are practically trained at the start of their work, by foremen or experienced colleagues at the various workstations. Supervisors and foremen participate in certain training courses (e.g. Pure Production), and subsequently deliver the course content to their workers.

Another method of practical training at the worker level is job rotation, whereby workers from one workstation change places for a period of time with workers from another workstation. This strategy increases workers' skills by allowing them to observe the work of accomplished colleagues working on a different task to them, and then being given the opportunity to perform the task themselves.

3.2.2.2. Appraisal and Reward System in the Public Company

The appraisal and reward system is dependent on the assessment of the direct superior (e.g. foremen assess workers, supervisors assess foremen, etc), which is done once every four months. Factors involved in assessment include hours present at work, work quality, the worker's behaviour in the workplace (e.g. keeping the workplace clean, taking care of tools and equipment, helping other workers), fulfilment of duty, lack of unauthorised leave. An annual reward, based on the average of grades given by the direct superior to each worker, is paid. Additionally, there is another reward associated with the achievement of production targets, such that if production reaches the set target in each season, or is increased compared to the previous month, a fixed amount of money reward is distributed between different levels of employees and managers, with equal amounts being given to all individuals at the same level. The weakness of the appraisal and reward system is that in some cases assessment is conducted unfairly because of the superior's personal liking for workers. Another downfall of the system is that the production reward is paid equally to all individuals in different departments, regardless of the performance of each department.

3.2.2.3. Suggestion System in the Public Company

A computerised suggestion system for knowledge sharing is in operation, whereby each assembly line has an office where individuals can lodge their suggestions. The system has three stages, these being, submission of suggestions, evaluation of suggestions, and feedback by the system. In the submission stage, individuals go to the suggestion office after checking the suggestion on the computer to confirm that it has not been proposed by

someone else. The suggestion is registered in the name of the individual on the computer, and the individual then completes and submits the suggestion form. Clerical employees can submit their suggestions using both a manual and a computerised system. However, workers can only use a manual system by submitting their suggestions to the suggestion office, or by putting them in the boxes provided. In the second stage, the suggestion offices of each department collect and send suggestions to the evaluation committees, and if these committees consider any suggestions to be useful and practicable, a reward is allocated to the originator. Moreover, if the individual concerned participates in the execution of the suggestion, he receives an extra reward. If the suggestion is rejected, the originator is informed. The number of suggestions in the company is high, but because of any lack of relationship between the suggestion systems of different departments, some ideas are implemented in some departments and not in others.

3.2.3. Performance Data in the Public Company

The performance of the company is heavily affected by the existing political connection of the company with the government. This has influenced the company's ability regarding access to financial resources, capacity utilisation, sales, profitability, dependence on imports, and innovation. For example, in terms of ability to obtain resources (e.g. bank loans), the public company has no problems, and this has enabled it to invest in equipment for mass production, and also to hire the workers needed for 24-hour production. Because of the high speed of the assembly line, the company is using the highest level of its capacity. The government always supports public industries in policy-making (e.g. limiting foreign investment in the car industry, and reducing car imports via increasing tariffs), thereby providing them with better opportunities for sales in the Iranian market. Furthermore, the government has politically and financially supported investment in the company for new production lines in other areas of Iran (e.g. Khorasan, and Tabriz), and other countries (e.g. Syria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia, and Kazakhstan). Another example of the influence of the political connection on the company sales is the government decision to replace 200,000 old cars in 2006 by giving loans to their owners to buy the cars produced by the public company. Indeed, the company is so wealthy that it has participated in the establishment of a private bank. Because of having access to financial resources for investment in production equipment, the company is able to produce most of the parts needed for its production in Iran, using cheap labour and raw materials, and energy, and also exporting some of its parts.

Regarding innovation as another factor of performance, the company is able to produce different types of vehicles (e.g. passenger cars, buses, minibuses, vans). There is a research centre in the company under the supervision of the CEO, with 630 employees in seven departments, including an Innovation Department. This centre is responsible for the planning and development of resources, product design and engineering, production of prototypes, and platform design. One of the results of those activities is the design and production of the Samand (national car), to replace the company's former main product (the Paykan).

Innovation is also encouraged through the company suggestion system, which is seen as a comprehensive computerised strategy for organisational knowledge sharing. As indicated previously, individuals who share their knowledge in the form of useful suggestions, receive a monetary reward. In fact, there has been a high amount of cost cutting and process improvement in the company through worker suggestions.

As mentioned earlier, for the purposes of the present study, performance is defined in terms of knowledge sharing by individuals in the company.

3.2.4. The Public Company's Products

Before 2002 the company's main products were passenger cars (mostly Paykan) and vans, but after the merger with the Khavar Company in that year, heavy vehicles began to be manufactured, although passenger cars represent about 89% of the output, and this figure has considerably increased during recent years. For example, the number of passenger cars produced by the company in the six-year period from 1995-2000, was 704,946, whereas in 2005 alone, the company produced 553,635 vehicles, which included 540,000 passenger cars (89%), 49,000 vans (9%), and 13,635 heavy vehicles (2%). From 7.708-billion dollars income of the company in 2005, more than 88% derives from passenger cars, and 12% from heavy vehicles. Passenger cars produced in 2005 consisted of six types of Peugeot, accounting for 374,000 cars, two types of Samand (76,000 cars), and 41,000 of the last generation of Paykan cars. The company also produced 49,000 vans in 2005. Heavy vehicles produced in 2005, included 1,400 buses, 1235 minibuses, and 11,000 trucks. The company's main products in 2006 are the two brands of passenger car (Peugeot, and Samand).

Table 3-2: Production of Passenger Cars by the Public Company

Year	1995-2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006 (Plan)
Number of cars produced	704,946	225,564	300,000	435,435	517,429	540,000	650,000
Growth rate	26%	28%	33%	45%	19%	5%*	20%

*The reason for the reduction in growth in 2005 was the abandonment of production of the company's main product (the Paykan)

3.2.5. Principal Markets of the Public Company

The company's main market is Iran. Because of the cheap price of petrol (7 pence per litre) and the absence of a comprehensive public transport system, there is a high demand for passenger cars in Iran, and the company supplies almost 70% of the cars sold in the Iranian car market. The range of prices of the company products has attracted a huge number of customers from different social groups. Indeed, the Iranian car market is so favourable for the company that customers pay a deposit and wait for some months until they receive their car. The company has a 10-year strategic plan to develop its market in Asian and African countries, and produces 10 million cars through its subsidiaries in other areas of Iran, and other countries. For example, the company has established factories in Kazakhstan (Ashkabad), Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Russia. It has also established a joint venture with a local company in Syria, with an annual capacity of 10,000 passenger cars that can be increased to 30,000, and that is planned to operate before January 2007. The company has agency offices, stores and workshops in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Venezuela, Senegal, for exporting its products and providing after sales services in those countries. Moreover, it has participated in international car exhibitions, especially in Islamic countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and African countries). The company has a plan to export passenger cars, commercial vehicles, and auto parts to 42 countries. Its potential target markets consist of ex-Soviet countries, Sudan, Lebanon, Algeria, Egypt, and Jordan (just-auto, 2006). The company has planned the export of 60,000 passenger cars in 2006 (Jahane Eghtesad, 2006). The value of the company exports in 2000 was 24.6 million dollars, which increased to 150 million dollars in 2005, and is predicted to be between 300-400 million dollars in 2006.

The company established another factory with an annual capacity of 100,000 passenger cars in the Khorasan province in the east of Iran in 2000, and began production in 2002. Another factory is under construction in the city of Tabriz in the west of Iran.

3.2.6. IT Infrastructure in the Public Company

The public company has made a huge investment in IT infrastructure (e.g. automation, Internet access, and computer networks), including IT hardware and software. It has an Intranet containing information for managers and experts, and an automated communication system for its clerical employees. Clerical departments use the IT infrastructure for knowledge sharing with the production departments. Almost 90% of clerical employees have access to the Internet, and most experts and all managers have access to the company's automation system. Employees use IT for information searching and information sharing. The company senior management use IT for both information sharing with the workers about rules, events, and general issues of the company, and to receive information from workers via its computerised suggestion system. The automated paperless system is used for administrative purposes by different departments in the company. The company has a website with a huge amount of information regarding its history, products, departments, news, and etc.

3.3. The Private Company

The private company is the largest private car manufacturer in Iran. It was established in 1996 under licence to a Malaysian Company (Proton), but now operates as an independent company with 100% private ownership. The construction projects finished in 1999, and the company sent the first group of trainees to Malaysia to be educated for experimental production, which started in 2001 under the supervision of Proton experts. For the first time, the company supplied its product to the Iranian car market in 2002. Because of financial problems and limitations in importing units, the company operates only one daily shift (8 am - 4 pm) with a low assembly line speed, and during the first three years of its operation (2002-04), it produced 1,057 cars. The Headquarters and Sales and After Sales Service Department of the company are located on two different sites in Tehran, but the factory is located on a 2.5 million square metre site, in a poor area in another province about 400 kilometres distance from Tehran. There are seven developmental phases planned for the factory site, but because of existing limitations only one phase of the production is

operational and the second phase is under construction. The factory site is designed for a capacity of 50,000 cars per year, but the actual level of production is much lower than this.

The organisational hierarchy of the company is short and small, with five managerial positions under the CEO. There are three levels between the CEO and employees in the Headquarters site, and a maximum of five levels between the CEO and the factory workers. The total population comprises 324 individuals (65 managers and supervisors, and 259 workers) working at three different sites, two in Tehran (The Headquarters, and Sales and After Sales Service Department), and the factory site. About 80% of those employed are local workers based at the factory site, with the remaining 20% coming from different areas of Iran, and working at the two sites in Tehran.

All departments work eight hours in one daily shift. The Headquarters site is a clerical office with 43 personnel responsible for planning administrative and financial activities, and activities related to the communication with the parent company.

The Sales and After Sales Service Department has 41 employees in two main units, these being the Sales Department, and after Sales Service Department.

The factory site has three departments, the Maintenance and Repair Department, Engineering and Technical Equipment Department, and Production Department, which are under the supervision of the factory management.

There is a low level of bureaucracy and formalisation within the organisation, and the existence of an informal system is visible in the company's daily activities. Because of the family relationships between members of the directorate and managers, rules and regulations can be changed very easily and quickly, without time-consuming processes that usually exist in public organisations. There is a low level of rules and regulations, and in some cases there are areas of work that have no clear rules or regulations at all. Furthermore, no job descriptions exist for the various departments, and because of this fact, together with the low level of bureaucracy, individuals have more face-to-face interactions with their colleagues and superiors to accomplish their organisational objectives. Additionally, some other factors such as daily meetings, the layout of the departments, and the method of serving lunch, have increased the level of interactions.

3.3.1. Management Practices in the Private Company

The dominant style of management in the company is formal with a low level of communication between superiors and subordinates. The relationship between managers and workers is formal. Some managers are retired individuals from the army, and have too much respect for the hierarchy, with the result that managers do not consult with workers. Therefore, idea generation in the company is top-down and most innovation come from managers, who have minimal communication with their subordinates. In the two Tehran sites, managers mostly spend their time in meetings with other managers inside the company, or with relevant individuals outside the company. The managers' communication with workers is limited to formal meetings (e.g. Morning Market) and daily visits to the assembly line. The CEO pays monthly visits to the factory site, during which his time is mostly occupied by managers, his communication with the workers being limited to the public meetings that are usually formal and are allocated for the CEO lecture and managers' reports. Therefore, workers' communication with managers is mostly written, and processed in a formal manner in the company's administrative system.

The company's small size enables a great amount of face-to-face interaction. However, the lack of clear job descriptions results in overlap between the tasks conducted by departments and individuals. Additionally, there are some problems regarding the level of trust between departments and individuals. Workers have good and informal relationships with each other, a fact that promotes their willingness to share information with each other informally. But because of formal relationships, workers and managers do not trust each other, and this results in managers involving themselves in the details of tasks they delegate to workers, rather than relying on help from managers, while the workers hide their knowledge from managers, sharing it only with their friends at the same level. Consequently, the atmosphere of distrust has decreased the level of knowledge sharing in the company.

The company's training system is informal and weak, consisting mainly of on-the-job training conducted by foremen in the production departments. There has been only one case of formal training, which occurred before the start of production, when the company sent 30 managers and supervisors to Malaysia for training by the parent organisation. The employees who received that training were subsequently used as instructors of the remaining employees.

Personal relations have affected the company's employment system, as the members of the owners' family are appointed to key positions (e.g. the CEO, and Sales and After Sales Service manager), and other managerial positions in the Tehran sites are allocated to relatives and friends. As a result, management stability is high. There is a large network of personal and family relationships in the company, which affects the employment of new employees, which is based on the advice of managers and their friends. At the factory site, most of the managers and all of the workers are local, from a poor area with a high rate of unemployment, and which is well known as having a tribal culture. Employees are selected after an IQ test and an interview. Because of the existence of two groups of managers (old, and young) with different styles of management, and because of the absence of job descriptions for departments there is conflict between managers. Tribalism has increased conflict between local and non-local managers in the factory, and this has influenced the relationship between departments and the consequent the flow of information in the company.

Some factors such as daily meetings, the layout of the departments, and the method of serving lunch have increased the level of interaction between managers and workers. For example, at the start of work, there is a daily meeting called 'Morning Market' that commences after morning exercise in the factory and the Sales and After Sales Services Departments. In the Morning Market, workers of each department meet their managers at their workplace, and spend about 5 minutes discussing work-related problems from the previous day, and comments are made by managers and supervisors about the current day.

The layout of clerical and operational buildings in the factory site of the company is such that all workers and managers have to enter the workplace through one door. Managers' offices are located in the corner of the production department, and managers can observe workers during the day through the windows of their offices. Lunch is served in the restaurant for all workers and managers, and individuals interact during lunchtime. However, there are strict rules regarding workers' communication with each other during working hours. For example, chains are fixed around workstations and workers are not allowed to go to other departments.

An appraisal system is in force, through which supervisors assess their subordinates, and managers assess supervisors. Such assessment is made based on a questionnaire containing items related to individual factors such as personal performance (quality and quantity of

work), respect for hierarchy, presence at work, feeling of responsibility in work, treatment of mothers in the workplace, care of equipment, and the amount of unauthorised leave. There are two methods of reward; the first is a general reward based on the quantity of the annual production. This reward is distributed between individuals based on the average of their appraisal grade during the year. The second is given to those employees who are introduced by their managers to the CEO, for their exemplary actions in their departments. The existing network of relations has affected the appraisal system, and in some cases assessment is based on personal relations, a situation which has negatively affected hardworking employees who feel the unfairness of the system.

The company has not established a comprehensive system for its daily work (e.g. financial and administrative systems). The absence of job descriptions is an example of this situation, which has resulted in relationships becoming dominant in the accomplishment of tasks, and also created conflict between individuals and departments. Another example is the lack of any effective system for knowledge sharing in the company, there being nothing more than a suggestion box for employees' ideas. This box is opened by the CEO and the number of suggestions received is low. Consequently, knowledge sharing in the company is more informal and conducted on a face-to-face basis among employees.

The production technology in this company is new and Japanese-based. The parent company started its production in 1985 under the licence of the Mitsubishi Company from Japan, and now operates as an independent company exporting to 60 countries. The company uses the Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) of the Mother Company, and this leads to ignoring ideas, which are not compatible with the SOP, and stifles innovation.

A type of labour union named the Workers' Islamic Council formally exists, and workers can make their demands via their representative in this council for discussion with the CEO's representative and other managers.

3.3.2. Workflow Activities in the Private Company

The Headquarters site is responsible for administrative and financial plans and sending the decisions made by directorates to the other departments for execution, and controlling the implementation of plans in the departments. It also functions as a mediator between the company and the parent organisation.

The Sales and After Sales Service Department has two main units, one dealing with for Sales, and the other After Sales Service. The Sales Department is responsible for the marketing and sales promotion of the company, and holds an exhibition that displays company products and gives information to visitors regarding these. Sales in Tehran are managed by the Sales Department and by representatives that have contracts with the company for exhibiting and selling products in other cities.

The After Sales Service Department is responsible for obtaining customer feedback, investigating complaints from customers, and solving problems related to cars using its repair unit in Tehran, training the agents' repairmen, and supervising the after sales services which are performed by agents in the other cities.

The factory site has three departments, these being the Maintenance and Repair Department, Engineering and Technical Equipment Department, and Production Department, which work under the supervision of the factory management. The Maintenance and Repair Department is responsible for solving the problems of the other departments regarding electricity, plumbing, welding and other activities.

The Engineering and Technical Equipment Department is responsible for the operation of equipment that supports production activities, such as cooling equipment, heating equipment, water supply equipment, electricity equipment, and air compressing machinery.

The company's production line consists of 37 workstations in three lines, these being the Painting Line, Trim and Final Line, and Repair Line. Almost all of the car parts including the body, engine, and other main parts are imported from Malaysia. The assembly line speed is low, and because of a lack of parts, the assembly line is sometimes switched off.

The Painting Line is responsible for painting the imported bodies in seven workstations which deal with the Sanding, Paint Spray, Flash out, Oven, Inspection, Black paint, and Touch up.

The Trim Line is responsible for assembling all of the car parts on the painted bodies, which arrive from the Painting Line. The assembly operation consists of three main groups including Trim, Chassis, and Final. There are eleven workstations in the Trim Line, that assemble some parts of the car including the electrical systems, heater, and cooler.

The Chassis Line consists of six workstations that assemble the brakes, engine, gearbox and their accessories.

The Final Line has 12 workstations, responsible for assembling the complementary parts of the car including seats, seatbelts, tyres, radiators, and hydraulic pumps for the steering wheels. This unit also carries out some final tests such as the CO2 test, shower test, tyre balancing, and engine adjustment.

The Repair Line is responsible for repairs, which are identified by the Quality Control Department.

The company's performance is affected by the government monopoly on industry and the banking system. Access to resources such as loans, has been difficult for the company during its early years of operation because of the government's monopoly of the banking system. The company operates under licence from the parent company, and is dependent on importing parts from Malaysia. However, government limitations exist regarding the I importation of car parts and together with the financial problems, these have caused the company to operate very much below capacity, thereby increasing the fixed costs for each unit of production.

Moreover, because of the parent company's compulsory Standard Operation Procedures (SOP), and the dependence on the import of parts, the innovation level in the company is low. There is no suggestion system to encourage new ideas from employees, and the only suggestion box that exists, and which is opened by the CEO, has not increased the level of idea generation in the company.

3.3.3. Performance Data in the Private Company

The performance of the company is heavily affected by the government monopoly, and government policy, which is in favour of public industries, has limited the opportunity for the private company to use existing facilities. For example, it has affected the company's ability to access financial resources, and hence to fully utilise its capacity, with a consequent influence on overall profitability, and imports. In terms of its ability to obtain resources (e.g. bank loan) the private company has limitations placed on the amount of loans available, and has experienced many problems in getting loans from public banks,

and this has stunted investment in the necessary administrative and financial systems. Additionally, the government restrictions on the importation of units have resulted in a low level of use of existing production capacity, and to worsen this situation, some times because of changing tariff rules by the government, there are delays in releasing units that have been successfully imported, from the customhouse. This has caused insufficient units in the factory. Because of the lack of access to financial resources for investment in production equipment, the private company is not able to produce any car parts, which means the opportunities for fully utilising cheap labour and raw materials, and energy, are lost, and higher priced production is the outcome. This intensifies the pressure on this young company in the Iranian car market.

Regarding innovation as another factor of performance, the company assembles only one brand of passenger car (Proton), and because of licensing under the Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) of the parent company, there is limited room for innovation. The financial limitations have prevented the company from establishing any system for knowledge sharing, the only method of idea generation being the one suggestion box already referred to. Although I have described performance in conventional terms, my own analysis of performance will be in terms of knowledge sharing.

3.3.4. Products of the Private Company

The company assembles three types of Proton passenger car, but production is limited by import and financial restrictions as previously revealed.

The company's principal market is Iran, and because of the car price, the customers are wealthy people, mostly from the capital city (Tehran), although the company has some agents in other cities that display and sell its products.

3.3.5. IT Infrastructure in the Private Company

Regarding IT infrastructure and IT usage, there are some technical and cultural problems in the company. IT facilities are available in several Tehran sites besides the factory site. All departments use computer and related software for their daily work (e.g. to record information, producing reports, typing letters, etc) but the culture of using IT for communication and daily activities is not common for some managers and employees. Therefore, IT usage in the private company regarding communication and knowledge is poor. Because of a weak telecommunication system, access to the Internet is difficult at the factory site. The company has a website, which contains limited information about its

history, and the products. However, since 2004 this has been enhanced and provides more information regarding the news, and administrative issues. The existing poor IT culture in the private company has resulted in a low level of IT usage for knowledge sharing and also for communication with the related individuals in the parent company.

Table 3-3: Production of passenger cars by the private company (2002-2006)

Product \ Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006 (9 months)
Wira Sedan	60	200	350	350	200
Wira Hatchback	150	500	750	1450	600
Proton Gen2	0	0	0	0	1000
Proton Impian	0	0	0	0	60
Total	210	700	1100	1800	1860
Growth rate	--	33%	57%	64%	--
Annual income (1000 x US dollars)	3600	11200	17600	29000	38000
Annual profit/loss (1000 x US dollars)	(500) Loss	200	350	(600) Loss	

3.4. Similarities and Differences Between the Two Companies

In this section the similarities of the two companies are briefly introduced, and also their differences are displayed in two tables. Table 3-4 exhibits the differences between two companies in terms of various organisational characteristics (e.g. age, ownership, hierarchy, IT infrastructure, etc). Table 3-5 demonstrates the measures of bureaucracy in the two companies.

3.4.1. Similarities Between the Two Companies

Since both companies are members of the car industry, one similarity is that the high level of knowledge sharing required by the complexity of the industry. Knowledge integration is hard to achieve in the auto industry because when the range of the integrated knowledge within a capability is broader, the complexity of broad-scale integration creates greater causal ambiguity and greater barriers to duplication (Grant, 1996, p. 117). Nationality and national culture is the second similarity, as both companies are Iranian and operate in the

same national culture. As a result, the Iranian national culture has affected the organisational cultures of both companies. The high rate of national unemployment, the lack of job security, and the youth of the workers are other similarities. It is understandable that the high power distance and autocratic national culture, results in a formal relationship between workers and managers in both companies. An appraisal and reward system exist in both companies, and there are daily meetings in both companies at the start of work between workers and their superiors.

3.4.2. Differences Between the Two Companies

The differences between the two companies are summarised in Table 3-4.

3.4.2.1. Differences Between the Levels of Bureaucracy in the Two Companies

Based on the basic model of bureaucracy (Weber, 1946), which can be categorised in five structural characteristics ('hierarchy, division of labour, system of rules, selection on merit and career system') and three behavioural attributes ('impersonality, rationality, and rule orientation') (Narayana, 1992, p. 125; Smith and Meier, 1994), the differences between the two companies, regarding their bureaucratisation, are summarised in Table 3-5.

3.5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the two companies operate in a similar national environment with increasing competition in the auto industry. This leads to their organisational cultures being affected by the same national culture, and to the increasing importance of knowledge sharing in the Iranian auto industry as a knowledge-intensive industry.

Differences between the two companies, especially regarding political connections, and the amount of bureaucracy they demonstrate, imply the existence of two different organisational cultures, which is expected to have varying influences on the behaviour of individuals within them. Therefore, this increases the importance of the study of the effect of organisational culture on knowledge sharing behaviour of employees in these two companies.

Table 3-4: Differences between the private and the public company

Factors	The private company	The public company
Age	Young, less than 15 years old	Old, more than 40 years old
Hierarchy	Flat and informal	Tall and formal
Size and population	Small, with 324 individuals in 9 departments	Large, with 18,551 individuals working in 59 departments
Ownership	Private	Public
Access to financial resources (e.g. bank loan)	Hard	Easy
Employment	Is affected by personal relations; all workers are contract workers	Is influenced by politicians, three types of the workers are: permanently employed, annual contract with the company, annual contract with external company
Labour union	Formally exists, and works in the company	Does not exist in the company
Training system	Informal and weak	Formal and active
System for knowledge sharing	No system, only suggestion box	Comprehensive and active suggestion system
Diversity of products	Low, only one brand of passenger car	High, different brands of passenger cars, buses, minibuses, and trucks
Capacity utilisation,	Very low	Very high
Dependence on imports	High (all parts are imported)	Low
Production and sales	Low	High
Profitability	Low (for some years)	High
Innovation	Low	High, because of the Innovation Department
Principal market	Only Iran	Mainly Iran, and other countries
IT infrastructure	Poor with low usage of IT	Good with high usage of IT
Working shift (s)	One daily production shift	24 hours production in three shifts
Speed of assembly line	Low	Very high and tiresome
Location	Three sites in two areas	All departments in one site
Job descriptions	Low and unclear	High and clear
Management stability	High	Low
Workers	Mostly from local poor area	From all areas of Iran
Face-to-face interaction between managers and workers	High	Low
Layout of managerial and operational buildings	Managers' offices are located in assembly hall	Managers offices' are located in separate building

Table 3-5: Differences between the Levels of Bureaucracy in the Two Companies

Bureaucracy measure	The private company	The public company
Levels of hierarchy	Low, between 3-5 ranks between the workers and the CEO	High, between 7-10 ranks between the workers and the CEO
Division of labour	Low, 9 departments in the company, 29 workstations in the assembly line	High, 59 departments in the company, more than 140 workstations in the assembly line
System of rules	Almost informal, with a low number of rules; lack of complete financial, and administrative system, and no system for knowledge sharing	Formal and comprehensive, with a large number of rules A comprehensive financial, and administrative system, and suggestion system for knowledge sharing
Selection on merit	More informal, and highly affected by personal relations	Highly formal, and almost always affected by politicians
Career system	Medium, appraisal and reward system exists in the company, but no clear promotion system, and job description	High, appraisal and reward system, and clear promotion system and job description
Impersonality	Low, much personal effect on the decision-making	High, systematic professional decision-making, with less personal effect on the decisions
Rationality	Appointment and promotion based on personal relations	Appointment and promotion based on systematic records
Rule orientation	Low, because of lack of rules for accomplishment of task (e.g. job description)	High, because of huge amount of rules, and clear job description
Ratio of non-production (administrative and support) personnel to the whole population	Low (26%) $84/324 = 0.26$	High (41%) $7606/18551 = 0.41$
Ratio of non-production (administrative and support) personnel to production personnel	Low (35%) $84/240 = 0.35$	High (69%) $7606/10945 = 0.69$
The level of bureaucracy in sum	Low	High

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Research Focus and Questions

The purpose of my research was to develop an understanding of the cultural factors that constrain the individual's knowledge-sharing behaviour in organisations with a view to developing guidelines that will enhance the use of knowledge in organisations. The guidelines that I hope to develop as outcomes of my research include: the advancement of theory in understanding the links between knowledge sharing and organisational culture; the identification of particular aspects of organisational culture of Iranian companies that have strong effects on knowledge-sharing behaviour; and also those specific aspects that have not been identified in previous studies as barriers to knowledge-sharing behaviour which would be vital for planning activities related to reducing operation cost, team working, enhancing performance through the best use of available knowledge in the Iranian auto industry and similar industries. From my knowledge of the characteristics of organisational culture of Iranian companies in the private and public sectors, it was expected that the research result would be interesting in terms of showing the differences between the effects of organisational culture on knowledge-sharing behaviour in these two sectors. Because of the lack of research in the field of knowledge management in Iran, as a new study in knowledge management especially in the Iranian auto industry, this one will provide results that are useful in enhancing plans related to knowledge-sharing behaviour as a key factor of increasing competitive advantage in the auto industry. The following is the main research question:

Main question: What is the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing in the two companies?

There are also some additional subsidiary questions, as follows:

1. What is the association between identification and knowledge sharing in the two companies?
2. Does bureaucracy moderate work conflict in the two organisations?

There are four questions about the effect of practices on knowledge sharing in the two companies as follows:

3. Does the existence of a suggestion/reward system influence the degree of knowledge sharing in the two organisations?

4. As far as the two companies are concerned, are middle managers a barrier to knowledge sharing and can bureaucracy be a means of protecting workers from middle managers' abuse of power?
5. What are the main facilitators of, and barriers to, knowledge sharing in the two companies?
6. Do workers behave differently with regard to knowledge sharing in private as opposed to public companies?

4.2 The Research Paradigm

Each of us sees the world in a different way from others. Our basic belief about the world will be reflected in the way we design our research, and how we collect and analyse our data. According to Hussey (1997, p. 47), it is important to recognise and understand our personal paradigm, as this will determine the entire course of our research project. According to Kervin (2000), "Most of us are content to remain in the safety of our paradigms. We continue to do variations of regression, or case studies, or surveys, or experiments, because of the comfort and convenience of familiarity, and the suspicion that other methodologies simply do not do it right. In particular, those with quantitative skills do quantitative work, and those with qualitative approaches do qualitative projects" (Kervin, 2000, p.539). Social research needs a design or a structure before data collection or analysis can commence. The purpose of a research design is to make sure that the evidence obtained allows us to answer the initial question as explicitly as possible. Many research method texts confuse research designs with methods. Designs are often equated with qualitative and quantitative research methods. "Failing to distinguish between design and method leads to poor evaluation of designs" (de Vaus, 2001, p. 9).

The term paradigm refers to "the process of scientific practice based on people's philosophies and assumptions about the world, and the nature of knowledge" (Hussey and Hussey. 1997, p. 47). There are two main research paradigms, which are labelled as 'positivist' and 'phenomenological' (Hussey and Hussey. 1997, p. 47). Some authors also use the terms 'experimentalist' and 'quantitative' for the positivist paradigm, and the terms 'interpretivist' and 'qualitative' for the phenomenological paradigm. These two approaches represent extremes in between which are other research paradigms including hermeneutics, interactionism, integrative theory, and social system theory (Burrell and Morgan1979, p. 29). The positivist approach seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena, with little regard to the subjective state of the individuals. The phenomenological paradigm points

out that the physical sciences deal with objects, which are external to human beings, whereas the social sciences deal with action, and behaviour that are generated from within the human mind (Hussey and Hussey, 1997, p. 47). According to Creswell (1994), in positivist assumptions reality is objective and singular, but in qualitative assumptions “reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants” in a study. Epistemologically, positivists believe that the “researcher is independent from that being researched”, whereas in phenomenological research, “the researcher interacts with that being researched”. Value-freedom, formal language based on a set of definitions, and a deductive process of research are the other characteristics of a quantitative paradigm, while a qualitative paradigm suggests a value-based, informal language, and inductive process for research (Cresswell, 1994).

Morgan (1997) suggested that these two fundamental approaches to research can be considered also in terms of levels, arguing that it is possible to adopt each paradigm and pursue a philosophical, social, or technical study. In this research, the focus is on the technical level in the specification of the methods and techniques.

Social surveys and experiments are frequently considered as the main examples of quantitative research and are assessed against the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative statistical research methods and analysis. Alternatively, case studies, are often viewed as prime examples of qualitative study, “which adopts an interpretive approach to data, studies ‘things’ within their context and considers the subjective meanings that people bring to their situation” (de Vaus, 2001, p. 10). In quantitative studies, facts emerge on the basis of some form of counting and numerical transformation, and “it is theory that provides the basis for the data to be gathered in the first place, that defines the system used to recognize and code data” and, therefore, boundaries between the variables and foundation of the analysis and interpretation of data are determined based on the theory (Philip, 1992, p. 771). The complementarities of qualitative and quantitative study can be distinguished in relation to their replication. In quantitative research, the researcher is regularly preoccupied with the establishment of “law-like relationships between organisational variables”, or between organisational and external environmental variables, using large numbers of organisations in their study. Thus, quantitative researchers neglect the broader contexts within which these relationships are observed. Contextual features are helpful to distinguish the relevant contingent conditions under which these relationships take place. For quantitative study, if there is a contradiction between the findings of a

replication and the original study, it might be difficult to evaluate how far this is due to the diverse contingencies present in the two studies (Tsang and Kwan, 1999, p. 770).

Although quantitative researchers often criticise qualitative research for “the difficulty of carrying out replications of its findings” (Bryman, 1988, p. 38), in qualitative studies researchers are able to interpret the findings of a repeated study by understanding the events in their research setting. Thus, a qualitative researcher explores the specific contingent conditions under which the hypothesised mechanisms are functioning. This helps the qualitative researcher to compare the findings of his/her replication study with those of the original research (Tsang and Kwan, 1999, p. 770). A qualitative approach provides a distinctive insight into the behaviour, beliefs and meanings of the individuals, situations and organisations under investigation, which express themselves in narrative forms. The validity of qualitative research is even harder to establish when the researcher starts to capture and then organise and analyse evidence collected from a small number of respondents using observation or interview (Hannabuss, 2000, p. 99). In the qualitative study, the researcher is not an objective, politically impartial observer on the subject of the study, but is rather “historically and locally situated within the very processes being studied” (Denzin, 2001, p. 325). In both qualitative and quantitative methods, representative approaches to knowledge creation depend on the awareness of the researcher, who is supposed to be able to discover the “truth about the world of management and organisations through a series of representations” (David 1992, p. 514). According to Miller and Friesen (1982), although qualitative studies are normally rich and thrilling and able to disclose “deep insights into the complex and dynamic interplay among relevant forces”, quantitative studies allow “more objective, replicable, and reliable findings”. The qualitative study in social science starts as the researcher leaves the objectivist extreme of the subjective-objective continuum. The use of quantitative methods in the social sciences, on the basis of methods of the natural sciences, is a proper way for the analysis of “the social world as a tangible structure” (Arvind, 1993, p. 238). No given paradigm is the best one, rather, based on individual assumptions and the nature of the research, the researcher can use a paradigm that best suits him/her. The particular paradigm adopted for this research was determined by the nature of the research problem investigated, and also by the researcher’s assumptions. In accordance with the differences between the two mentioned paradigms, and also the multiple aspects of the research area (knowledge management and organisational culture), an interpretivist paradigm was selected. Moreover, because knowledge sharing is not a simple process that can be studied via a quantitative method, and also because the knowledge management field is young, and

there are no strong quantitative measures for knowledge sharing behaviour, a qualitative method was used. Because of the nature of the research that relates to different organisational cultures, an inductive process in analysis was employed.

4.3 Data Collection

4.3.1 Research Sites

The study required the researcher to return to Iran for data collection, which was conducted by means of a case study, using the company as the unit of analysis. Two Iranian car manufacturers (one private, one public) were studied, the rationale being that the researcher was familiar with Iranian culture, and able to converse in the same language as the interviewees. Consequently, the potential for communication breakdown would be decreased, and the likelihood of collecting rich data increased. . Also because of language familiarity, better understanding of key words and metaphors used in the interviews would help me to make data analysis more reliable. Another reason for this selection was the complexity of the processes in the auto industry, compared with some industries, which make a more appropriate environment for research in the field of knowledge management. Lack of research into knowledge management in Iran was another motive for this choice. The transition of the auto industry from a government monopoly to a private market has created an environment for the private sector to invest in car manufacturing, which means the establishment of medium-sized enterprises with different characteristics from public companies, and this formed another reason for the selection of research sites.

4.3.1.1 Characteristics of the Research Sites

As explained in Chapter Three the two chosen companies have different characteristics regarding their age, size, location and ownership. The public company is the first car producing enterprise in Iran, established in 1962, and is the largest vehicle manufacturer in the country, having 18,551 employees. This company has established seven subsidiaries, and a Football Club. All the company's departments are located at a site 8 kilometres from Tehran. Because of time limitations, the data was collected in unit assembly line number 4, a unit that has 968 employees and is one of the newest assembly lines in the company that makes two brands of passenger cars. The rationale for choosing this department was that most of the workers have come from other departments of the company, thereby enabling the department to be considered as a proper sample of the whole organisation.

The private company is young and medium sized with about 300 employees, having been established in 1996 and responsible for the assembly of a passenger car, which was originally the product of a Malaysian Company. The product first came to the Iranian market in 2002. The Head office, and Sales and After Sales Services Department of this company are located in two separate sites in Tehran, but its factory is located at a site 15 kilometres from Boroujerd city in Lorestan province.

4.3.2 Access and Initial Contact Before Data Collection

Initial contact was made by the researcher in December 2003 with the CEO of the private company directly, and with the CEO of the public company indirectly through a friend who was a government official. After obtaining the companies' formal agreement to participate, six months before the actual data collection (January 2004), two general questions were sent via email to both companies, with a request that these be distributed to their managers, and individual replies be returned via the researcher's email address. The questions were as follows:

1-In your view, what is (are) your most important problem(s) in the company in the field of employee relations?

2-What is (are) your most important problem(s) with knowledge sharing within the company?

The CEO of the private company distributed the questions among its managers, and asked them to send their answers directly to the researcher's email address as soon as possible. One of the managers of the private company replied after four days and mentioned that insufficient knowledge of the English language is the cause of lack of communication among managers, especially with the parent company. In order to avoid the effect of insufficient knowledge of English on the managers' response, a Farsi translation of the questions was then sent to the CEO of both companies with the request that they re-distribute this among their managers and inform them that they need not reply in English, but could put their answers in a Farsi word file, and attach it to an email. After one month responses had been received from 8 of the 13 managers in the private company (5 in Farsi, and 3 in English), but only one direct reply from a manager in the public company was forthcoming. The reasons for the low response rate from the public company managers included higher levels of bureaucracy in the organisation, and also delay in sending questions to those managers because of having no direct contact with the CEO to follow up the response. The responses were translated from Farsi to English by the researcher, and discussions were held with my supervisor in order to create the interview structure. In the

public company, questions were sent to the training department to be distributed and then answers were to be gathered, but the researcher was not informed about that. In the public company, 15 of the 41 managers who received the questions, responded. The researcher did not have access to their answers until visiting the company for data collection, and being introduced to the training department to arrange access to other departments.

4.3.3 Sampling

The stratified random sampling approach was used for data collection in the two companies, in order to obtain sample that included different levels in each company. The respondents included managers, supervisors, experts, technicians, foremen, administrative staff, and workers. The sampling was done by obtaining a list of all the people working on the three sites of the private company; allocating numbers to each individual, and then randomly selecting respondents based on the population of each department so that the percentage from each was at least equal to the percentage of total employees in that department to the total number of employees in the whole company. For the sample of managers in the public company, the intention was to interview those (15 out of 41 managers) who had responded to the two initial questions, as their response showed that they were not reluctant to answer questions, and this improved the quality of data collected. During the three months of data collection, the training department arranged for interviews with six of those managers. The other managers interviewed were from assembly line number 4, which covers ten (10) work zones of the public company. Based on the population of each zone, a proper sample was selected from workers of all ten zones. This assembly line operates 24 hours in three rotating shifts, and because of some limitations, such as the length of the researcher's stay after daily working hours in the factory, access to shift B, which was operating in the morning (8 am to 4 pm) was available. Altogether 37 individuals were interviewed from different levels of the public company. All respondents from the three sites of the private company were selected using stratified random sampling; and 50 respondents were selected from this company including 15 from headquarters (13 males, 2 females), 8 from the Sales and after Sales Services Department (6 males, 2 females), and 27 from the factory (25 males, 2 females).

It may be asked whether the rank of individuals affected the way they answered, in which respect, this was not the case. There were two main groups of individuals: managers and workers. In the majority of their answers, managers supported the workers' ideas. Also different ranks of managers (e.g. supervisors, and managers) had the same ideas regarding

the questions. For example, the CEO, managers, and foremen in the private company had the same views regarding the top-down idea generation in the company. As another example, different ranks in the public company (e.g. managers, supervisors, and workers) had the same views regarding the role of a suggestion system as a facilitator of knowledge sharing in the company.

4.3.4 Interviews

Before travelling to Iran for data collection, the researcher designed the draft of the interview structure using four cultural dimensions (Cunha and Cooper, 2002) as the base, and revised it based on comments from his supervisor. The interview structure was sent to some other academics inside and outside Aston University, and on the basis of comments received by six of these people, the interview structure was finalised after further discussion with the researcher's supervisor. Data collection was carried out in a three-month period from June to August 2004 in Iran, using face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The qualitative face-to-face interview has been used as the main technique to collect data by knowledge management researchers (Puddy et al, 2001; Hislop et al., 2000; Eriksson et al., 2000; Shani et al., 2000; Dyer and Nonaka 2000; Bresman et al., 1999; Sonja, 1992). It is considered to be a valid and reliable instrument for data collection, because "it is flexible, accessible, intelligible, and highly illuminative of important and often hidden aspects of human behaviour" (Hannabuss, 1996).

Communication was an important part of the data collection, and in order to create a friendly environment, it was necessary to establish a good relationship with informants. The length of 87 interviews in two companies was 69 hours and 52 minutes, being comprised of 41 hours and 29 minutes for 50 interviews in the private company, and 28 hours and 23 minutes for 37 interviews in the public company. The average length of the interviews in both companies was 49 minutes per person. The average length of the interviews in the public company was 46 minutes (60 minutes for managers and 37 minutes for workers); and the average length of the interviews in the private company was 50 minutes (59 minutes for managers, and 41 minutes for workers).

A common problem regarding data collection in organisations is that subordinates may think that their viewpoints will be discussed with their managers and thus, they would not declare their actual opinion. In order to communicate effectively and to be seen as

impartial and friendly by the respondents, and to increase the reliability of data, by decreasing the effect of limitations related to the interview, attempts were made by the researcher to create a friendly and informal environment by engaging in some informal talk with the respondents before the start of the interview. This was done by spending about ten minutes introducing myself as an academic researcher studying abroad, by asking questions related to their interests (e.g. questions about current football matches, marital status...); and by ordering a cup of tea or juice for them. In this introductory stage, the respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their information, and asked for their permission to record the interview on tape, and in some cases on videotape (only in the private company). In a few cases, the interviewees did not want to be recorded on videotape, but 30 such interviews in the private company were videotaped. The individuals involved were 18 managers, 4 supervisors, 2 foremen, and 6 workers. The length of recorded film was 1,385 minutes (on average 46 minutes per person). The reason for recording interviews on videotape was to have a back-up of the data in case of damage or loss of audiotapes, but this did not happen. Those videotapes can also be a visual source of data for further research in future (e.g. studying the body language).

For the better clarification of terms used in questions, about five minutes were spent explaining the meaning of terms such as data, information, knowledge, information sharing, and knowledge sharing, and giving some examples.

In addition, respondents were allowed to ask for explanations of sentences and words at any time they needed during the interview; and frequently they did ask and received detailed explanations. Respondents were asked to use the stop button of the cassette recorder or to ask for the video recording to be stopped at any time they wanted. However, this occurred on only two occasions, and hence it is very probably that respondents answered the questions honestly and have told the truth. Respondents were free to decide whether to participate in the interviews, and whether to allow tape or video-recording. Allowing their interviews to be recorded on audio and video-cassette was complete proof that respondents trusted the researcher, and it is natural when someone trusts another person to tell the truth to him/her. For example, one of the workers in the private company stated, *"Now you have come here I am telling you words of my heart; it is a reality"* (worker #3, Assembly line, private company). Another reason is that if they were reluctant to tell the truth and were afraid of losing their jobs because of their answers, it would be expected that they would speak in flattering terms of their managers and supervisors, whereas they frequently criticised their superiors and the existing relationship between

themselves and their superiors, while at the same time not wanting their superiors to be informed of their views about them. For example, one of the employees in the private company was interviewed in a room where there were some file storage cabinets, and during the interview her supervisor came into the room three times to collect files. Every time she entered the room, the interviewee stopped talking until she left the room. Although she was afraid to speak in front of her supervisor, she nevertheless criticised her superiors and their actions, as she believed “*They do not value workers and their viewpoints*” (*Sales employee, private company*). After the interview, one of the workers in the private company (*worker #2, Assembly line, private company*) on behalf of himself and some other workers, asked questions about the confidentiality of their interviews to make sure that their answers would not be shared with their managers. Clearly, their willingness to share with the researcher, information that criticised their superiors can be interpreted as complete confidence and trust in the research process. Further evidence of such trust is that other workers described some workers, who gave positive statements regarding their managers, as managers’ spies.

In addition to the tapes recorded and notes taken during the interviews as formal techniques of data collection, a fieldwork journal was also constructed by taking daily notes to use as reflections of the two companies, and as evidence to support the interview data. About 16 notes were made, which were used in different stages of the data analysis. For example, in the private company the notes were about the story of a spy, the lack of appropriate Internet access on the factory site, the story of a non-local manager about his son who was upset by another manager until he resigned and left the company, and the charity activities of the owner of the private company. The examples of such field notes in the public company included stories about the problems faced during the data collection in gaining access to departments, limitations on carrying my cassette recorder in the company, problems about getting the list of departments from the relevant department, and refusal by one of the key managers (HR Deputy) to be interviewed after arranging two appointments, the CEO’s visit on the assembly line, my unsuccessful attempts (telephone, letter, email, using related individuals as mediators) to have access to the CEO, and the contents of the meeting of a manager with foremen in the public company. Those field notes were used as evidence in support of the data analysis in the two companies.

I also took part in some meetings and visited the assembly lines of both companies. Using reflections from my field diary notes I refer to a story about the worker who was

mentioned as a spy by other workers. I made some video film during interviews using my camcorder. Every night I recorded camcorder tapes onto videotapes in the guesthouse of the private company. Once, when I was recording the interview of the above interviewee who had been a policeman before and was now working in the security department of the factory, the guesthouse caretaker was there and saw his picture on TV. He laughed and said *"Do you know what the workers call this man?"* I said no, what do they call him? He said *"They call him 'Antenna', because he always spies on other workers and reports it to the administrative manager"*.

I am also confident that I have followed up the questions using snowballing techniques to get the details clearly by asking further questions when there were new points or statements mentioned by the respondents, or if there was any ambiguity regarding the answers. I took notes during the interview, and used those notes for cross-checking the answers. When I noticed that there were occasionally contradictions in the respondents' answers to some questions, I interrupted the respondent concerned and told him/her that a given answer was contradicting his/her previous statements, and asked for clarification. In addition, respondents were allowed to ask for explanations of sentences and words at any time during the interview; and frequently they did ask and were given full explanations.

All the interviews (69 hours and 52 minutes) were transcribed, which resulted in about 1,700 pages in Farsi handwriting. After reading the interviews and deciding on the use of selected topics for the formal analysis, 24 different files were created, each for one subject for each company (e.g. identification, facilitators and barriers to knowledge sharing, two files for translation of selected interviews in each company, and 12 files for questions which emerged through the formal analysis). The English translation of selected quotes was put in those files comprising 554 pages of Microsoft Word files.

Two types of questions were asked of the respondents in the interviews. The first group of questions was about the organisational culture, and the second group related to idea generation and knowledge sharing in the companies. The same questions were asked in different ways to managers and workers, and were followed up based on their answers until a clear answer from each person resulted.

Questions about organisational culture included the feelings that the respondents had about their company, practices such as performance appraisal and the reward system, the

relationship between workers and managers, the amount and clarity of rules and regulations, the level of skills and practices used for the development of skills, the practices for idea generation in the company, and the existence of procedures to enhance co-operation and to reduce conflict between individuals and departments in the company.

Questions about knowledge sharing in the companies included: the way of encouraging people to share their knowledge, barriers and facilitators of knowledge sharing (e.g. things that make knowledge sharing easier, more difficult, etc), and the use of knowledge as a tool for sectional interests. Regarding barriers and facilitators of knowledge sharing, questions were asked in two ways, these being the respondent's general viewpoint about barriers and facilitators, and the respondent's views about the existence of those barriers and facilitators of knowledge sharing in their company. Specific questions about the types of knowledge were not asked, because the study's focus was on knowledge sharing as a behaviour, and not on any specific type of knowledge or content, or the value of the knowledge being shared.

Questions asked of workers about the organisational culture were as follows:

1. How would you describe what it feels like to work here?

→ Follow up:

- Is it a friendly or adversarial place?

- Does it make you feel bad or feel good?

- What are the main metaphors or terms that you would use to describe it to other people?

2. Does your company have a performance appraisal and reward system?

→ If yes:

Could you please describe the system, in terms of your understanding of how it works?

→ If no:

OK, you do not have a performance appraisal system – but in what ways are judgements of work quality made?

3. Thinking about the relationship that you and your co-workers have with management, how would you characterise it?

→ Follow up:

What are the main metaphors or terms that you would use to describe it to other people?

4. Is your organisation one in which there are a great many or relatively few rules and regulations?

→ Follow up:

- Can you give some examples of situations where people have hoarded knowledge productively for their own good?
- What do you think are the critical factors affecting how and why knowledge is sometimes shared and sometimes not?
- 10. From your perspective, what factors increase knowledge sharing among employees?
- 11. Can you give some examples of things that you think make knowledge sharing easier?
- 12. What sorts of things make sharing knowledge easy in this organisation?
- 13. What sorts of things make sharing knowledge difficult in this organisation?
- 14. Who do you think gains the most value from knowledge sharing in your organisation?
- Follow up:
 - Why do you think it works like this?
- 15. Who do you think gains the least value from knowledge sharing in your organisation?
- Follow up:
 - Why do you think it works like this?
- 16. What makes it difficult to share knowledge?
- 17. In your opinion how, when, and where does the most effective knowledge sharing take place?

The questions asked of managers and supervisors about organisational culture were as follows:

1. How would you describe what it feels like to work here?
 - Follow up:
 - Is it a friendly or adversarial place?
 - Does it make you feel bad or feel good?
 - What are the main metaphors or terms that you would use to describe it to other people?
2. Do you have a performance appraisal and reward system in your company?
 - If yes:

Could you please describe the system, in terms of your understanding of how it works?

 - If no:

OK, you do not have a performance appraisal system – but in what ways are judgements of work quality made?
3. Thinking about the relationship that you and your colleagues have with your subordinates, how would you characterise it?
 - Follow up:

What are the main metaphors or terms that you would use to describe it to other people?

4. Is your organisation one in which there are a great many or relatively few rules and regulations?

→ Follow up:

- How do your employees learn about these rules?
- Are these rules relatively clearly understood by everyone?
- Are these rules formally written down and available for people to read?

5. Is your organisation one in which there are a great many or relatively few new ideas generated?

→ Follow up:

- How does your company generate new ideas?
- Do employees have a role in generating new ideas? If so, could you give me some examples, please?
- If employees do not have a role to play in generating new ideas, where do you think such ideas come from?

6. Is your organisation one in which the employees have a great many or relatively few skills?

→ Follow up:

- How does your company develop skills in its managers, supervisors, and employees?
- What new skills have you learnt in the last twelve months?
- How did you learn these?

7. Does your organisation have any programmes or procedures that it uses to try and enhance co-operation and reduce conflict between employees and departments?

→ Follow up:

- If yes, please explain how?
- Can you give me some examples of how these work?

In the field of knowledge sharing, the following questions were asked of managers and supervisors:

8. In this organisation, are people encouraged to share their knowledge?

→ If yes, follow up:

- In what ways are they encouraged to do so?
- Are these programmes effective or ineffective?
- Please provide some examples of some that you think have been effective and some that you think have been ineffective.

9. Sometimes people use knowledge as a tool for their own sectional interests - does that happen much here?

→ Follow up:

- Can you give some examples of situations where people have shared knowledge productively for the greater good?
- Can you give some examples of situations where people have hoarded knowledge productively for their own good?
- What do you think are the critical factors affecting how and why knowledge is sometimes shared and sometimes not?

10. From your perspective, what factors increase knowledge sharing among employees with one another and employees with their supervisors and managers?

11. From your perspective, what factors increase knowledge sharing among supervisors and managers with one another?

12. Can you give some examples of things that you think make knowledge sharing easier?

13. What sorts of things make sharing knowledge easy in this organisation?

14. What sorts of things make sharing knowledge difficult in this organisation?

15. Who do you think gains the most value from knowledge sharing in your organisation?

→ Follow up:

- Why do you think it works like this?

16. Who do you think gains the least value from knowledge sharing in your organisation?

→ Follow up:

- Why do you think it works like this?

17. What makes it difficult to share knowledge?

18. In your opinion how, when, and where does the most effective knowledge sharing take place?

To avoid missing any ideas, which respondents were inclined to share with me, I added the last question after conducting a few interviews and finding that some respondents wanted to say something more:

Q: In addition to the questions I asked, if there is anything else that you wish to tell me, please feel free to share it with me.

4.3.5 Reflexivity

Regarding the reflexivity in my research during the research processes, it is necessary to discuss the following questions:

1. Did my presence cause people to give certain types of answers (e.g. did I make it too clear that sharing knowledge is a good thing)? The answer is yes, because I spent about 5 minutes before each interview explaining the key terms used in my questions, such as information, knowledge, information sharing, and knowledge sharing. I also explained the examples of knowledge sharing that enhance the organisational tasks in terms of reduction of time, cost, and the amount of material used in the production process; or the increase of safety or making the job easier for workers. I did this because I wanted interviewees to focus their answers on their knowledge-sharing behaviours. The fact that I communicated the value of knowledge sharing seems less important than that those interviewees were made aware of this as the focus of my inquiry.

A probable criticism here could be that the interviewees wanted to please me by exaggerating the amount of knowledge that was shared. My answer is that respondents did not answer in this way. Because for example, they said, that either knowledge sharing was low (e.g. in the private company), or that they encountered many difficulties (e.g. work pressure, fatigue, and lack of time for knowledge sharing with colleagues in the public company).

2. For my research I defined culture as 'values, norms, and practices' which exist in an organisation, rather than what an organisation is. There are different definitions of culture that would lead to a completely different kind of data and results. However, the adoption of this definition influenced the data collection, analysis, and writing of my thesis. For example, in the culture part of my interview structure I asked questions about the viewpoint of participants about the existing situation and what they believed about it (values), and their beliefs about the behaviour of other colleagues (norms), and also different types of routines (formal and informal) that were used in the organisation for getting work done (practices). It certainly would affect the content of my interview structure if, for example, I had asked people to tell me who they were as an organisation. It also was useful in the categorisation for analysis of my data in each company, and for writing my thesis.

3. Did I assume that knowledge flows in a particular direction (e.g. from superior to subordinate)? The answer is no, because my research aimed to investigate knowledge-sharing behaviour in general, not in a specific direction. For instance, I asked questions in general about the encouragement of knowledge sharing in the company. But, if there were

some important points that I thought could lead to useful data if followed up, then I would ask some extra questions.

4. What would have been the result if I had treated managers and workers as more complex categories (e.g. 'good workers' and 'benevolent managers' etc)? The answer is that I did not treat managers and workers as more complex categories because my research aimed to study the effect of organisational culture as a whole (not a specific sub-culture or group of members); and also it would have affected the answers, through biased questions that could direct the respondents' answers, and influence the results of the research.

5. I assumed that people are motivated by monetary rewards, but why is there a need for a financial motive? The answer is that at the national level there is a high rate of inflation, and also a lack of a credit system in Iran for the financial needs of individuals; thus, it was expected that monetary rewards would be regarded as an important factor in the encouragement of knowledge sharing. Yet what would have happened if I had assumed that the lack of knowledge sharing is a natural bi-product of conflict and interpersonal dislike (e.g. we share knowledge with people whom we like)? Although there were some other sources of conflict in both companies (e.g. different salary and reward for three groups of workers in the public company, and small size of the private company that leads to more face-to-face interactions between individuals), I did not assume the lack of knowledge sharing as a natural bi-product of conflict; instead I assumed that conflict might affect the level of knowledge sharing in the company. Therefore, I asked general questions about the existence of routines for conflict resolution, and followed these up based on the answers, which I thought might be related to knowledge sharing.

6. I was not interested in the type or importance of knowledge shared, but rather in knowledge sharing as behaviour. This affected the method of my data collection, because had I wanted to investigate the type or the importance of knowledge shared, I would have needed to include the existing documents about the ideas submitted to the suggestion system in the public company, or the suggestion box in the private company to find out the importance (e.g. the amount of cost reduction) or the type of knowledge shared (e.g. technical, clerical, or general).

7. Have I measured knowledge sharing as a past behaviour or have I measured the intention to share knowledge? In my data collection and data analysis, I relied mostly on

past behaviour which was described by interviewees (e.g. their stories about the past and the result of those stories).

8. I assumed that 'knowledge' is something hard as a solution or an answer. Yet what would have been the result if I had assumed that knowledge is soft like a question or a problem? Or if I had assumed that knowledge is argued over and negotiated? I remained uncommitted on this and allowed the interviewees to decide whether it was soft (merely raising a problem) or hard (suggesting a solution). Often the nature of the suggestion system method was that if you suggest a solution you are implicitly saying there is a problem so both types of knowledge are involved.

9. I assumed that knowledge could be put in a suggestion box like a self-contained physical object. Yet what would have resulted if I had assumed that knowledge could not be taken out of context, in terms of arising from a need to solve a situated problem? The suggestion contained the employee's name and section and job. It contained many situated aspects that could then be used to understand the value and meaning of the suggestion. But can I separate behaviour (knowledge sharing) from knowledge? In most cases the nature of the suggestion system meant that the behaviour (sharing knowledge) required communicating both soft and hard knowledge together.

4.3.6 Limitations and Problems Faced in the Data Collection Process

It is generally hard to gain access to public companies in Iran. Although I tried to make arrangements for my data collection in advance by sending emails to the CEO of the public company, and he agreed and introduced me to managers for data collection, there were still some limitations to my data collection in that company. Because of the bureaucratic system, I spent a long time making arrangements with people at different levels before I was able to start any data collection. For example, although the CEO agreed to my collecting data and all relevant departments were informed, I nonetheless spent a further four days after these arrangements requesting three times by telephone, letter and making an approach in person, to have access to the list of staff in different departments from the related office. I had to extend my permission from the security department of the public company during my data collection. Despite having a formal letter of permission, every day when I arrived at the company, I had to spend 10-15 minutes at the security office at the main door to arrange my entrance with the related department via telephone. Managers' time limitation and their disinclination to be interviewed was another problem in the public

company. The main reason for disinclination of the managers seems to be more political than personal. During the three months, I could interview only six of the 15 managers who had responded to my previous emailed questions. I arranged an appointment on two occasions with the Human Resource Deputy of the company and on the first occasion, I entered his office to start the interview, but he did not allow the interview to proceed. Another limitation in the public company was the rigid rule regarding the leakage of information from inside the company to the outside. For example, carrying a camera, camcorder, floppy disc, CD, and any other computer accessories inside into or out of the company is prohibited. I could take my cassette recorder into the company to record interviews after special registration at the security office. The environment in the private company regarding data collection was much more relaxed and supportive, and I was even allowed to film from the start of work in that company and at all stations of the assembly line.

4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage consisted of searching for repeated patterns through reading of the interview transcripts. The second stage was formal analysis after the selection of patterns. During the informal analysis, I started to examine transcripts and looked for repeated patterns, which were important for the analysis. After the selection of patterns and discussion with my supervisor, some patterns that were thought irrelevant (e.g. size, uncertainty, contingency, and resource dependency) were disregarded and others, which seemed to be more relevant to knowledge-sharing behaviour, were selected for formal analysis. These patterns included identification, middle managers, trust, suggestion system, reward and appraisal system, relationship between workers and managers, conflict, and nepotism, all of which will be discussed in detail in the analysis chapters.

4.4.1 Formal Analysis

As an inductive research methodology, grounded theory was used for formal analysis; developing hypotheses extracted from the text of interviews and comparing those texts with the current literature, looking for selected patterns. To use data for analysis, I created separate files for managers and workers using MSWord software. I saved English translations of selected quotes from employees of both the private and public company in separate files. These files were created to engage with the theory in the fields of feeling of identification with CEO/company, idea generation, knowledge sharing process and the

existence of systems for this process in each company, middle managers as barriers to knowledge sharing, relationship between managers and subordinates, and facilitators of and barriers to knowledge sharing in each company. On the suggestion of my supervisor, who consulted two other academics with previous experience of supervising non-English students with data in other languages, I decided that there was no need to translate all the data into English (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, pp. 285-6). As a result I translated relevant quotes for each category and put those in files. I translated three interviews from each company to show the data characteristics to my supervisor.

For the formal analysis of data, I carried out the following steps in accordance with the grounded theory (Straus and Corbin, 1990):

First, I read through all the transcripts to get the initial idea for categorisation of data. In this stage, I found a high number of themes which seemed to be suitable for analysis. I discussed these with my supervisor and, based on his comments, I made a framework for the initial coding. This framework contained three broad headings: structure, culture and knowledge sharing. These broad headings contained job satisfaction, job security, team working, attachment to the company, training system, relationship between superiors and subordinates, silence behaviour, upward influencing, work speed and pressure, free time for workers, company size, company age, meetings, projects, age of workers, face-to-face contact, hierarchy, competition, inter-departmental rivalry, belief about knowledge sharing, organisational position, age differences between superiors and subordinates, nepotism, educational level of employees, fairness of suggestion system, formalisation, bureaucracy, rules and regulations.

In the second step, in order to limit the range of themes, I started the initial coding to identify proper ideas for the analysis. Coding is an operation by which data are broken down, conceptualised, and put together in new ways (Straus and Corbin, 1990). In this stage the main themes included organisational identification, trust, resource access, appraisal and reward system, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, training, communication, existing situation of knowledge sharing, level of idea generation, facilitators of knowledge sharing, barriers to knowledge sharing. These themes contained some of the initial themes; and some of them were disregarded. I read through interview transcripts from both companies to find significant differences between them. I also conducted a literature review for those themes to decide which to use for the next stage.

The third step included identifying main themes and findings, and I continued reading through the transcripts to find explanations of each theme in terms of three aspects: identifying a particular belief/action, the reason for that belief or action, and the effect of that particular belief or action. I selected categories, which seemed to be central, and appeared frequently in the data, and some logical and consistent explanations developed by relating those categories (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 147). After discussing the results of the previous step with my supervisor, in order to answer the questions that emerged from discussion, I created separate files (one file for each question for each company), and put relevant quotes from my data in each file by reading the transcripts from each company. These quotes contained reasons, effects, and the way of describing the subject by managers and workers as the base for the analysis chapters. In this step I searched through my data for the answer to the following questions that emerged from themes:

1. What do workers and managers think about middle managers' motives for acting as barriers to knowledge sharing in the company?
2. What are managers' explanations or excuses for acting as barriers to knowledge sharing, and what do workers think about those excuses?
3. What language do workers and managers use to describe the hiding of knowledge by workers, supervisors, and managers?
4. What language do workers and managers use to describe showing off through knowledge sharing?
5. What methods do workers use for hiding knowledge or showing off and what do managers think about this?
6. What use do managers make of workers' knowledge sharing (steal ideas, punish workers, and claim ideas as their own) and how is this described by workers and managers?
7. How is competence-based trust and benevolence-based trust by workers in managers expressed by workers and claimed by managers?
8. How do workers refer to trust as personal (individual manager) or impersonal (system, rules, higher manager, invisible)?
9. Do managers say anything about personal relationships versus an impersonal system?
10. How do workers and managers express their identification with the company?
11. What needs of workers and managers are satisfied by their identification with the organisation? (e.g. safety, affiliation, self-enhancement, and holistic meaning)

12. Why do workers continue to identify with a company despite managers acting as barriers to knowledge sharing?
13. What is the organisational identity (separately for workers and for managers? Who they are as an organisation)?
14. How much of a contradiction is there in the data of worker-to-worker or manager-to-manager?

In the fourth step, I checked findings with the literature to see if they were new. I did this by using key words for search via electronic journals. In the fifth stage, after checking the availability or lack of support for my findings from my data, I ignored those findings which were not novel or were not supported by considerable quotes, and kept three new findings for more detailed analysis. Those three findings contradicted the current literature in the fields of middle management, organisational identification, and bureaucracy.

In the last step (final coding), I undertook a deeper analysis based on quotes extracted from reading transcripts, and translating the relevant quotes from them. Appendices C and D display some examples of the final coding, and Appendix E contains examples of quotations taken from transcripts. I did not use any computer software for my data analysis, because firstly my data was in Farsi language and there is no software for the analysis of Farsi data. Another reason is that if I wanted to use software, which is usually used for the analysis of English text, I had to translate whole interview transcripts (about 1,700 pages) and it would have required a long period of time, even more than the time spent on the manual analysis. The final coding included the main headings of the analysis chapters. There were some common headings for both companies, such as organisational identification, description of the current situation of knowledge sharing in the company, facilitators of knowledge sharing, and barriers to knowledge sharing. There were also some specific headings for each company, for example, suggestion system in the public company, and middle managers as barrier to knowledge sharing in the private company. For every heading in the analysis, I created a statement by linking categories extracted from data, and those statements were frequently discussed and revised in meetings with my supervisor. There were some sub-categories for each category, which I explained in separate statements and each statement was supported by associated quotes. I used categories of quotes that were saved in separate files.

To facilitate access to quotes and prevent the mistake of using quotes interchangeably, I created a coding system with a 4 digit code for each informant. The first left digit denotes the company code (Public company = 1, and private company = 2); and the second left digit represents the position (Manager = 1, supervisor = 2 and worker = 3). I have defined

bosses and chiefs and managers as managers; and defined foremen and supervisors as supervisors; and defined clerical workers and manual workers as workers. The third and fourth digits of the code are allocated to the number of persons in between others at the same level (starting from 01 to maximum 99). For easy access to the interview text, I added two more digits to codes after the slash sign (/) to designate the page number of the interview and the line number in the page. For example code (2312/15/12) in front of a quote, means that this sentence is chosen from line 12, page 15 of the interview of the 12th worker of the private company. In the last copy of my thesis, I replaced codes for the informants' title. Appendices A and B show the coding list of both companies.

I analysed data from each company in a separate chapter and reached a conclusion for each company. I put the conclusions together and reached my research findings, and linked the findings to the literature, in the discussion chapter.

Chapter Five: Analysis of Findings in the Private Company

Introduction

This chapter contains the analysis of data from workers and managers in the private company, and a conclusion. In the chapter the data is connected with the different topics mentioned in the literature review, these being: identification, trust, relationships, nepotism, conflict, middle managers, and reward system. In each section the existing situation of the company is described under these headings, which are related to the effect of Iranian national culture on organisational culture, and their effects on the knowledge-sharing behaviour of employees in the private company are analysed. In the conclusion, the research findings are linked to the most important barriers to, and facilitators of, knowledge-sharing behaviour, as a part of the company's organisational culture.

5.1. Organisational Identification

In the literature review Iranian national culture was found to emphasise the importance of paternalism and in particular the role of the father. As a consequence, this study's interest lies in the importance of the effect of identification with the CEO on work behaviour. Tajfel (1978, p. 63) defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his or her knowledge of his or her membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership". Social identification is the person's emotional involvement with a particular group. According to Pratt (1998, p. 183), "identification with social groups satisfies a whole range of human needs", for example, the need for safety or the need for affiliation. Pratt (1998, p. 183-184) also points out that identification with organisations satisfies the individual's holistic need, via providing meaning and helping the person "to find a sense in his or her life". Therefore, identification can be seen as regarding the employee as an individual as a whole, and this influences the cognitions, feelings, and behaviours of the individuals. In order to determine an individual's strength of identification with an organisation, it is necessary to investigate the existence of some feelings of individuals. According to the literature (Abrams, 1992; Cheney, 1983; Doosje et al., 1995; Lee, 2004; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Bhattacharya and Elsbach 2002; Feather and Rauter, 2004; van Riel et al., 1994; Mowaday et al., 1979), individuals' identification with an organisation can be defined by the following measures:

- 1- A feeling of belonging to the organisation

- 2- Congruency between organisational goals and values
- 3- Positive organisational membership
- 4- Organisational support
- 5- Recognition of distinct contributions
- 6- A feeling of acceptance; and
- 7- A feeling of security.

It is necessary to note that most previous studies have used an identification questionnaire with multiple options for data collection, which means that respondents had to select one of the options; whereas, the data in this study was gathered using interviews and there were no direct questions about identification; and that which was said by the interviewees was said willingly. On the other hand, interviewees showed spontaneous identification rather than passive identification in response to questions. Thus, the data is unbiased, although it is likely that it does not cover all identification measures used in previous studies. According to the data analysis, identification with the organisation by workers in the private company is high; and they demonstrated their identification with the company in different ways which could be categorised into two main groups depending on the sources of identification: extra-organisational sources (e.g. locality or tribal, nationality as Iranian, company as provider of family expenses,) and intra-organisational sources (CEO of the company, young company, friendly place, company as extended family, company as a producer, workplace as home, always be there, enjoyable job). The detailed analysis of the workers' feelings regarding their identification with the company, now follows.

5.1.1. Feeling of Belonging to the Organisation

The feeling of belonging is one of the most common states, which can be observed of identification with the organisation. Workers in the private company declared their feeling of belonging to their company in different ways, especially identifying with the company as extended family. Family is one of the most important institutions in Iranian culture; when workers compare their belonging to the company with their home or family it is a signal of their strong feeling of belonging and identification with their company. Additionally, it is common in Iranian culture as a set of Islamic and Persian cultural traditions, that when people are satisfied with their situation and want to emphasise their satisfaction, they thank God (e.g. praise be to God) in their statements. The following quotes demonstrate the workers' feeling of belonging to the company:

“The environment is friendly. We do not feel here is a workplace, we feel here is like a family environment; I am serious, all of the guys here feel like family” (security worker #1, private company).

“Environment is completely friendly. For example I spend half of 24 hours of my life in the factory; I mean this factory is my second home. From early morning when we come at 7:30 am until 4:30 pm that we are together with the guys, we are members of one family; it does not make any difference from which section or department, we are all together and we have a friendly environment; and praise be to God now it is like that, we have a friendly environment” (security worker #2, private company).

“By God, the feeling that I have, I feel satisfied; because before I got the job I did not think that I could manage to work in my society but now that I am working here I see that I am very helpful and I can do many jobs; I am happy that I am working here. Now this environment is somehow that it can be said is according to my desire” (employee, Production Control Department, private company).

Using the metaphor ‘a drop in the sea’ is another example of a high feeling of belonging to the organisation. It is very hard to separate a specific drop of water from the sea; so a worker using this metaphor to describe his social identity, which is declared in the following extract, can be interpreted as a very strong feeling of belonging to his company:

“All praise be to God that I am able to do a useful job here. As I am like a drop in this sea that this sea is a place that makes cars...and at last I can twist for example, a screw of this car; I am very happy regarding this” (employee, Production Control Department, private company).

5.1.2. Positive Organisational Membership

A positive feeling towards being a member of the organisation is the most frequent theme found in workers’ statements about their identification with the private company. Workers identified with their company by asserting the feeling of being glad, or feeling happy at being a member of the company; or wishing to work in the company for as long as they can; and even having a feeling of being alive in their work. The following quotes support the existence of positive feelings towards the workers’ membership of the private company:

“In my personal view I have a good feeling of working here. Because I am in my local area, close to my living place (local area) and that the level of my colleagues’ thought is understandable and we understand each other well; it is attractive to me” (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

“I have a feeling of satisfaction of working here. I say I am satisfied because I am interested in my work, but there is much difficulty beside it” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

"My feeling is a happy feeling that I work here in this company and it has caused the progress of our city. I am very happy that production of this factory has increased; its production has been good this year, I like its production to be more than this" (worker #3, Painting Line, private company).

In some cases the workers' identification was related to their early days of starting work in the company, since the factory was being built when they were employed as construction workers. This resulted in workers seeing themselves as nurturers of the company since the first days of its life; which as a result increased their positive feelings towards it.

"By God as I said when we entered this company in 1380 (2000) when the project was started, the project manager said 'guys, this is not an auto factory yet, you must work with shovel and pick; you must come and do construction work'. We did construction work for about one year and now the factory is developed and produces cars" (worker #6, Assembly Line, private company).

"I am a worker on the painting line, and my feeling regarding this factory starts from the first day that I was employed; I have made a promise that when I enter this factory, to do my best regarding physical aspect and experiences and feeling. By God's help until now I am happy with this factory and I have not seen any problem from its managers and supervisors and God willing I will not see any in the future. I can say that compared to Iranian companies, our company is at a good level regarding production culture, production, sale and any other thing" (worker #2, Painting Line, private company).

Considering the job as an inseparable part of life is another example of a strong tie and high identification with the company, as is stated by one of the workers in the private company.

"At the first grade it can be said that I am very interested in my job, I mean I consider it as an inseparable part of my life; and it can be said that I am alive with work" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

A strong tie with the company makes workers want to remain with it for as long as possible:

"I say to you that I like to stay in this organisation as long as this company exists ...Yes, I like to stay here because I am really happy with the performance of the company management" (reception employee, private company).

"I really like as long as I exist to be in the service of this factory; as long as I have knowledge that can be put to the service of this factory" (worker #3, Painting Line, private company).

5.1.4. Feeling of Security

As another aspect of identification, workers in the private company have mentioned satisfaction of their need for safety. Individuals' feeling of acceptance by the company is one of the reasons that workers identify with it. Due to the high rate of unemployment in the area in which the factory is located, the number of applicants for jobs in the factory has been very high, and workers have been selected from this large pool of available labour after taking an IQ test and interview. These workers consequently feel that they are accepted as qualified workers for their job. The majority of the workers have identified positively with the company as a provider and explained how they and their family have benefited from their employment there. As a result of the importance of family in Iranian society, one of the most important stages of life for a young person in Iran is marriage. Financial support for providing accommodation and the necessities of life for young couples is essential, and because of the lack of an appropriate credit system for obtaining loans, marriage is not possible without having a job. Some workers have identified with the company as their supporter for getting married and many married workers have mentioned their gratitude to the company that puts food on the table of their families. Workers have declared their satisfaction in terms of safety needs by expressing their ability to solve their living problems, to feel comfortable and tranquil in the following statements:

"Yes, I have a good feeling of working here, because my living costs come from here; my living needs are met from here. I am a tenant and I have been married for three years, since I came and started my job in the factory. My living needs are met from here and I have nowhere else. I work here with all my effort, God willing the company remains active and we can be here as long as it exists" (worker #3, assembly Line, private company).

"I have a good feeling of working here. I am tranquil, I am happy because I am interested in my job and I am working in my own department" (worker, Repair and Maintenance Department, private company).

"As I said I have been serving in the army and now that I am working here I feel tranquil and good, because we do our job in the best manner" (security worker #2, private company).

5.1.5. Sense of a Common Goal and Success with the Company

Another facet of identification is viewing organisational goals as personal goals, and supporting the organisation so it is successful. Workers in the private company identified in this way, using the term 'we' and wanting success for the company, as in the following statements:

“What I have seen during this period is a growing trend that we observe that every day we are developing more; we have a growing trend. I think, I mean I feel that I am satisfied that I am working in (the company name) and I am sure that in the not so distant future we will reach our goals and wishes” (office secretary, private company).

“At the first stage I am happy that the factory progresses in this province and gets enhanced” (worker #6, Assembly Line, private company).

“We wish success for this company. I like it now that ten cars are produced per day; to be increased three-four fold of this, because when production increases we have both work progress and individual progress. I wish this company to be one day the best company in Iran” (worker #3, Painting Line, private company).

5.2. Identification with the Company’s CEO

Although identification with the company’s CEO by workers in the private company can be seen as a way of identifying with their company, according to the workers’ statements, the reason for their identification with the CEO can be interpreted as more personal rather than impersonal, as they focus on his characteristics, such as his honesty, humbleness, care and his concern for the workers, and also his ease of communication, close and friendly relationship with workers, and his decision to establish the factory in their poor area. The following quotes support this statement:

“Since I entered this company I saw integrity in the manager, the top manager. This is much enough for me, I like too much to work with honest individuals. Compared to places that I have worked before, stealing is less here, I mean they have not, is zero. Err... I am very happy that I am working here” (Sale employee, private company).

“I appreciate the company CEO for the establishment of the factory in this poor area and province of the country. Considering inflation and unemployment in the country, personnel must appreciate this investment” (security worker #2, private company).

“In my view the CEO has a very good relationship with employees. Especially when he comes to the factory he has a very friendly relationship with workers” (employee, Production Control Department, private company).

5.3. Identification with Co-workers

Identification with the group plays an important role in facilitating and increasing co-operation and is a crucial factor in lessening competition (Brewer and Kramer, 1986; Kramer and Brewer, 1984; Dawes and Thaler, 1988).

When employees identify with co-workers, there is a greater likelihood that they will identify with the company. One of the intra-organisational sources of identification with the private company was found to be a relationship between workers, which, because of their friendship and acquaintanceship outside the company, created a feeling of trust between workers and in turn positively affected their identification with the company as the provider of a place for them to work with their friends and fellow citizens. Individuals who identify with a group, when they talk about their group, usually state 'We' rather than 'They' to show their oneness with it. Workers in the private company described themselves as a distinct group, using the words 'We' and the informal term 'Guys' as a description of co-workers. On the other hand they usually used the term 'They' when referring to managers. It seems that hierarchy is not the only reason for this group identification, but also because the majority of the workers are local and they have friendly and familial relationships with each other. Tribalism is an important cause for their identification with co-workers, and which leads to friendly relations between them and concern about the problems of group members. Workers declared their identification as in the following statements:

"Environment is friendly with our colleagues, not with superiors, not with managers. We have not got much relationship with managers and supervisors. We have not got good relationships with our supervisors" (worker #1, Assembly Line, private company).

"Here we are all like brothers, we are like a family" (worker #2, Painting Line, private company).

"I have a family relationship with most of the workers in here, because of this our workplace is friendly (worker #3, Painting Line, private company).

5.4. Organisational Identification by Managers in the Private Company

Managers identified with the private company, but it seems that organisational identification satisfies different needs for managers than for workers. For example, managers mostly identified with the positive values of the company and with the company owners to satisfy

their holistic and belonging needs, while workers' identification was more linked to their lower level of needs, such as those for safety and sustenance.

Managers show their respect for those positive values that they think are more related to the beliefs, intentions and behaviours of the owners of the company, who are also the members of the board of directors. They view the ideas and viewpoints of the company's top managers, as very different from other top managers in the private sector. Managers described the owners of the company as people whose intentions are only to please God; to behave at the highest level of humanity towards the prosperity of industry and the environment, and as individuals who value the company's employees. The message of the company chairman on their website explicitly supports the managers' ideas about him. In his message, he states:

“Shareholders and managers from generation to generation are obliged to spend the benefits and the profits of this company only in the right way, and for the pleasure of God the Almighty. The sublime God is always watching our actions and our intentions; and we hope that while this company is on the right path and on the road of giving service to people; to be saved under the patronage of God”.

This message is a kind of mission statement of the company that declares “where it wants to be and whom it wants to serve” (Brown, 1998, p. 13). In addition, information was gathered in informal talks with members of the board of directors during lunch, about the benevolence of the owner of the company and his family, and their charitable works. The company belongs to four brothers and other family members. The chairman (the main owner of the company) has undertaken many charitable acts including donations for building schools, mosques and universities, payment of tuition fees of poor students at private universities, and for many other cultural and educational purposes. One of his sons is the company CEO, and his other son is manager of the Sales and After Sales Services Department. Both of these people also do charitable work as well, but at a lower level than their father. Their donations are made to people whom they do not know via mediators that they trust. This can be interpreted as contrary to the notion that “managers' paternalism is a way of controlling employees' behaviour”, because they mostly donate for charitable purposes to communities and individuals that they have no contact with, and therefore there is no expectation of any reciprocal benefit from their actions. Managers identified with the positive values of the company in the following quotes:

"I have a feeling of high satisfaction of working here; because top managers of this company really behave at the highest level of humanity, and their actions and behaviours are mostly towards the prosperity of industry, the prosperity of environment, and valuing individuals and employees of the company. I think top managers of the company are thinking more about the welfare of employees and promotion of industry and less about their own welfare and financing. I have had contact with many artisans and industrial managers; I see that here is a big difference between ideas and viewpoints of top managers of this company with others" (consultant of the CEO and directorates, private company).

"This issue that I know the owners of this company, my knowledge about them and their goals; and this issue that I know how they will spend the profits of the company; all these have made me to be interested in my job" (manager, Construction Project Department, private company).

Holistic meaning is so important for some managers that they see their personal life completely mixed with the company, as one manager declared in the following quote:

"The reality is that during these two current years (the company name) has become everything to me. The reality is that I wake up with (the company name), I sleep with (the company name), and I dream of (the company name). I mean everything of mine has focused on (the company name)" (manager, Project Department, private company).

Other managers have identified with the company to satisfy the need for holistic meaning, as follows:

"I feel that I am useful; not only for this factory but also for the industry of the country" (Factory Manager, private company).

"I say because of my country, because of the local area, and young individuals who are unemployed; I have accepted all of its difficulties here; and I feel that it has created a satisfaction for me, and I have changed its difficulty to tranquillity for myself" (manager, Production Department, private company).

Managers declared their feeling of belonging as a feeling of identification with the company, using the terms 'We' and 'My company' and viewing the company's problems as their own, and talking about their work experiences from the early days of the company's establishment. This feeling of belonging satisfies managers' needs for holistic meaning, as stated in the following quotes:

"I use my information for the progress of my company ...I can say that we have nothing less than a similar organisation with 40 years of age; but also we have got more" (manager, After Sales Department, private company).

"I have been the first person that co-operated from the first day to establish this company; as a result I feel responsible for every problem that exists in this company" (manager, R&D Department, private company).

"My feeling is that I conceive this factory as my own ... and I feel that I am the original shareholder and the original owner of the company" (manager, Finance Department, private company).

Contrary to the majority of workers, few managers mentioned the need for safety as the reason for their identification with the company as follows:

"It will be useful for me and naturally useful for my colleagues... it can be said a feel of err...very friendly and security, friendly and with job security" (manager, Sales Department, private company).

"We want to work here, we want the company to be developed; alongside this development I live, in fact alongside this development I secure the future for my family and myself" (manager, Production Department, private company).

"Thank God, because as said, I am working in my own city, my own region, I am happy with this ... praise be to God, I am pleased. Any way, my job is in front of my home and we are satisfied with it, praise be to God" (supervisor, Unit Making Department, private company).

5.4.1. Emotional Effects of Identification

Identification with the company has influenced managers emotionally so that their feelings regarding their work in it are extremely positive. Managers showed their positive feelings regarding their work in different ways, testifying to job satisfaction, a feeling of duty and responsibility towards the company, and hopefulness about the company's future. For example, their job satisfaction is exposed in statements such as: *"these have made me interested in my job", "I love working in this company", "I have a high feeling of satisfaction of working here", "I have passed everything with satisfaction and I can say that I am very satisfied", "it has made me confident in my job", "I like my job...I feel it is good".* Managers also described a feeling of duty and responsibility towards their company, when they declared for example, *"a high feeling of responsibility and I think that I have a debt that certainly must be paid", "I have been able to do more than my formal duty", "responsible for every problem".* The positive values have made managers feel committed to the future of the company, so that they stated *"I prefer to be in the service of the company as long as I can", "we must work for them (company owners) as much as we can", "try at the highest level to help them to reach their goals", "time and place is not important for me, I usually come here at 6:30-7:00 in morning", "I have put all of my activities into it (company)", "I use my information for the progress of my company", "I will endeavour as much as I can, for the*

if his views were implemented in the company, it would become an ideal organisation, as mentioned in the following quotes:

"I see really the patience that our CEO has in meetings regarding the arguments and issues which are declared in those meeting. It is something that might be seen much less that he acts so soft with problems, with the personnel, and with suggestions. It creates a very affectionate environment" (manager, After Sales Department, private company).

"The personality of our CEO that in fact our personnel are very obedient to him; and may be one of factors is his personality that we all like problems of this company to be solved sooner" (manager, Production Department, private company).

"From the day we wanted to start working here, views of senior management (CEO) have been very interesting. I mean that bright view, interesting thoughts that if they are implemented in the company; I say that it will become an ideal company and a very good factory; that might be said I really think it will acquire a very high position at the level of province" (supervisor, Trim Department, private company).

5.5. The Identity of the Private Company as Young

Organisational identity, at the individual level, is described as "a cognitive image held by a member of an organisation" (Dutton, et al., 1994, p. 239), and also at a collective level, as the answer to this question, 'Who are we?' as "a collectively held frame within which organisational participants make sense of their world" (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, p. 357), which means a widespread agreement among all the members of an organisation about its characteristics. Organisational identity concerns those features of the organisation that members perceive as apparently central, continuing, and distinctive in character that contribute to how they define the organisation and their identification with it (Gioia and Thomas, 1996; p. 372). Managers and subordinates in the private company agreed on the identity of their company as a young company. Although, on the whole they were in agreement over this identity, it seems that each level views this young company through their own lenses. In sum, there are two main groups of characteristics that have been assigned to this young company, categorised by 'strengths' and 'weaknesses'. Managers have been more focused on the strengths, while workers have tended to consider its weaknesses. Strengths of the young company consist of "background for change and improvement", "potential for idea generation", a good and bright future, positive goals and values of the owners; and also fresh minded, talented, creative, and industrious individuals who have a feeling of duty towards their company. Weaknesses that some workers think are more visible than strengths are: working

under the condition of a government monopoly and limitations made by government for the private sector, getting experience via experiment that sometimes is costly for the company, a lack of systems for idea generation, visible weaknesses such as problems related to knowledge sharing and lack of plans for reducing conflicts. In this young company, managers are occupied by work, and their relationship with subordinates is described as weak; and discrimination between workers by superiors has made the heart of the workers “*full of pain*”. This young company has employed fresh-minded individuals who are not professionals, and its situation is not yet as stable as a mature company. The characteristics are explained in detail as follows.

5.5.1. Strengths of the Young Company

First of all, the CEO has declared that the young company has not yet passed the growth stage. This can be interpreted as his hopefulness about the ability of the company to proceed through this developmental phase and become mature, as mentioned in the following statement:

“We are a young company and we are growing in terms of production and organisational chart” (the CEO, private company).

Another manager, who is also a shareholder and director has also pointed to some potential strengths for this young company, such as creative and skilled members who are trying to create the company with their fullest effort:

“Basically, we are a young company and every department of the company is young; and those who are authorities of each department, in fact they are creating this organisation. They are creating this organisation themselves. Then they are individuals who are very creative, somehow are dominant over the work, they have much study, much communication, and they are implementing a system named (the company name); we are not in a stage that you assume like a company that has worked for years and now individuals are working in it. All of us are creating, and then all are in a very industrious period, full of idea, and creative” (manager, Sales and After Sales Service Department, private company).

This means that this manager has a high level of trust in the members’ potential to become skilled and also in relation to their positive characteristics. For example, the same manager again emphasised that highly talented members and skilled managers were strengths of the young company:

“Basically we tried to employ industrious individuals with high abilities, high talent, and high productivity and perseverance...Of course there are some

professional individuals at high managerial levels” (manager, Sales and After Sales Service Department, private company).

Another manager clearly stated the youth of managers as a strength that can improve the generation of ideas within the company.

“I said that because the system is a young and new system and fortunately most managers are young managers, still this background exists to hear what is said. Still the background for change exists, that if someone comes and gives a new idea they accept that, it can improve their system. Perhaps, this is one of strengths for this company” (manager, Construction Project Department, private company).

This attribute of the young company has created a warm feeling for one manager, who views this using the analogy of raising a good child, with the managers as the family. The use of the child metaphor by this manager signals the high attachment and commitment of managers regarding their company, as in the following quote:

“If I want to explain my feeling of working here, I say that because (the company name) is very young, my feeling is that working here is as beautiful as nurturing a child, which is as sweet as a child for each father and mother, I think we are growing up this child” (boss, Finance Department, private company).

Another manager viewed the potential for the establishment of a suggestion system, and facilitated contact with the CEO by the company members, as strengths of the company:

“Let me tell you that in our factory, well because it is young and we have just started the work; there is plenty of room for work regarding a suggestion system...there is a suggestion box and the CEO reads its suggestions” (manager, Production Department, private company).

Although managers referred to a suggestion box as a facilitator, workers mentioned it much less. This means that workers are not aware of, or do not trust, the suggestion box scheme as a way of knowledge sharing with the company.

The positive value of establishing this young company, that has solved the problems of some individuals in this poor area, is appreciated by one of the managers as follows:

“Considering the benevolent intentions of (the chairman of the company) and his family, that their goal of establishment of this company has been the removal of privation and providing jobs for unemployed individuals of this area; I feel in my turn if I can do something in this direction; I will have a proportion in their benevolent intentions” (manager, Administrative Department, private company).

This manager has also identified with the young company as a benefactor who likes to have a share in the benevolent actions of high-level managers in the removal of poverty in a poor area. Managers have identified with the positive values of the company, and predicted a bright future for it, and that has caused them to have a more positive feeling about working in a young company than in their previous workplace, as mentioned in the following quote:

“By God, my feeling of working here is a good feeling. I mean because I was working somewhere else before I enter this company; because this is a young company, and has good aims; God willing to reach its goals. I have a good feeling of working in this company” (supervisor, Trim Department, private company).

Managers are optimistic about the future of the company, and because of that, they feel that they have a duty to try to take this company to its highest point.

“Because this company is young, we must all endeavour to take this company to its highest point; in my viewpoint; I consider it as a feeling of duty” (supervisor, Unit Making Department, private company).

The reason why this local manager mentioned his feeling of duty is because he believed in its contribution to the region, as mentioned in the following quote:

“But in sum as I said we have a feeling of duty about this young company which is located in this region and we must struggle for it” (supervisor, Unit Making Department, private company).

Workers who described their company as a young company, were more focused on the weaknesses, and the only strength that one of the workers declared was the employees' inclination towards knowledge sharing.

“I said the company is young and is passing its progress route; individuals divulge any information or knowledge they have” (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

5.5.2. Weaknesses of the Young Company

Although as mentioned above, the CEO of the company has implicitly declared his hope for the company to pass the growth stage, he has explicitly accepted this characteristic as a disadvantage for the company, which has some problems regarding production and organisational rules. This means that the CEO has acknowledged the weaknesses regarding the age of the company, and he is aware of the situation caused by this.

“The company is young, and production is at the early stage, and we have not enacted most of rules and regulations...our problem is that we have not enough rules and regulations. Sometimes it happens that we have some works to do, but we have no rule regarding doing those works” (the CEO, private company).

Some disadvantages included licensing that has forced them to employ less professional members at lower levels of the company, declared by another manager as follows:

“The employees we have now in (the company name), because we are a young company and of course because of (the mother company) request, we employed fresh individuals that they can be formed with (the mother company) training, to get that form and can work with that format” (manager, Sales and After Sales Department, private company).

Another manager views “working under the conditions and rules of the country” as a disadvantage of their young company, as indicated in the following quote:

“Our company is still very young...because this company is a young company with its specific characteristics, a company that wants to work in this country, in addition to conditions and rules of this country” (manager, R&D Department, private company).

The most visible problem regarding this point is the government monopoly in large industries including the car industry. Although during the last decade there has been a move away from monopoly towards the private sector in car manufacturing, the conditions with constantly changing rules that usually favour the public sector, that still prevail, make for a highly problematic environment for this young company.

Another weakness of the young company, essentially working by trial and error, is described as “getting experience via experiment” by one of the managers as follows:

“Of course I need to explain it that our company is a young company...well, we are getting experience via experiment. We must assess weaknesses and strengths until we can acquire what is needed and ideal” (consultant of the CEO and directorates, private company).

The lack of experienced car manufacturing companies in the country is the reason for this problem. Then, as mentioned by other managers, this young company has to create all its systems by itself since there is no successful previous private company to be used as a benchmark. There was also a story from another manager (*manager, Painting Project Department, Private company*) about “getting experience via experiment” that has caused a huge loss in projects (e.g. in the power system of the factory that caused a loss of £55,000).

One manager complained about the lack of a system for knowledge sharing that prevented the company's high potential from being reached.

"We, it is young company with plenty of room for progress... but we have no system to collect, assess and select suggestions for implementation" (manager, Production Department, private company).

Managers also indicated the lack of a knowledge sharing system to be a result of the existing systems of the young and inexperienced company, as stated in the following quote:

"We have many problems regarding existing systems in the factory; and lack of encouragement for information sharing is one of them. Yes, assume that all of those are because this is the start of our work, and in fact we must create all systems, ourselves" (manager, Production Department, private company).

The existence of visible weaknesses in the company has been accepted as a natural characteristic of its youth; and because of that, managers feel good about working there, because they believe that those problems will be solved when the company matures, and becomes more successful in the future.

"Because this is a young company... Although well, I see some visible weaknesses inside the company, but generally my feeling is good, and I have a feel of bright future for this company" (supervisor, Trim Department, private company).

Operational managers mentioned poor morale as a weakness of the company, saying:

"The morale is weak. Yes, the morale is weak; but I just wanted to say to you that morale is weak and then workers are discouraged... but basically hearts are full of pain" (supervisor, Unit Making Department, private company).

This discouragement is not compatible with the other characteristics of the young company, such as young workers and managers, and hopefulness about the organisation's future, and the feeling of duty. There must be some reason that can explain these contradictions. Perhaps hierarchical problems and communication barriers have resulted in an environment within which even some managers feel pain in their heart and cannot easily talk about the problems caused by this feeling. Discrimination between workers was mentioned, as a problem that exists in their company and in every young company, and as the reason for reduced knowledge sharing. In other words, they believe that a low level of knowledge sharing is natural in young companies:

"Yes, I said to you that its barrier is more because of discrimination between workers. If discrimination can be deleted; in every young company this

problem exists; but well, it should be tried to delete this discrimination. Discrimination reduces knowledge sharing between workers” (supervisor, Unit Making Department, private company).

As mentioned previously, although workers generally had a high level of identification with the company, some workers on the factory site who identified their company as a young one, thought that its weaknesses outweighed its strengths. Workers described weaknesses such as the absence of plans for reducing conflicts, and a weak and formal relationship with managers, as stated in the following quotes:

“Unfortunately in this factory its weaknesses are more than strengths and I think it is because the company is young. But anyway I like my job in my workplace; I have some problems that I must tolerate. I mean there are some difficulties in work that must be tolerated” (worker #7, Assembly Line, private company).

“I have not seen such a plan to increase co-operation and reduce conflicts. It might be because this company is young and a decision has not been made about those plans” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

Managers’ pre-occupation with their work was mentioned as the reason for the weak and formal relationship with their subordinates, as stated by one of the workers who said:

“I say that relationship between managers and workers at some level can be said because of some reasons is weak. The reason is that because company is a young company, managers are busy. Managers concentrate more on production; and personnel can be said are accustomed to it; they must be happy with that” (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

Workers have accepted the formal relationship in the young company, because they feel that a close relationship will harm managers. The reason indicated by one of the workers is lack of familiarity of the workers with the system:

“Relationship is a formal relationship. I said that it has some specific reasons; maybe because this is a new and young system, and worker is not familiar with the system; I think if manager become intimate with the worker, it makes problem for the manager” (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

As a result, the identity of the private company as, ‘a young company’ has been characterised differently by managers and workers with regard to its strengths and weaknesses. Managers have predominantly focused on the strengths and workers mainly mentioned the weaknesses.

5.6. Knowledge Sharing in the Private Company

5.6.1. Description of the Current Situation

To discover the barriers to knowledge sharing in the private company, and their causes, it is necessary to describe the current situation regarding organisational knowledge sharing. In fact, the CEO of the company stated his support for knowledge sharing and he believed that this had actually been implemented, saying:

“We have done this (knowledge sharing) several times. At the manager and supervisor level, when we send someone to a class or a seminar, we ask him/her to come and explain it to the others. For example, for safety and fire fighting training we did not use someone from outside the company, we used our own employees. Anyone who understands a task, we ask him/her to teach it to others” (the CEO, private company).

“Individuals who know some things in different fields we support them to be a training core for the whole organisation” (the CEO, private company).

One of the managers believes that the knowledge sharing direction of their company is inside to outside and vice-versa, thus signalling a low level of intra-organisational knowledge sharing.

“Most of our information sharing is from inside to outside and outside to inside the company” (manager, Construction Project Department, private company).

Workers also supported the above viewpoint about the direction of information sharing as follows:

“Well certainly, for generating new ideas some experts come from other companies or organisations (e.g. the mother company from Malaysia) and do it in our company; or our company sends some employees to other places to be trained and come back after training” (typist, Administrative Department, private company).

Another view of knowledge sharing in the private company is that its level regarding the company's problems is low, as one of the managers stated:

“Individuals in our company talk more about personal, social and political issues, and less about the problems that affect the company” (manager, Construction Project Department, private company).

5.6.2. Idea Generation in the Private Company

Managers and workers in the private company believe that the level of idea generation in the enterprise is low, but each group has different ideas about the causes of this situation. Managers pointed to workers as the reason for the low level of knowledge sharing, whilst workers in contrast, believed managers to be the problem in this respect. The viewpoints of both groups are considered in the following two sections.

5.6.2.1. Managers' Description of Idea Generation in the Private Company

The only existing formal way of knowledge sharing in the private company is through the suggestion box, but managers are not aware of the performance of that box. They believe that idea generation is low and passive rather than active and dynamic, as indicated in the following quotes:

"Idea generation in the company is more passive. I mean individuals (employees and managers) face a problem in their work process, and then they suggest a viewpoint to solve the problem" (manager, Sales Department, private company).

"The level of idea generation in our company is low. I mean individuals do not give considerable suggestions" (boss, Administrative Department, private company).

"Some ideas are given to the CEO via the suggestion box, that I do not know its number and amount, but under my supervision personnel have given limited viewpoints; not too much" (manager, Sales Department, private company).

Managers think that the low level of idea generation and knowledge sharing in the company is related more to the employees, society, and the organisation; and they have not mentioned the effect of their own role as a potential reason. One of the reasons declared by managers is the financial problems of employees, which occupy their minds and thus prevent them thinking about the company's problems.

"Employees are busy about their own financial affairs and do not react too much to daily matters of the company" (boss, Administrative Department, private company).

Another manager declared *"the workers perception about their information and knowledge"* which they have acquired during the years to be the barrier to knowledge sharing.

“Workers feel that they have spent years to get this knowledge and it must not be shared so easily and quickly with others” (Factory Manager, private company).

Managers believe that workers’ self-interest (e.g. achieving a higher position) has caused them not to share their information with colleagues at the same level.

“They (workers) feel information sharing with other workers might give a better chance to their colleagues to get a better position than themselves” (Factory Manager, private company).

Two other managers stated that society and the company are responsible for the low level of idea generation in the company, as indicated in the following quotes:

“Lack of rich and up-to-date information resources in society makes getting information and knowledge difficult, and it causes stinginess about knowledge sharing by individuals” (Factory Manager, private company).

“Employees do not have much of a role in idea generation, and I think new ideas are not needed and the company does not ask for new ideas” (supervisor, Trim Department, private company).

5.6.2.2. Workers’ Description of Idea Generation in the Private Company

Workers also believe that the level of idea generation in the company is low, as declared in the following quotes:

“I think Idea generation in the company is at a very low level” (office secretary, private company).

“Idea generation is low; I mean I have not seen new ideas to be proposed. It is very low; there is no initiative or thing like this” (employee #2, Finance Department, private company).

“In our company in general it can be said that there is a very big problem that I feel myself sad about that; individuals do not share the information with one another” (typist, Administrative Department, private company).

Workers have different viewpoints compared to managers regarding the reasons for the low level of idea generation in the private company. They believe that managers must provide the environment for idea generation, and because of that, they have presented managers as the main reason for the existing level of idea generation. This is because workers think that they are inclined to share their information, and they expect managers to ask them for their ideas. According to the workers, this has not happened; workers even feel that they are not allowed to declare their ideas. The following quotes support this statement:

"New ideas come from managers in their meeting, that we, low level employees are not informed about it. Individuals like me have no role in idea generation" (employee #2, Finance Department, private company).

"In my view, idea generation in this company is at a low level" (typist, Administrative Department, private company).

"Idea generation in the company is at a low level...Ideas come from managers, very little happens that they ask personnel" (reception employee, private company).

Workers also confirm their personal problems as being another reason for the low level of idea generation in the private company.

"Honestly I have not thought about giving a suggestion; I mean we have so many problems in our life.... As I am informed about my colleagues around me, I have not seen this from them as well" (worker #4, Assembly Line, private company).

5.6.2.3. Employees' Role in Idea Generation

A few managers and supervisors commented on the lack of the employee involvement in idea generation in the company. Managers and groups, for example, generate ideas as follows:

"Employees are not participating in idea generation. There are some groups and committees that their members give their ideas in the meetings" (manager, Trade Department, private company).

"Usually ideas are presented by middle managers and CEO, and employees have a very weak role in idea generation" (Boss, Finance Department, private company).

Workers have largely pointed out this problem and have described it as a kind of isolation by managers that discourages knowledge sharing. Workers feel that they are not accepted as players in the field of idea generation, and are even afraid of getting negative feedback regarding their ideas, as mentioned in the following quote:

"People like me do not have role in the idea generation, because every time that an idea has been given certainly it has been acted against that idea. In fact it can be said that the authorities that are at higher level give their own viewpoints" (reception employee, private company).

The failure by managers to value workers' ideas has been cited as another reason that reduces knowledge sharing. The following quotes support this statement:

"We have no role in idea generation; our viewpoint has no value for managers...in my opinion if they value individuals in the workplace so that they can share their viewpoints and experiences in a good way; it will encourage information sharing" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

"No, we have no role in idea generation. We give suggestion but they (managers) do not value our suggestions" (worker #1, Assembly Line, private company).

Workers believe that only personnel at higher levels generate new ideas, and if they have an idea it must be given to their superior to be transferred via the company hierarchy.

"People like me have no role in idea generation. The workers tell their ideas to supervisors... And based on the hierarchy, the supervisor submits it to the manager and from the manager to the factory manager; and from the factory manager to CEO" (security worker, private company/referred to as 'spy').

"Probably, new ideas come from managers in their meeting, that we, low level employees are not informed about it. Individuals like me have no role in idea generation" (employee #2, Finance Department, private company).

"We have no role in idea generation, only the CEO and managers generate new ideas" (worker #1, Assembly Line, private company).

5.6.3. Informal Knowledge Sharing in the Private Company

Another characteristic of knowledge sharing in the private company described by both managers and workers was informal knowledge sharing. Managers believe that informal knowledge sharing happens automatically, and by information seekers consulting information sources, which may then affect individuals' jobs and promotion.

"We have no formal system for knowledge sharing. When an individual feels s/he needs some information, consults someone who thinks has needed information and that person shares his information as much as s/he can" (consultant of the CEO and directorates, private company).

"Knowledge sharing has not been recognised as an organisational issue. Maybe, sometimes err... it happens as something personal" (manager, Constructional Project Department, private company).

"It (knowledge sharing) is useful in job and promotion of individuals and their colleagues" (supervisor, Sales Department, private company).

Although the amount of knowledge sharing in evidence can be considered as an advantage for individuals, it appears to be insufficient for a company that is passing the growth stage and therefore needs to be much greater. Sometimes informal knowledge sharing is related to the personal taste of individuals and is limited to two friends for their own self-interest by their

saying “*keep it between the two of us*”, as one of the workers mentioned in the following quote:

“Personal interest causes information sharing to happen with someone and not happen with someone else. For example, today I like to share information with my friend and even it has happened several times that I say ‘keep it between the two of us, do not reveal it to someone, do not say, the problem should not be revealed to higher level’. It exists, it is personal” (worker #7, Assembly Line, private company).

The other problem is that informal knowledge sharing usually happens verbally and therefore information is not documented for the use of other individuals and at other times. As one worker mentioned in the following quote, friendship is the condition upon which to build trust between two people in order to share their knowledge mutually.

“Information sharing happens by verbal method, for example today I do not know this case, I go and ask my friend that ‘Mr. what is it and why this is like that?’ Well, basically one of them explains it to me and informs me; and some times I explain to them” (worker #7, Assembly Line, private company).

This informal method is also limited to individuals inside each department and does not spread information between departments. The following worker does not even have any idea about the general conditions of other departments within the company, and also “Some colleagues might not share their information” (Repairman#1, private company).

“Of course I do not have much information from other departments; all of the answers are about our department...I have no information about the other departments” (worker, Engineering Department, private company).

As a result, managers and workers have declared that because of the lack of a system for sharing information, informal knowledge sharing happens inside the company; however it is conditional and has limited scope. And although it might be useful for individuals, it does not appear to be much use to the company, because, as the above worker stated, they do not share because of managerial encouragement, and do it only between themselves.

5.6.4. Facilitators of Knowledge Sharing in the Private Company

In this section those features of the private company that workers and managers have mentioned as facilitators of knowledge sharing, are introduced. These characteristics are: employees’ inclination, morning market, local workers, CEO as encourager, suggestion box, perceived usefulness of knowledge sharing, friendly relationship between individuals, and identification with company.

5.6.4.1. Employees' Inclination Towards Knowledge Sharing

Workers stated their inclination towards knowledge sharing many times. They claimed that they *"like their ideas to be examined"*, they *"must not be in a closed ring"*, *"I personally like to share my information"*, *"every one must share information with others"*, and saying even that they *"become glad"*, to share their knowledge, because *"they like more to show themselves"*, because they think that hiding information does not benefit individuals. The following quotes support the workers' inclination towards knowledge sharing:

"There are some individuals who have some special ideas and they like their ideas to be examined" (office secretary, private company).

"I think every one who has information, must share it with others" (employee #2, Finance Department, private company).

"I personally like to share my information with everyone, who is working with me" (repairman #1, private company).

In some cases, workers' inclination is related to their religious belief. For example, one worker stated:

"I think myself that for example, 'The Zakat of knowledge is to distribute it' I think like this" (employee #2, Finance Department, private company).

Zakat is an Arabic word, which literally means purification and cleanliness. In Islamic legal terms it means contributing a certain amount of our wealth upon reaching a defined level within a specified period of time (usually one year). The contribution is made to the needy. The philosophy behind this is that a portion of the wealth is not ours, but is for the poor. The above worker has considered knowledge sharing as a blessed action that does not expect any corporal reward from other individuals. He thinks when he shares knowledge with a spiritual intention, that his action (knowledge sharing) will be spiritually rewarded by God.

The other reason for workers' inclination is considered as their intention to 'show off' or to impress, as declared by another worker:

"No, I have not seen individuals hide their information; especially in the department I work; because they like more to show-off themselves. I mean there is no knowledge that its hiding benefits the individual; because they can show-off themselves more, well to be recognised more; possibly it is the reason. I mean I think myself like that" (employee #2, Finance Department, private company).

Workers are so inclined towards knowledge sharing that, if they feel that the environment is encouraging, they even get information from outside the company and share it with their co-workers; but a lack of encouragement, respect and value for individuals and their ideas have negatively affected their inclination towards knowledge sharing, as stated in the following quotes:

“If an individual sees that his information sharing is somehow being encouraged, if s/he has not got that information; s/he goes outside the factory, or company and gets that information by study or other methods and brings and shares it with employees and co-workers” (employee, Production Control Department, private company).

“I think valuing suggestions, considering individuals and their ideas even respecting them, I think encourages information sharing. It causes that if some one has an experience to share it with the company very happily” (worker, Repair and Maintenance Department, private company).

“Yes in our department information sharing has been happening. We do it more ourselves, this is not because of managerial encouragement, it is self-intentional” (worker, Engineering Department, private company).

Regarding the barriers which have constrained workers' inclination towards knowledge sharing, according to the above quotes, workers believe that managers do not respond to their inclination properly, because they think that managers *“have used only their own ideas”*. They have also criticised the lack of a formal system for knowledge sharing through which their inclination could be recognised. Managers not only confirmed the workers' inclination towards knowledge sharing, by supporting their claim; but also emphasised it as a reverse challenge in the following quote:

“People supply their knowledge easily, supply their knowledge easily. Even sometimes there is a reverse challenge; they say that ‘why the company does not use their knowledge?’ they mostly feel this problem that their knowledge is not being used in the company” (manager, Painting Project Department, private company).

Managers also stated that the eagerness of individuals has decreased because of motivation problems as follows:

“In the assembly line many individuals were eager to generate new ideas but since last year idea generation is decreased, because of motivation problem and weak performance of system” (manager, Painting Department, private company).

As a result, the data strongly supports the idea that workers in the private company are inclined to share their information, but the lack of a system for sharing information and the lack of

motivation from managers (e.g. respecting individuals and valuing their ideas) have affected this predisposition negatively.

5.6.4.2. The CEO as the Facilitator of Knowledge Sharing

Workers in the private company frequently named the CEO as the facilitator of knowledge sharing in the company. They believed that the background for effective knowledge sharing was the CEO's encouragement because he prepared a suitable environment in which employees could give their suggestions and views to him via the suggestion box. Workers consider the CEO as a person who highly values idea generation, and has prepared a broad environment for implementing the ideas of those who have direct contact with him. They believe that he does, in fact, ask for viewpoints. They have recognised the CEO as eager to increase the level of knowledge sharing in the company, and believe that he acts on his inclination by encouraging workers through his verbal communications with them. But workers have pointed out that there is no specific formal system for knowledge sharing. Another characteristic of the CEO that workers have described is that he is able to boost workers' morale when he speaks to them, and creates hope regarding the company's future. They believe that the CEO values and trusts workers by giving news about the company to them, and they feel confident about the future. Workers have compared middle managers with the CEO, and in contrast, think that these managers do not value idea generation, and that they do not have any specific form of communication that encourages knowledge sharing. Workers would like to see the positive behaviour of the CEO (encouraging knowledge sharing, giving hope to workers and boosting their morale, and sharing information about the company with workers), emulated by middle managers and at other levels of the company. The following quotes support the contention that the CEO is a facilitator of knowledge sharing in the private company.

"Our CEO values idea generation very much, but unfortunately, the rest of the managers, do not know anything about management and always encounter with problems by their traditional management style; unfortunately, they do not value idea generation" (manager, R&D Department, private company).

"According to my position, because I have direct contact with the CEO and well, he asks my ideas about work...I myself have a broad environment for implementing my ideas, and the CEO has used my ideas on some occasions" (office secretary, private company).

"Encouragement to information sharing in the company is very little. It is done by verbal dialogue. Certainly management (CEO) is very eager to increase the level of information sharing; but there is no specific method for it; otherwise a problem happens and then it is discussed. There is no

systematic method for information sharing” (employee #2, Finance Department, private company).

Some managers have confirmed the workers’ idea about the CEO and his suggestion box as facilitator of knowledge sharing. For example,

“Our personnel respect and like the personality of the CEO, and it is the only facilitator of information/knowledge sharing in the company” (manager, Production Department, private company).

“I think it is mostly related to the company CEO who has spent most of his life abroad, and his viewpoints that he really believes them as one of the important factors that facilitate information sharing in (the company name)” (Factory Manager, private company).

In contrast, another manager considered the CEO to discourage knowledge sharing in the following quote.

“The CEO makes decisions based on his own viewpoint, rather than experts’ viewpoints. When management does that; it means that he does not need information sharing” (manager, Painting Project Department, private company).

Overall, workers believed the CEO to facilitate knowledge sharing in the private company, and have described him as an encourager of knowledge sharing, a person who shares information about the company with workers, and boosts their hope and morale about the company’s future. As a result, workers are inclined to share their knowledge with the company. However, there is no formal system for knowledge sharing, and workers do not trust middle managers as much as they trust the CEO in terms of sharing their information. This point is extracted from workers’ statements when they expressed the desire for other managers to behave in a similar way to the CEO with regard to knowledge sharing. Some managers agreed with the workers’ viewpoint about the ‘CEO as facilitator’, but some of them held contrary viewpoints as well.

5.6.4.3. Morning Market

Holding meetings is one means of facilitating knowledge sharing in organisations, and is especially effective when individuals from different levels within an organisation are involved. There is a daily morning meeting called the ‘Morning Market’ in the factory and Sales and After Sales Services Department of the private company. This begins after morning exercise and the workers of each department meet their managers at their workplace, where they spend about five minutes discussing work-related problems from the day before, and listen to comments made by managers and supervisors for the current day. Some managers stated that

the 'Morning Market' is unique to their company and there is no such meeting in any other Iranian enterprise. In order to verify their claim, the researcher visited the factory during the morning exercise and the morning market. The CEO, middle managers and workers, all mentioned morning market in the following quotes.

"Every morning we have 'Morning Market' that it can be said that all personnel of factory at different levels gather around each other and for a few minutes if even they do not have any word to say they must gather, if they do not say any thing they must gather; if someone has a problem, suggestion, problem and in fact a report; they can declare it" (the CEO, private company).

"We have a daily meeting called 'Morning Market' in the factory and Sales and After Sales Services Department. We analyse the work and problems of the day before in this meeting with our colleagues. There is no such meeting anywhere in the same units in the country" (manager, After Sales Services Department, private company).

"It can not be said that the work quality of individuals are assessed, but we have a morning meeting for works of day before, and works are assessed in this meeting by talking and using work procedure" (repairman#1, private company).

5.6.4.4. Perceived Usefulness of Knowledge Sharing by Individuals

Perceived usefulness is "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" (Davis, 1989, p. 320). It has a very significant effect on the use and intention to use a system (Davis, 1989). In the context of knowledge sharing, managers and workers in the private company stated the perceived usefulness of knowledge sharing as a facilitator of knowledge sharing in the absence of a formal system for this:

"Information/knowledge sharing is not encouraged formally in our company, but individuals do it automatically, because they have learnt that it is effective in the job and promotion of themselves and their colleagues" (supervisor, Sales Department, private company).

"If I have a good understanding, and know that if I go and share my information with my colleague it does not harm me and it benefits me; certainly I do this work" (employee, Production Control Department, private company).

5.6.4.5. Friendly Relationship Between Individuals as Facilitator

The personal relationship between the two sides of the knowledge sharing process is an important factor in increasing the amount, quality, and frequency of knowledge sharing.

Workers and managers in the private company declared individual relationships as a facilitator of knowledge sharing in the company, but they described it in different ways. Workers have emphasised tribalism as the reason for close and sincere relationships, as stated in the following quotes:

“The characteristic of (the company name) that makes knowledge sharing easier is that it has a good condition that most of the employees are local. They are local and are familiar with each other and it is possible to work on this case, because relationships are mostly heartfelt and this heartfelt relationship can be used much for this issue” (worker, Engineering Department, private company).

“Factors that affect information and knowledge sharing happen because of workplace... if we have a problem we solve problem of each other. If a colleague needs money we help him, like this. In work we work based on friendship, both for the company progress and for consent of each other” (worker #3, Painting Line, private company).

“What I see now is that there are some individuals that they share information with each other in a manner that the other side does not recognise, or they do not want to share their information. But if their relationship is friendly or somehow to be heartfelt and their aim is to co-operate; they can progress their job much better” (typist, Administrative Department, private company).

Managers have also highlighted the friendly relationship as a facilitator of knowledge sharing between departments and one that compensates for the lack of a formal knowledge sharing system. Furthermore, the lack of job descriptions in the company has created an environment that requires more knowledge sharing. Managers have also highlighted organisational identification as a complementary factor alongside the friendly relationship as a facilitator of knowledge sharing, in the following quotes:

“There is no formal obligation for units to share their information with each other in our company, it must exist. Perhaps only friendly relationship between managers makes information/knowledge sharing easier” (manager, Painting Department, private company).

“At the moment information sharing is more based on friendship” (manager, Production Department, private company).

“Heartfelt relationship between individuals in (the company name), and their feeling of attachment to the company are facilitators of information/knowledge sharing in (the company name)” (supervisor, IT Department, private company).

5.6.5. Barriers to Knowledge Sharing in the Private Company

In this section, barriers to knowledge sharing, as mentioned by workers and managers in the private company, are discussed. These barriers are: top-down idea generation, lack of a system for knowledge sharing, middle managers as a barrier to knowledge sharing, high unemployment and lack of job security, conflict between managers and departments, hiding knowledge for self-interest, sharing knowledge for self-interest, sharing information to please superiors, showing off by the knowledge sharer, nepotism, lack of job description, distance between factory and Head office, and licensing. All these factors are considered to have resulted in low levels of knowledge sharing between departments and individuals in the private company.

5.6.5.1. Top-down Idea Generation

Top-down idea generation is introduced as one of the important barriers to knowledge sharing in the literature (Riege, 2005). Workers and managers in the private company acknowledged that top-down idea generation has caused a low level of idea generation in their company. Workers believe that they are not allowed to declare their ideas and very little happens to cause managers to ask personnel what they think; moreover, when workers propose their ideas, managers use them as a background to generate and propose ideas by themselves.

“Until now managers and authorities, have used only their own ideas. Because of that the level of idea generation in the company is low” (office secretary, private company).

“Ideas are given by managers and supervisors” (Sales employee, private company).

“Certainly, all of the ideas come from managers. I mean managers who are working in the company. Maybe they ask personnel to get a background of an idea; and finally that idea is proposed by that manager” (reception employee, private company).

Managers have confirmed workers’ statements that idea generation is top-down in the private company, as they have stated in the following quotes:

“Most ideas in the company are generated by the CEO or we (middle managers) suggest it to the CEO and he approves it” (manager, R&D Department, private company).

“Information sharing is more from higher level managers to the lower levels” (boss, Administrative Department; private company).

“Employees have no role in idea generation; new ideas come from high level managers” (supervisor, Purchase Order Department, private company).

5.6.5.2. Lack of System for Knowledge Sharing

Workers have identified the lack of a system as a barrier to knowledge sharing in the private company. They believed that the absence of such a system has made knowledge sharing and transfer of experiences difficult, as mentioned in the following quotes:

“Lack of rules and regulations in the company regarding information sharing makes it difficult” (repairman #1, private company).

“There is no formal manner to encourage people to share their information in this company” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

“There is no method to encourage information sharing in this company” (worker #6, Assembly Line, private company).

Managers also considered the absence of a system for knowledge sharing as a barrier, but justified this omission by stating that the company is still at the stage of establishing systems and has financial limitations. For example, the CEO stated:

“Maybe a good opportunity has not been given to all personnel to participate in all of the company’s works, we have no suggestion system yet and because of that, if there are some ideas in the company we might not be well informed about them” (the CEO, private company).

“Yes, you see, we think that in fact we must establish infrastructure. For example, when we have no perfect financial system, we have no inventory automation; when we have not for example, a mechanised and good production planning, we might think that it is very early to spend much time on personnel suggestions” (the CEO, private company).

Middle managers confirmed both the CEO’s and workers’ belief that the lack of a system is a barrier to knowledge sharing. They also think that their workers are individuals that *“always they need to be pushed”* and that a system for knowledge sharing could act as a motivating force for workers, as indicated in the following quotes:

“There is no facility or plan for knowledge sharing in our company” (manager, Construction Project Department, private company).

“Because of lack of system, our employees are not interested in information searching and information sharing” (manager, R&D Department, private company).

“Lack of system and financial reward for knowledge sharing in (the company name) make information sharing difficult in the company. Workers always need to be pushed, but if they get reward they might lead the way and share information” (supervisor, IT Department, private company).

5.6.5.3. Middle Managers as a Barrier to Knowledge Sharing

Management literature argues that organisational performance is more influenced by what happens in the middle of organisation, rather than at the top (Currie and Procter, 2005; Dutton and Ashforth, 1993; Dutton et al., 1997, 2001; Floyd and Lane, 2000; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997, 2000; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990).

According to the literature, the middle manager is considered to be a facilitator of organisational activities; especially those related to human resource motivation towards the objectives of an organisation. For example, middle managers in organisations are described as those who interpret and implement organisational strategy. They are viewed as ‘team builders’, and motivators of staff to ensure the smooth running of operations, in order to create an effective working environment. Middle managers handle a great deal of information, co-ordinate and communicate and distribute resources (Holden and Roberts, 2004; Stewart et al., 1994). They are also described as those who create and integrate dispersed knowledge into organisational knowledge delivered to the clients (Janczak, 2004). To play their role properly as the knowledge integrators and handlers of information within an organisation, middle managers need to provide an environment for their subordinates within which, they feel safe, easy and free to share their information and knowledge. In such a climate subordinates are able to propose their ideas and suggestions regarding organisational tasks and thereby contribute towards the enhancement of organisational performance.

The data analysis in this study found middle managers in the private company to be a barrier to knowledge sharing. Workers, and even some managers, stated that middle managers functioned as a barrier to knowledge sharing in different ways. For example, citing their actions such as questioning subordinates for their knowledge sharing, their dictatorship, and hiding their information from other departments, other managers and subordinates. Middle managers do not value employees’ ideas, and do not appreciate information shared by subordinates.

To explain the role of middle managers as a barrier to knowledge sharing, their actions are divided into two categories: first when middle managers do not play their role properly, and second when they play a reverse role as barriers to knowledge sharing in the company.

5.6.5.3.1. Middle Managers do not fulfil their role as facilitator of knowledge sharing

Workers believed that middle managers had not facilitated knowledge sharing as they had expected, and that high-level managers needed to develop and encourage the facilitator role amongst middle managers:

"I think management has important and the first role in facilitating information sharing, so that gradually transfers this behaviour to middle managers and from managers to employees" (employee #2, Finance Department, private company).

Workers expect their managers to document and share information regarding the history of their company, and also expect continuous knowledge sharing from middle managers, rather than spasmodic contributions, which are dependent on the daily mood of managers. Workers believe that middle managers do not share their information with subordinates, as they mentioned in the following quotes:

"I think our managers undermine information sharing with their subordinates...I think it has not been done too much in the field of information and knowledge sharing. I think it has never been investigated" (office secretary, private company).

"For example if the supervisor's morale is good and he has patience, he will share information, he will hand in information; but if his morale is not good well, does not care; it is my viewpoint" (worker, Quality Control Department, private company).

One of the workers stated that: *"managers do not feel their subordinates need to have more information" (office secretary, private company).*

Workers view this situation as dangerous for their company and would like their managers not to continue in this way:

"I can say it is not good information sharing regarding what is supposed to be done in the Sales Department. In my opinion if they (managers) want to continue like this they will fall on the ground, somehow that they will not be able to stand up again" (Sales employee, private company).

The next problem that workers have stated explicitly and implicitly is that middle managers do not ask subordinates to share their information and ideas, and have not collected employees'

ideas for use within the company. Workers think that middle managers do not value or welcome workers' ideas. In other words, workers believe that middle managers have not played their part as integrators of dispersed information and knowledge in the company. Workers have criticised managers for only using ideas from specific individuals, and have not asked for workers' ideas, which they consider to be technical ideas. Workers also believe that they have high capacities that can be used in a more effective knowledge sharing environment, but that even if they do make a suggestion, managers do not value it, simply because they are workers. The following quotes support this statement:

"Never someone asks for worker's viewpoint, the word is what the manager says. Here is such as I have a duty to execute manager's order" (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

"Surely all of ideas are given by managers, very little happens to ask whether is wrong or right...but they (managers) do not use my viewpoint as a technical worker" (reception employee, private company).

"I say that ideas come from some specific individuals. I mean maybe others have very high capacities compared to those individuals; but their ideas are not requested" (repairman#2, private company).

Workers also believe that middle managers have not welcomed their ideas and that workers' ideas have no value for managers. They declare that *"there has not been someone to hear them"*, and even when they are heard it *"it is the managers' viewpoint that is being confirmed"*; meanwhile they (managers) *"propose their own ideas to top level management and they are encouraged for that"*. Workers believe that their information and ideas are viewed as surplus and managers consider experienced workers as newcomers. The following quotes support this statement:

"Based on their words, I conclude that there has not been someone to hear them (workers) and use their ideas" (office secretary, private company).

"Unfortunately, they (managers) do not value ideas. I have said it several times they (managers) do not consider some problems. But they themselves; managers and supervisors propose their own ideas to top level management and they are encouraged for that but worker's viewpoint has no value" (worker #3, assembly Line, private company).

"Here mostly when workers share information is surplus, workers' information is not valued as they (workers) wish. For example, we have work experience outside the company but here they (managers) say that 'we do not consider outside'" (worker #3, Painting Line, private company).

The lack of appreciation by managers was introduced as a reason why middle managers do not practically encourage individuals who share their information. Workers do not expect to be rewarded by money; they are satisfied with “a simple recognition” such as “just saying thanks”. They believe that this simple recognition “increases self-confidence” and “has a direct relationship” with knowledge sharing. Some workers also go further, saying “thanks is not needed”, and ask just for the co-operation of managers. These themes indicate that workers are inclined towards knowledge sharing and that this predisposition has been previously confirmed as blocked by a lack of co-operation and encouragement from middle managers, as stated in the following quotes:

“Managers encourage information and knowledge sharing in word, but they do not put it in practice” (repairman #2, private company).

“I think people share information and knowledge easily, when the value of a person who has got more information than another to be recognised and to be respected; and his salary and fringe benefits to be paid based on his knowledge and information...but sometimes it has not happened, salary and fringe benefits has not been paid based on knowledge and information; then he has said ‘what is this job I am doing?’” (worker, Engineering Department, private company).

(The sentence “what is this job I am doing?” in Farsi language means that it is valueless and I do not do it anymore).

Some of the managers supported workers’ ideas regarding the lack of appreciation for knowledge sharing in the company, as follows:

“It is natural to be expected when someone shares his information, at least to be said to him even one word like “thank you”, “thank you very much”. I have seen sometimes even it does not happen in our company” (boss, Finance Department, private company).

“A foreman who is doing this job (knowledge sharing) and teaches doing the job to others, but he must be encouraged so that he do it more. Unfortunately, I say this happens less in our company” (supervisor, Unit Making Department, private company).

5.6.5.3.2. Middle managers’ reverse role as barriers to knowledge sharing

Workers also consider middle managers as barriers to knowledge sharing, because they believe that managers play a reverse role regarding knowledge sharing. One aspect of this reverse role is that managers use only their own ideas and do not allow workers to suggest ideas:

“Employees are not allowed to give ideas” (Sales employee, private company).

“Usually the majority of colleagues tell their ideas and viewpoints to the managers of departments; but generally what are proposed are the managers’ viewpoints. During the period that I have been working here; I have not seen new ideas be proposed” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

“Until now managers and authorities have used only their own ideas, because of that the level of idea generation is low in the company” (office secretary, private company).

Workers complained about the “very bad” and “tiresome” environment created by their managers, feeling that the relationship is a distant and formal one like one with a “military base” and they feel fear in this environment. This fear does not allow workers to concentrate on their job, or share their ideas, and “cannot easily go and speak four words with the managers of this company”.

“Well, here, there is no environment provided for information sharing like other companies; and employees are suffering the most harm due to this” (Sales employee, private company).

“Here guys (workers) are getting so tired that they do not think about anything at all. They (workers) only think of finishing their work and going home” (worker #4, Assembly Line, private company).

According to the researcher’s information, the speed of the assembly line in the private company is not so high as to make workers physically tired, and therefore when workers become fatigued there must be some behavioural reason. That reason can be found in the following quotes:

“When there is encouragement and my workplace is not tiresome, I progress better and share most of my knowledge with others; but when my workplace is tiresome, that knowledge I have will be wasted” (worker #4, Assembly Line, private company).

Q: What do you think makes the workplace tiresome?

A: “For example the supervisor’s behaviour” (worker #4, Assembly Line, private company).

“This is like that they (managers) have made this factory as a military base in the region. For example, I, as a worker who is working on the assembly line cannot easily go and speak four words with the managers of this company” (worker #6, Assembly Line, private company).

“I have very good information for this young company; but because of the environment that my manager has provided for me, I have no good concentration on my job” (Sales employee, private company).

To support this statement the notes made in the field journal are used. The above employee (Sales employee, private company) was interviewed in a room used for storing files and during the interview her supervisor, a female employee, entered the room three times to collect files, and every time she entered the room the interviewee stopped talking until she had left. She was reluctant to speak in front of her supervisor.

Another important statement by workers was that middle managers steal ideas from subordinates or use their ideas by introducing them in their own names to higher level managers, and thus personally reap the benefits. This makes workers put themselves “*totally aside and not give any viewpoint*”, and keep what they know to themselves. The following quotes support this statement:

“When information is shared with a higher rank, certainly the person who is positioned at that higher rank is benefited, because he has introduced information in his own name. It has never happened that they come and say that an individual at a lower rank has done this job, or he has done it” (reception employee, private company).

“If I suggest a new form that makes work better and easier, they try to refer it to the CEO themselves, to say that they have done it themselves, and put it under their own name” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

“I have seen myself (now I can not say only managers, maybe in the rank before managers as well) they transfer information through themselves. For example it has happened that someone has identified a problem, instead of introducing him, a person who has been at higher rank of that person has identified himself as doer of that work and has got its benefit for himself” (reception employee, private company).

Workers have interpreted this action (stealing ideas) as using employees as steps for managers’ own promotion, as declared in the following quotes:

“Well, the barrier to information sharing is the relationship between employees and managers. If someone does not use the others as the step for his own promotion, it (information sharing) can happen easily” (repairman#2, private company).

“Now in the society in every job, people put their foot on the head of the others to reach their own goals” (worker #3, assembly Line, private company).

“It happens here that sometimes people hide their information, to put their foot on the head of others and go to a higher level, we have it here” (worker #4, Assembly Line, private company).

The other way that middle managers act as a barrier to knowledge sharing is by implementing strategies that keep workers apart. This creates a feeling amongst workers that knowledge sharing may be harmful, which consequently decreases social capital in the company by limiting workers' communication with other workers in different workstations. Workers think that *"having encounters and talking with each other is important"* for knowledge sharing. They say that chains are fixed around workstations and strict rules have created a situation in which workers *"can not go easily to another unit and come back"* and they *"have less contact with each other"* and during work time workers *"never can talk to each other"*. Workers claim that their managers have asked them not to share their information with workers of other departments, as declared in the following quotes:

"Regarding human relations of guys (workers) some strict rules have resulted that guys (workers) have less contact with each other. I mean during the day that I am working here I can speak to others very little. Now you see, around our line is chained, you cannot go out or someone else cannot come in. Or in our department our line is divided to units. I can not go the other side and come back" (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

"Our supervisors are effective barriers to information sharing" (worker #3, Assembly Line, private company).

The next problem stated by workers was that middle managers act against workers' ideas, because workers' knowledge sharing creates a feeling of danger for middle managers about their position. Also *"when you (workers) say something they (managers) tease you"* and make problems for the workers who shared information. As a result, those workers who experience *"total failure of morale"* and feel insecure regarding problems that they might face because of their knowledge sharing, try to hide their information.

"As barrier to information sharing is that they (managers) do not recognise you (worker), or when you (worker) say something they tease you or say 'do not speak guy', 'what do you say?', and things like these resulted in total failure of morale. Next time if you have a suggestion you do not declare it, and you say 'it is not my business. I have seen it one or two times before'" (worker, Repair and Maintenance Department, private company).

"Manager's performance can be a barrier to information sharing. Well, when I know that a word that comes out of my mouth and I tell it to you, and it possibly causes me to be reproached, well I do not say this word again, if I know something I do not say it" (worker #7, Assembly Line, private company).

"Now if I propose a plan to my manager that I can solve a problem my supervisor experiences a feeling of danger. Because he feels that if some day

he does something wrong to be replaced by me as a qualified person. This is the reason that if a plan is declared, these middle managers harm the presenter of plan. This issue is one of important reasons that usually causes information to be hidden” (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

According to their reaction during data collection, workers seemed to be really anxious regarding middle managers’ actions against their knowledge sharing. Although I assured them informally before the interview, and formally at the start of the interview, about the confidentiality of their information, nevertheless, they felt anxious about critical information shared with me as a neutral researcher. For example, during his interview one worker asked the following question:

“Excuse me, what is the guarantee for recording this (interview) on the tape?” (worker #4, Assembly Line, private company).

To eliminate his worry, I replied “I assured you at the outset, and in the middle again I guarantee the confidentiality of this information, and I will not share it with any person”. I even offered a written guarantee from myself about the confidentiality of information, but no person asked for that. Another example is that after his interview another worker (*worker #2, assembly Line, private company*), on behalf of himself and some other workers, asked questions about the confidentiality of their interviews, to make sure that they would not be shared with their managers. This can be interpreted as fear of their managers’ action, with regard to information shared with the researcher, which contained some criticism of their managers. Finally, it can be viewed as additional strong support for the hypothesis that ‘middle managers act as a barrier to knowledge sharing’.

Workers mentioned middle managers’ personal surveillance of them (e.g. *“a manager is looking at me behind the window”*) or their planting a spy amongst them (e.g. *“each manager appoints a spy for himself”*) as another problem that restrains workers’ communication and as a result decreases knowledge sharing in the following quotes:

“The explanation is that each manager appoints a spy for himself and it decreases research level. I mean it is not possible to communicate” (worker #3, Assembly Line, private company).

“You see the problem of appointing a spy, for example a manager and an employee have information relation and they want to do a job but it is difficult for them to do it in two (2) or three (3) days. Another person who is able to do that job in one or two hours because of information relation of these two people (manager and worker) does not go to share his information and finish the job” (repairman #2, private company).

“A worker can not move from his place, others (official staff) are sited around each other. This is only me (worker) that must do my job and do not put my head up, because that manager is looking at me behind the window” (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

According to my diary, another example of spying on workers by middle managers was the story of the spy, which was mentioned in the methodology chapter, in which the guesthouse caretaker named one of the workers a spy when he saw his picture on the TV screen.

The next reason that supports the reverse role of middle managers is that middle managers prevent knowledge sharing between departments, as stated by workers in the following quotes:

“If there is some information that can make a progress, they (managers) try to use it in their own department (e.g. financial department) and do not leak it to the other departments” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

“Some times our supervisors do not allow us to go and see works of other departments and get informed of their work” (worker #1, Assembly Line, private company).

“Keeping people distant from each other as said; in terms of work relations make information sharing difficult in this company. As said, keeping us (workers) far from each other; I mean in terms of work relations...for example supervisors say ‘do not share your information with such and such a person’” (worker #3, Assembly Line, private company).

Workers believe that middle managers respect relations more than rules, and information related to the mistakes of their own relatives and friends from the CEO, and this has resulted in low knowledge sharing by workers who experience a feeling of injustice in the company. The following quote supports this statement:

“One of the barriers to information sharing in our company is that instead of rules, relations are dominant and it can reduce information sharing...I mean valuing everyone not just valuing relations and the person who has come to the company and one of managers is his supporter; and values him and do not recognise others, it is very bad” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

As another signal to support the above statement, workers also criticised middle managers for blocking their communication with the CEO, because it was perceived that such communication could result in the sharing of critical information by workers with him, about middle managers or the mistakes of their friends, which had been concealed by them. Workers

trust the CEO more than they trust middle managers and feel 'more comfortable' sharing their information with him than with middle managers, as declared in the following quotes:

"I might not feel comfortable to speak to my own manager; I might be embarrassed. I might be able to talk to the CEO more comfortably. I think if it would be possible, that employees can talk to the CEO and contact him, then information sharing will be easier" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

"Before when the CEO was coming here we could go and meet him but now we can't, if I go, straight away, straight away they (managers) will stop me" (worker #6, Assembly Line, private company).

Some managers agreed with workers' ideas about "middle managers as barriers to knowledge sharing" in the private company. For example, one of the managers supported the workers' concerns regarding the stealing of ideas by middle managers, as follows:

"Some individuals, present shared information from their colleagues as their own information to higher level to get advantage for themselves. It happens because of lack of job security" (manager, Sales Department, private company).

Two other managers confirmed the lack of knowledge sharing by middle managers with their subordinates, and declared that they always keep "the last blow of pottery" for themselves, as indicated in the following statements:

"Some supervisors do not share whole information in training process to their subordinates and always keep 'the last blow of pottery' to themselves" (Factory Manager, private company).

"Some managers or supervisors do not share their information with subordinates" (manager, Administrative Department, private company).

On the contrary, some managers believe that some information is secret and therefore, must not be shared:

"There is some secret information which belongs to the company and must not be shared, because it will affect goals and policies of the company" (manager, Sales Department, private company).

Managers also agreed that there was a lack of value given to, and encouragement for, workers' ideas, and accounted for this by referring to the company, which has not rewarded workers for knowledge sharing. However, as mentioned previously, workers did not expect financial reward; a simple thank you satisfied them. It appears that managers accepted that they had not

encouraged their workers, even by merely thanking them for their efforts to share knowledge, as demonstrated by the following quotes:

"People in our company do not present their ideas, because they think the company does not value their words. Because they feel it is useless, I have seen a few individuals who present their ideas" (boss, Finance Department, private company).

"Individuals hide their information because the company has not valued and has not rewarded their previous information sharing" (manager, Finance Department, private company).

"The only thing that decreases the level of information/knowledge sharing is lack of valuing workers and their will in (the company name)" (supervisor, Trim Department, private company).

Managers also agreed that their colleagues act against workers' ideas by questioning workers, and preventing ideas from being shared with higher level managers. Managers accepted that they had not allowed their workers to think freely and propose their ideas, as shown in the following comments:

"Sometimes questioning employees (by superiors) because of their information sharing decreases information sharing in our company" (manager, R&D Department, private company).

"It was what I wanted to say to you. In our company, what we have found out is that if you have a thought or viewpoint, you must keep it in your mind; you are not allowed to tell it. If you tell it, you will lose your value" (supervisor, Unit Making Department, private company).

Some other managers did not mention anything about their own role, but believed that self-interest was the motivation behind workers' reluctance to share information with each other, as stated below:

"Our employees mostly are not intended to share their information/knowledge, and always they need to be pushed but if they get reward they might take the lead" (Factory Manager, private company).

"Some workers are reluctant to share their knowledge with their colleagues, because they feel that they have spent years to get this knowledge and it must not be shared easily and quickly to others" (Factory Manager, private company).

The CEO of the company confirmed the low level of information sharing by middle managers with him by telling the following story:

"This encouragement for information sharing that I say is very subjective, for example, we have a professional mountaineer in our factory who has arranged a team and they have been climbing several times to different mountains of Iran under the name of our company and it took three years until I found out when occasionally I took part in one of their programmes. I had never supported this team and its members; and before that nobody had helped them" (the CEO, private company).

The CEO expressed his sadness regarding this random, disorganised knowledge sharing in the company in the following quote:

"If it is presumed to take three years and the CEO recognises that a talent like this (a professional mountaineer) exists in the company, I am personally anxious and sad that in our organisation knowledge sharing happens impulsive and there is no system to permanently encourage individuals; encourage individuals to knowledge sharing; and organise their ability" (the CEO, private company).

5.6.5.3.3. Middle managers' motive for being barriers to knowledge sharing

Middle managers have some motives for acting as a barrier to knowledge sharing. According to workers, middle managers' motives involved: lack of job security, managers' dictatorship, self-interest, and hiding information related to the mistakes of their relatives and friends. Workers believe that middle managers feel insecure about their jobs and try to keep the company needing their service by decreasing knowledge sharing. This can be viewed as a likely reason, because as mentioned before there will be many changes within this young company and the replacement of managers might be one. Then, middle managers try to prevent knowledge sharing, because it leads to identifying qualified workers. Middle managers are scared *"to be replaced by me (worker) as a qualified person"*. The following quotes stated the lack of job security as the motive for middle managers:

"There is no documentation or publication for this purpose, or managers come and hand in their experiences to their subordinates. I think no, until now, there has not been something like that... maybe feeling insecure about future is the reason for this... they (managers) have a wrong understanding in their mind that decreasing information sharing causes others to think that they are needed too much, and try to keep their position for themselves" (office secretary, private company).

"I give information to my manager, my supervisor experiences a feeling of danger and he makes a problem for me. This is one of the factors that cause information to be hidden" (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

Middle managers' concealment of information related to the mistakes of their relatives and friends from the CEO, can be considered as another example of their sense of insecurity about

their position, because if those mistakes are reported, they will be responsible at least for the performance of individuals whom they supported in gaining employment in the company, if not for all individuals who work under their supervision.

“If in a department a person does a mistake, it is likely that because of the existing relation they do not declare the mistakes and do not let it leak to somewhere else. Because of the existing relations, the mistake is never being declared, and they (managers) try to hide the mistakes and do not let it leak to higher level of management that is the CEO; but if the mistakes happen by someone who has no relation with authorities, in one hundred percent they will inform CEO” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

Workers view managers’ dictatorship as another motive for managers creating obstacles to knowledge sharing, as indicated in the following quote:

“I think it is the feel of seeking dictatorship makes information and knowledge sharing difficult in (the company name) between managers and subordinates. Because we are a young company, and it is possible that we have lots of immediate changes in the future, this feeling and lack of security about future causes information sharing never to happen or become very slow...I think our managers undermine information sharing to their subordinates, and it is because that they do not feel their subordinates need to have more information. I think there is some autocracy in our organisation, and it has caused huge amount of loss to the company” (office secretary, private company).

Q: Is this autocracy from high-level management or middle management?

A: “No, from middle management” (office secretary, private company).

The majority of the workers indicated that middle managers’ self-interests were the basic motive behind the barrier they have created to knowledge sharing. Workers declared their viewpoints as *“higher rank is benefited”* or managers use information *“for their own benefits”* and *“for their own personal goals”*. Workers believe that *“managers and supervisors propose their own ideas to top levels of management and they are encouraged for that”* but they do not let ordinary workers do the same. They think that *“the person at that higher level has benefited not the individual who has declared the suggestion”*, because workers feel that managers put their name on the workers’ ideas *“to say that they have done it themselves”* and *“managers get benefit from the experiences of others”* and *“they (managers) do not give the workers their right”*. Workers oppose this situation and suggest that the *“manager must not think only about himself”*, an attitude that has resulted in the situation that *“people hide their information for their own good”*. The following quotes describe this statement:

“It has happened that when we speak to individuals at the same level of mine in the other departments that say for example, I have given that suggestion but

when it has been shared with a higher level; the person at that higher level has been benefited not that individual who has declared the suggestion” (reception employee, private company).

“Managers use our information for their own personal goals; yes they use it.” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

“Certainly managers get the most benefit from information sharing. The reason is that when they contact supervisors, foremen, and workers, they see something, and they can submit it. As said, I liked it could be declared by workers as well. Yes they submit it under their own name then, tomorrow, some day they get a higher position or place” (worker #3, Assembly Line, private company).

Some managers supported workers’ statements regarding the lack of job security and their own perception that knowledge sharing was a threat to their position as the motive behind efforts to create barriers to knowledge sharing, as revealed by the following quotes:

“Because of lack of job security, some supervisors and bosses prevent ideas from their subordinates coming to the attention of higher level management, because they feel it will be a threat to their position” (Factory Manager, private company).

“Some managers or supervisors do not share their information with subordinates, because they have fear of losing their job or their position” (manager, Administrative Department, private company).

Some managers also think that “because of a lack of team working culture”, self-interest is something common in the society, but it exists at a higher level in the company (e.g. getting personal advantages from stolen information or information which is not shared with colleagues and subordinates). Managers viewed this as an important motive for those colleagues who wish to prevent knowledge sharing:

“In our society, especially in our company everywhere you go people hide their information for their own good” (boss, Administrative Department, private company).

“Sharing information of colleagues to higher level is to get advantage for themselves” (manager, Sales Department, private company).

“Because of the lack of team working culture individuals put their benefits in the first place and they do not share their information for the company’s benefits” (Factory Manager, private company).

Contrary to others, one manager mentioned workers’ self-interest as a barrier to knowledge sharing, as follows:

“Employees do not share their information to the same level of colleagues because they feel it might give a better chance to their colleagues to get a better position than themselves” (Factory Manager, private company).

In conclusion, it is seen that the data supported the idea that in the private company middle managers act as a barrier to knowledge sharing. This can be confirmed from two aspects. Firstly, middle managers do not play their role properly as facilitators of knowledge sharing, because they do not welcome and encourage this activity, and they also do not share their information with subordinates. They have not documented their information and workers' information for use by the company. As a new finding, and representing the second aspect, the data analysis supported the idea that middle managers play a reverse role and act as barriers to knowledge sharing in the private company. Middle managers play a destructive role in this respect by stealing ideas from subordinates and sharing these with higher level management, decreasing social capital in the company by diminishing communication between workers and departments, and concealing information from other managers and departments. Middle managers respect relations more than rules, and hide mistakes made by their friends and relatives from the CEO. They also act against workers ideas by questioning them, and creating a military environment, spying on them, and limiting their contact with the CEO.

As a result, workers view knowledge sharing as harmful rather than useful, and are thus reluctant or refuse to share information with others.

Middle managers' motives for themselves creating obstacles to knowledge sharing were introduced as: lack of job security, dictatorship, and self-interest. Considering other aspects of the data that indicate the existence of conflict between managers and departments, and the motives mentioned above, it is possible to interpret these as the surface of more deeply rooted motives in the conflict between middle managers who try to secure better positions or at least keep their current positions safe from attack by other managers, within a growing company which they believe will face many changes in the future.

5.6.5.4. Information as a Means of Securing Managers' Self-interests

A part of knowledge management literature argues that 'knowledge is power', but in the organisational context this is not generally accepted, and there is no empirical research to support this notion. Some people believe that knowledge itself does not have power but it is what individuals share about what they know that gives them power (Mc Dermott and O'Dell, 2001, p. 81). On the other hand, in the normal situation it is expected that members of

organisations try to facilitate knowledge sharing; the middle managers' role as facilitator of knowledge sharing is especially important. In the previous section it was concluded that middle managers in the private company did not facilitate knowledge sharing, and that where they felt knowledge sharing to be harmful to them, they actually acted as barriers to the process; however, when they felt it guaranteed their own self-interest, they shared information with higher level management. In general, this situation can be described as an insecure environment that is characterised by a high rate of unemployment in the country, lack of job security, lack of job descriptions in the company, and local tribalism in the factory, all of which serve as antecedents of conflict between managers and departments. The company CEO and other managers described personal conflict between individuals in the private company in the following quotes:

"I think if somewhere in our company, information has not been shared it is because of tensions and conflicts between individuals" (The CEO, private company).

"The biggest difficulty related to information transfer that I have seen in my managerial periods, has been personal conflicts of individuals and their personal hostilities with one another. For example this manager does not like the other one" (manager, Sales and After Sales Service Department, private company).

"Information sharing in this company is more intra-group. It can be said that each department does it for itself, and does not distribute information to the other departments" (supervisor, Purchase Order Department, private company).

The existing conflict has resulted in a low level of knowledge sharing between managers and departments that has been intensified by the distance between the factory and its Head-office. Nepotism is another tactic that managers have employed to strengthen their position in the company by supporting individuals who are loyal to them. Managers' actions include discouraging workers from knowledge sharing, by disrespect for employees' ideas, and a lack of appreciation for workers sharing knowledge. Managers sometimes concealed information or prevented information from being shared in order to protect their self-interest, and sometimes they shared information for the sake of self-promotion. For example, they shared knowledge to please superiors and to keep or promote their current position.

5.6.5.5. High Unemployment and Lack of Job Security

The unemployment rate in Iran is generally high. Managers in the private company mentioned this as a factor that affects knowledge sharing in the company in the following quotes:

“Because of the high rate of unemployment in the country people have to stay in their job even if they are not satisfied with it and this affects co-operation, morale, and decreases knowledge sharing” (boss, Finance Department, private company).

“The high rate of unemployment in society and lack of job security makes information/knowledge sharing difficult in (the company name)” (manager, Finance Department, private company).

The unemployment rate in the local area where the factory of the private company is located, is one of the highest compared to other provinces in Iran. Due to the high rate of unemployment in the area, the number of applicants for vacancies at the factory has been very high. Managers and workers have been selected from amongst the high number of applicants. Because of the high level of risk of becoming unemployed, managers and workers avoid any action that might put their jobs at risk, even if this action is knowledge sharing. Middle managers always keep *“the last blow of pottery to themselves for a rainy day”* and *“prevent ideas from their subordinates coming to the attention of higher level management”* in order *“to control the threat at its lowest level”*. Middle managers perceive a *“threat to their position”* and *“feared losing their job or their position”*, believing that if they share all their information, the company will not need them anymore. Middle managers also *“present shared information from their colleagues as their own to superiors in order to obtain advantage for themselves”* and secure their own positions. The following quotes from managers support the above statement:

“Lack of job security decreases knowledge sharing in this company. Individuals (managers and employees) feel that if they share their information with someone else, at last it will be a threat to their position” (manager, Sales Department, private company).

“Some supervisors, because of fear and lack of job security, do not share information with their subordinates to control the threat in its minimum level” (Factory Manager, private company).

“Some managers in our company like old alchemists try to keep their low information to themselves, because they are fearful of losing their job or their position” (manager, R&D Department, private company).

The high level manager (CEO) also agreed that the lack of job security is common and affects knowledge sharing of individuals in the private company when he stated:

“There is some information that its sharing has no danger for its owner, for example, a mountaineer or a person whose field is hygiene; s/he is not scared of giving this information to others. Gradually we reach a level that a person

who has some information and is doing a job, maybe because of different reasons this person restrains to share his information. It can be because of lack of patience or lack of motivation and finally unfortunately, it can be in some cases because the individual is scared of transferring his/her information and abilities to another person, and feels that the organisation will not need him/her after that. Anyway, it is common" (the CEO, private company).

Workers had the same idea as managers concerning the lack of job security, but they mentioned envy as another reason for individuals withholding information, as indicated in the following quotes:

"Because of lack of job security, managers in (the company name) do not share their information and keep the company needy to themselves, and keep their position" (office secretary, private company).

"A feeling of over-ambition and lack of job security in (the company name), has decreased the level of information/knowledge sharing between individuals in the company" (office secretary, private company).

"Lack of job security, envy, wrong understanding of colleagues about information sharing by employees, and lack of valuing information/knowledge sharing in (the company name) are obstacles to information/knowledge sharing" (Sales employee, private company).

5.6.5.6. Conflict Between Managers and Departments in the Private Company

Managers in the private company explicitly asserted their conflict with each other. The basis of the existing conflict is described as differences *"between traditional and modern management styles and age differences between managers"* and *"difference of opinion"* between managers. There is also more conflict with the managers of those departments engaged in general services such as finance and human resource in the company. For example, one manager even mentioned the name of another department within which he alleged that information hiding takes place and, as a result, this particular department's function had been ineffectual and the cause of problems for all departments, as mentioned in the following quotes:

"All departments have a dispute with Finance Department" (manager, Trade Department, private company).

"The Finance Department is very weak in information sharing. It has acted very, very weak and has made problems for all departments" (manager, Trade Department, private company).

"Information hiding happens in the Finance Department but it does not happen here (in Trade Department)" (manager, Trade Department, private company).

Another manager targeted the Human Resource Department in order to show his conflict with and distrust of the HR manager by describing him as *“not proper person”* and regarding him as a problem *“that must be investigated and solved”*, as declared in the following quote:

“The Human Resource Department of our company is weak because the person who is appointed as its manager is not proper person. I think it must be investigated and solved” (manager, Painting Department, private company).

Another manager described management style and age differences between managers as the causes of conflict as follows:

“Conflict between traditional and modern management styles, and age differences between managers are barriers to information/knowledge sharing in (the company name)” (Factory Manager, private company).

One of the operational managers drew attention to the high level of conflict between departments and the fact that the company had no strategy in place to resolve conflicts as mentioned in the following quote:

“Units in (the company name) have a lot of conflict and differences of opinion, and I have never seen senior managers have a plan for solving these conflicts and problems” (supervisor, Electronic and Body Unit Department, private company).

Workers in the private company have also confirmed the existence of both *“personal and general”* conflicts between managers and departments in the company, which they feel are at a higher level between managers compared to between workers. Workers declared that conflict between managers has resulted in using *“knowledge as a tool for their own sectional interests”* and also for creating *“disagreement between their personnel”*.

Workers are not happy with the conflict situation between their managers, believing that it is not the managers, who get hurt by this conflict, but the workers themselves who are *“being mashed”* or *“being crushed”* as a result. They also regard the existing conflict as a barrier to the company’s progress and believe that if managers decrease the conflict, departments will progress in terms of work, and also *“working relations will become better and more friendly”*. The following quotes support the above statement:

“There are conflicts in our company, including personal and general” (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

“Unfortunately, managers’ relationships are more hostile than workers’ relationships. Most managers have problems with one another and as worker or as foreman I am being mashed, being crushed; they (managers) do not get hurt” (worker #7, Assembly Line, private company).

“Well, if disagreements decrease, they (departments) share their information with each other, they (departments) will progress in terms of work and also working relations will become better and friendlier” (typist, Administrative Department, private company).

One of the workers highlighted the conflict between blue-collar and white-collar groups in the following quote:

“There is a high amount of difference between the repair unit and others. Repairmen are not valued as much as others (clerical workers). They count us in a different way. For example, as low class, and things that they say and reach to our ear” (repairman #2, private company).

As a result, both managers and workers agreed that conflict exists between managers and departments in the private company. Managers do not trust one another, and their conflict decreases knowledge sharing between departments, and this conflict is transferred to the workers’ level. Workers view this war situation between managers as harmful to themselves and their company.

5.6.5.7. Low Level of Knowledge Sharing Between Departments

As a result of conflict between managers and departments, knowledge sharing between the departments in the private company is low. Managers believe that the departments in the company *“do not share most of the information with other related units”*, and sometimes it reaches such a level that senior managers interfere and *“make it (knowledge sharing) compulsory”* so that even if managers *“do not like to share information”* they *“have to share it with other units”*. This indicates that because of conflict, middle managers who are supposed to facilitate knowledge sharing in the company not only do not facilitate it, but need to be forced to share their information. The following quotes stated by managers support the above statement:

“In our company some units do not share most of their information with other related units, for example, the Finance Department does not share financial information with the administrative department” (boss, Administrative Department, private company).

“The Finance Department is very weak regarding information sharing” (manager, Trade Department, private company).

“Departments in our company do not distribute knowledge to other departments” (supervisor, Purchase Order Department, private company).

Workers in the private company also believed that managers do not share information between departments and *“they (managers) try to use them (useful information) in their own department in such a way that is not leaked to other departments”*. Workers declared that departments *“do not have contact with each other”* and even claimed that their managers have asked them, *“not to share information”* with individuals from other departments. Although workers accepted that information held by some departments might be *“confidential and there was no need to share it with other departments”*, they emphasised the facilitating role of managers and expected that *“managers in each department must co-operate in information sharing”*. The following quotes support the above statement:

“In our company, especially in our department (Finance Department), if they have some information that they can use them to promote the work, they try to use that information in their own department, so that it does not leak to the other departments” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

“For example, in the other departments supervisors say ‘do not share your information with such and such a person’ (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

“I have no information from other departments. We work mostly in our department and have no contact with other departments” (worker, Repair and Maintenance Department, private company).

As a result, managers and workers in the private company confirmed a low level of knowledge sharing between departments.

5.6.5.8. Hiding Knowledge for Self-interest

Managers in the private company believed that hiding information was *“something natural for all human kind”* regarding it as *“natural that some people like to keep their information to themselves”*. According to the managers, hiding information in the private company occurs because of the *“lack of job security”*, and individuals *“keep information up their sleeves to share it with a senior manager”*, who is higher than their own line manager. Managers believe that individuals view knowledge sharing as *“a threat to their position”* and they keep *“the last blow of pottery to themselves for a rainy day”* to share with those managers who they think are *“able to benefit them, increase or decrease their salary or dismiss them”*. Managers justified this behaviour by saying *“because everyone likes to show-off himself and are encouraged”*. Some managers mentioned that workers ask for *“extra payment”* to share information regarding *“what is happening”* between workers. That again can be interpreted as support for

the practice of spying on workers by managers. The following quotes support the above statement:

"I think hiding information and knowledge is something natural for every human kind. Because of lack of job security, individuals keep something as 'the last blow of pottery' to themselves for a rainy day" (manager, Sales Department, private company).

"Some employees keep information up their sleeve to share it with a higher level manager (higher than own manager) because they feel that manager is the only person who is able to benefit them, increase or decrease their salary or dismiss them, they keep their information and share it with that manager" (manager, Production Department, private company).

"It is natural that some people like to keep their information to themselves. Certainly there are some people who do that" (manager, After Sales Department, private company).

Workers in the private company also confirmed that hiding information *"dominantly happens"* in their company and accepted the lack of job security as a reason, whilst declaring other reasons such as *"over-ambitious feeling"*, envy, fear of disloyalty, *"wrong understanding of the intentions of colleagues regarding information sharing"* and also a *"lack of valuing information sharing"* in the company. The last reason relates to managers' performance, which has not met workers' need regarding facilitating knowledge sharing in the company. Workers believe that individuals hide their information *"to keep the company needy of their service to keep their position"*. They also stated competition for promotion in the company as a motive, believing that some individuals *"use others as their own promotion step"* and saying *"everyone likes to promote himself, nobody wants his colleague to be promoted"*. Workers regarded their experience and their information as the factor that causes their progress and if they *"transfer that information and experience; it prevents their promotion"*. They believe that if they share their information, they *"will be left out in the cold"*, and consequently *"hide it (information) until the day that is really needed"*. Some individuals believe that they have *"struggled years and years"* to gain experience and do not like to share it lightly. In fact, one of the workers even said *"I have a plan in my mind that can solve the problem of the company, but I have not divulged it yet"*, because he felt at that time, that the release of the plan had no benefit for him. The following are quotes from workers:

"Now that cars are more complicated, nobody gives his information to someone else. Everyone like to promote himself, nobody wants his colleague to be promoted" (repairman #2, private company).

"The individuals who hide their information, they are scared of betrayal. I mean, I think if I give you my information, and my information is very important, you share it with others and it will be contaminated and I cannot obtain anything and as said 'I will be left out in the cold'. Because of that I hide it, until the day that is really needed" (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

"Hiding information for self-interest dominantly happens in our company. I mean that person wants to put that information in his own name. That person thinks that his experience and information causes his progress and if he transfers that information and experience, it prevents his promotion, and the other person will overtake him. For example, regarding this case, in our department if an individual in payroll unit has some skills, if I ask him to teach me some of (as said) 'the last blow of pottery', she/he never tells it to me" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

As a result, both managers and workers in the private company agreed that because of self-interest, knowledge is usually and regularly concealed in their company.

5.6.5.9. Sharing Knowledge to Please Superiors

Workers in the private company stated that *"knowledge sharing to please superiors happens at a very high level"* and workers *"share their knowledge too often to please their superiors"*. Workers do this by explaining their experiences to managers in the best way, and also by stealing ideas which have been created in a group discussion to say that they *"have personally reached"* those ideas. Workers also share the *"method that has not been shared with"* colleagues in their job, with their managers so that the *"supervisor or manager will see it"*. Their motives in sharing information to please superiors are *"to revise the viewpoint of the manager"* about themselves, to *"get reward and to be encouraged"*, and as a result *"to gain a higher position"* in the workplace.

It seems that regardless of its nature, some workers have accepted this kind of knowledge sharing as a legitimate *"way of information sharing"* and declared that *"it is very good"*. The following quotes contain workers' viewpoints:

"In my workplace people share their information too much to please their superiors. We have a colleague that when he does a repair work, he informs the manager just for getting reward and to be encouraged" (repairman#1, private company).

"Information sharing to please superiors happens here too much. Every person, who wants to gain a higher position use it and try to explain his experiences to his manager in the best way to revise the viewpoint of the manager about himself" (reception employee, private company).

5.6.5.10. Sharing Knowledge for Self-interest

Using information as a two-edged sword is going to be a reality in the private company, because the question for individuals will always remain 'to share or not to share?' and the answer depends on whether a specific person at a particular time feels that his/her benefits are guaranteed by hiding or by sharing. As discussed previously, hiding knowledge for self-interest happens in the private company, and now examples, which support this argument are provided:

"There are some individuals that share their information with the manager to get promoted or to be encouraged, at least for any reason it exists" (worker, Repair and Maintenance Department, private company).

"Sometimes information sharing happens for getting empty positions, for capturing that position. For example I go to my supervisor and say, I have this ability and I do this job, you appoint me for that position in department... Yes, for promotion, seeking benefit from work, getting benefit as said from job" (worker #5, Assembly Line, private company).

5.6.5.11. Self-promotion by Knowledge Sharing

Workers in the private company believe that some of their colleagues "who have work experience" hide their knowledge from other workers and use their knowledge for self-promotion by sharing their information with supervisors and managers, especially when they think that their manager is facing a problem. Workers believe that the motive for individuals who use information in this way, is that they want to show to superiors that "their skills and performance are higher than the other workers" and as result "to be recognised more" by managers and supervisors. Workers stated the following:

"Individuals in the painting line who have work experience before entering (the company name) share their knowledge to their superiors to show that their skills and performance are higher than other workers" (office secretary, private company).

"Sometimes it happens that a manager faces a problem and I have a solution for that problem. I hold it with myself until the day that my manager or my boss is helpless and then I go forward. What I want from this? I don't know, but in the days like that I divulge that information to show-off myself" (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

"Sometimes it happens that for example, when we ask colleagues about the manner of doing a job they say "I do not know" or "I can not do it" or "I am not informed about it", and later we see that s/he has used the method that has not shared with me in his/her job so that supervisor or manager see it" (employee, Production Control Department, private company).

Managers in the private company confirmed the workers' viewpoint regarding self-promotion through knowledge sharing. Managers believe that individuals give *"even some suggestions which are not practical only to put themselves under consideration of their supervisors"*. Managers believe that some individuals *"insist to show to others that they are knowledgeable"* by knowledge sharing and their motive is more about *"being encouraged"* *"rather than solving a problem of the company"*. The following quotes support the above statement:

"The fact is that in our organisation people like more to give suggestions to put themselves under the consideration, rather than solving a problem of the company" (manager, Project Department, private company).

"Some people in our company give even some suggestions which are not practical, only to put themselves under consideration of their supervisors" (supervisor, Trim Department, private company).

"In our company some people who have not got related information/knowledge, they insist to show to others that they are knowledgeable and try to share information/knowledge, but it has never had a good result, because the other side does not accept their claim as knowledgeable people" (consultant of the CEO and directorates, private company).

The company CEO also supported the workers' and middle managers' idea about the existence of self-promotion by knowledge sharing, but he believes that it happens more at the middle level of the company:

"It can be said that at directorship and management levels of our company, individuals strive to show themselves bigger than what they are, and they try to declare their knowledge more than what it is" (the CEO, private company).

5.6.5.12. Nepotism (X factor in the private company)

Literature on nepotism is more focused on studying family-owned businesses, to identify the advantages and disadvantages that nepotism can create within organisations. As a dominant issue in less-developed countries (Hagen and Amin, 1994) nepotism has been described in many different ways; including as a 'dirty word', as a 'solution' and also as a 'problem'. Although research has resulted in identifying more disadvantages than advantages of nepotism via its effects on the functions and policies and human resource management in organisations (Ford and McLaughlin 1986; Hagen and Amin, 1994), some people believe that based on the way it is monitored, nepotism can be harmful or helpful to organisations (Nelton, 1998). Different structures in the countries (socio-cultural, economic, educational, and political structures) are important in relation to nepotism. For example, cultural differences affect the perception of managers towards the practice (Hagen, et al., 1998).

The majority of the workers and also some managers in the private company identified nepotism as a critical issue in the company. When one of the workers ironically responded X as one of the factors that affected workers' appraisal in the company, the researcher asked 'what do you mean by X, and this person asked for the tape recorder to be stopped, and then answered 'relation'.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the reliance on family members and close friends is a feature of Iranian national culture that can cause nepotism not only in terms of the employment of family members but also that of close friends, and in their continued support by managers in Iranian organisations. To prevent confusion about using term 'relation' in this section as a sign for my interpretation of nepotism, I need to mention that in Iranian language, when individuals use word 'relation' in an organisational context, it does not mean the general meaning of interpersonal relationships, but usually refers to family relationship or friendship, which affects individuals' benefits within the organisation (e.g. employment, position, reward, etc). Therefore, term 'relation' in the quotes in this section is interpreted as nepotism in the private company.

Workers defined nepotism as "*being friends (of managers), or being introduced by someone else (to the managers)*". They emphasised the disadvantages of nepotism in different ways such as calling it a "*problem*", or "*lack of respect for official rules*". Workers think that in the private company "*relation is dominant*" and managers "*value only relation*" in "*doing the jobs*" and "*positioning individuals*". They believed that those colleagues that are supported by managers are valued more than others, and used very tough language to criticise the practice, declaring "*the problem is nepotism; we are really suffering from nepotism*".

Some workers related the history of their efforts during the establishment of the factory, complaining about nepotism as the reason that caused "*some people to come and without any problem get good jobs with good salary and benefits*". Workers believed that middle managers practice nepotism in appraisal and reward and "*allocate rewards based on the relations*", because some individuals who work very hard and have a high feeling of responsibility in their work are not rewarded and "*some individuals who work much less than technical and engineering workers get more rewards*". One of the workers told a story to indicate that "*performance appraisal is based on relations and nepotism*". He compared his tenure with a newcomer who entered the company just one month ago and "*because of relation*" the supervisor assessed him (the experienced worker) as good, but assessed the newcomer as

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"*excellent*". Some workers accepted nepotism as a usual custom in private companies, but they believed that as a result of this, middle managers "*do not declare the mistakes*" made by their friends "*and do not let it to leak to somewhere else*". Workers believe that "*existing relations has caused disagreement between workers*". The following quotes support the above statement:

"The position of individuals is not based on their work; I think it is based on the existing relation" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

"For assessment, work, morale, work attendance, time and X are considered" (worker, Engineering Department, private company).

Q: What do you mean by X?

He asked me to stop the tape recorder and then said '*relation*'.

"The reward system in our company is weak. I mean I do not say myself, in our own department there are some individuals who work very, very much, and they have a high feeling of responsibility in their work, but unfortunately they are not rewarded; but there are some individuals who work much less than technical and engineering workers and get more rewards...I think the reason is that the company is private, usually in private companies it is the custom" (worker, Engineering Department, private company).

Workers in the private company strongly emphasised the disadvantages of nepotism, believing that middle managers practised it in the employment and allocation of positions and resources to workers, which is viewed by workers as an injustice, and has created a negative feeling of suffering among them, and consequently generated conflict between them. Hence, it has caused a low level of knowledge sharing by workers within the company, as workers mentioned in the following quotes:

"One of the barriers to information sharing in our company is, that instead of rules, relations are dominant and it can reduce information sharing" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

"Yes, the first important barrier to information sharing is this relations, more important is relations...It causes other workers who are not supported by managers to be discouraged from sharing their information and knowledge. They (workers) say 'when managers' friends get its benefits, why do I share my knowledge without being benefited from it?'" (worker #6, Assembly Line, private company).

"To increase information sharing to an effective level, the company must decrease some problems like relations and nepotism, because relations are the most important factor. The supervisor or manager must be concerned about all workers, not only their friends, and nourish them in terms of salary, accord and these things, so that this existing injustice can be removed" (worker #4, Assembly Line, private company).

Managers in the private company did not mention nepotism as much as workers did. Managers regarded nepotism as a *“lack of meritocracy and appointing improper individuals in positions”* within the company. Only two managers criticised nepotism on the grounds that it affected the company’s employment practices *“based on friendship, relations or relationship”*, through hiring individuals who *“are not suited for their job”*. Managers believed that nepotism resulted in a reduction of trust in the company and in employees keeping knowledge to themselves. They stated the following:

“Some people are hired in this company based on friendship relations or relationship; and they are not suited for their job. They have not got information, and because of that they have used relations to get the job” (manager, Painting Project Department, private company).

“Lack of meritocracy and appointing improper individuals in positions caused reduction of trust in the company by employees; and they keep information to themselves and do not share it with the company because they say ‘why I share my information and A and B get its benefits’” (manager, Production Department, private company).

As a result, both workers and managers regarded nepotism as a barrier to knowledge sharing in the private company. Managers considered the disadvantages of nepotism as a *“lack of meritocracy”* that has resulted in a low level of knowledge sharing by workers with the company; and workers described the disadvantages of nepotism as a feeling of injustice among those workers who are not the beneficiaries of the practice, and the resulting discouragement to share their knowledge with the company.

5.6.5.13. Lack of Job Descriptions

Because of the company’s relative youth, as the company CEO mentioned, they *“have not passed the growth step in terms of production and organisational chart”*, and therefore, some of the required systems have not yet been established. The researcher was informed that no formal job descriptions for the various departments and jobs in the company, and it was only during the data collection exercise that the company began to implement International Standard Organisation (ISO) systems. Managers in the private company mentioned that because of the lack of job descriptions, there are sometimes misunderstandings regarding jobs and this resulted in conflict between individuals and departments, and *“makes knowledge sharing difficult between units”*. They commented on this as follows:

“Lack of job descriptions in our company has decreased knowledge sharing” (boss, Finance Department, private company).

“Lack of job descriptions makes knowledge sharing difficult between units; because units are not sure about information that they must share” (manager, Production Department, private company).

5.6.5.14. Distance Between the Factory and Head Office

Managers in the private company believed that the “*distance between the factory and Head Office*” has made “*information/knowledge sharing difficult between units*”. Managers have to travel about four hours from the factory to Tehran to attend meetings with other managers, and this is time-consuming. Moreover, sometimes the necessary documents are not available for use in knowledge sharing. Because of the poor IT infrastructure in the area where the factory is located, managers’ ability to use IT for knowledge sharing is limited to email, but sometimes there are problems regarding access to the Internet in the factory. The following are quotes from managers regarding the distance problem:

“Distance between the factory and head office and sales department has made information/knowledge sharing difficult between units in (the company name)” (manager, After Sales Department, private company).

“Distance between (the company name) factory and headquarter office causes problems in communication between units and sometimes makes discontent between units” (manager, Production Department, private company).

One of the managers believes that IT, which could provide a solution to the distance problem, is not used properly for knowledge sharing in the company:

“I have not seen in our company, people use too much tools such as computer and Internet for information sharing” (manager, Construction Project Department, private company).

5.6.5.15. Lack of Trust in Managers by Workers in the Private Company

Situations that lead to trust have been considered frequently in the literature. As a set of variables three features appear often in the literature to explain the characteristics of a trustee, these being, ability (competence), benevolence, and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). In this study, these three components (competence, benevolence, and integrity) proposed by Mayer et al (1995), have been used for the analysis of data regarding trust in managers by the workers. The reason for the selection was because this measure has been specially designed to assess perceived trustworthiness and has been found to highlight the strongest components of trust (Costa, 2003; Farrell et al., 2005). Competence (ability) includes “that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific

domain” (Mayer, et al, 1995, p. 717). Features such as being successful in the things they do, being confident about skills, having the capability for doing the job, having knowledge about what they need to do, are considered as ability factors for a trustee (Farrell et al., 2005). Several researchers have employed the term benevolence in their analyses of trust, focusing on the particular relationship with the trustor (Larzelere and Huston, 1980; Solomon, 1960; Strickland, 1958). Benevolence is a positive orientation and some specific attachment of the trustee towards the trustor, embodying “the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from a selfish profit motive” (Mayer et al. 1995, p. 718). In the trustor’s view, a benevolent trustee is attributed as having characteristics such as, being helpful, considering the needs and desires of the trustor as important, being fair in dealing with others, having a strong sense of justice, being concerned about the trustor’s welfare, and looking out for what is important to the trustor (Farrell et al., 2005). Integrity “involves the trustor’s perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable” (Mayer, et al. 1995, p. 719), such as sticking to his/her word (Farrell et al., 2005).

5.6.5.15.1. Lack of benevolence-based trust in managers by workers

Workers in the private company have shown a low level of trust in their managers, regarding both their benevolence and competence. In the field of benevolence-based trust, workers criticised managers’ for their failure to consider the needs and desires of the workers. For example, as mentioned in previous sections, workers are inclined to share their ideas and information, and they like their ideas to be welcomed, but as workers called the “*word of their heart*” and “*the truth*”, they believe that managers do not consider them and their ideas as important, and managers do not do “*anything*” for workers who share information. Workers’ trust in managers’ benevolence is so low that one of the workers declared his viewpoint, as “*what never reaches anywhere is screaming*”. This quote originally comes from a famous Farsi poem that says “If the scream is my scream, and the ear is your ear, of course something that does not reach anywhere is screaming” that means “nobody hears what I say”. The following quotes support this contention:

*“I said what I knew, but as said, what never reaches anywhere is screaming”
(worker #4, Assembly Line, private company).*

“Well, basically one of the factors that can be like this, that err... a person who has experience in a field or can do a work; when he sees that his manager or a person at a higher rank who is authority, does not do anything for him certainly he does not share his information. I do not say it must be rewarded but, it has not been welcomed as it is supposed; well, basically

maybe individual does not do that (information sharing)" (reception employee, private company).

"Usually most colleagues share their ideas and viewpoints with managers of the departments, but generally it is the managers' viewpoint that is being confirmed" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

Regarding another aspect of benevolence-based trust (looking for what is important to the workers), workers declared their trust in the CEO as a person who *"has real sympathy for the worker"* but criticised middle managers who do not *"decrease the distance"* between themselves and workers in the following quotes:

"I appreciate the CEO of this company, because really my feeling, how can I say, you suppose he has a close relationship, in terms of moral really lovely. Now put it aside that the workplace may not be at a very good level, but I have a very good feeling about the CEO of the company" (typist, Administrative Department, private company).

"If managers can decrease the distance between management and personnel, I mean via meetings and group talks, it could be the best effective factor for information sharing" (reception employee, private company).

In the context of managers' fairness, workers stressed that middle managers have no sense of justice regarding workers. Workers believe that managers *"do not give the workers their rights"* and are not sure about the managers' decisions regarding workers' rewards regardless of whether *"their decision is right or maybe wrong"*. Workers stated that managers always try to *"find fault with workers"*, and this has decreased the work progress in the company. Workers also view it as unfair on the part of middle managers that *"employees can not communicate with the senior management of the company (CEO)"* and feel that they *"might be able to talk to the CEO more comfortably"* than with middle managers. Another unfair action by middle managers is mentioned as putting workers' ideas in their own names to present to the CEO. Workers also are not happy with *"too much discrimination between repair workers and others"* by managers. The following sentiments were expressed by workers:

"One thing that makes information sharing difficult in this company is that employees can not communicate with the high level manager of the company (CEO), it is one factor. I mean if you want to say something, they (middle managers) say 'it must not be said by you as an employee, I must say it as your manager'" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

"I mean if I suggest something to the manager, he (manager) shares it with the CEO in his own name as his own plan. In fact they put their name on the information which belongs to others" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

"They (managers) do not give the worker's right" (worker #6, Assembly Line, private company).

One of the workers stated that middle managers are not concerned about them, and they *"only act for themselves"*, and as his last word he hoped that managers *"care about workers, not only production workers, but all workers"*:

"I say, supervisors only act for themselves; only for themselves, and they are not concerned about worker...there is no more special thing to say, only care about workers, not only production workers, but all workers" (worker #6, Assembly Line, private company).

One of the workers declared that managers do not trust them in the following quote:

"The explanation is that each manager appoints a spy for himself...I mean it is not possible to communicate" (repairman#2, private company).

Beside many negative quotes from workers about managers' benevolence, there was only one worker who positively stated the benevolence of middle managers as follows:

"Our managers and supervisors really care about us regarding welfare" (security worker, private company).

Interestingly, that worker (*security worker, private company*) was the person whom other workers called 'antenna' and the managers' spy. Therefore, it is deemed that this positive claim is something to be expected from him, and cannot be regarded as valid evidence of the managers' concern about workers in the private company. Workers in the private company respect integrity as a positive characteristic, and they described positively the integrity of the company CEO, but they did not confirm the integrity of middle managers, especially in regard to their encouragement of knowledge sharing in the company, as they mentioned in the following quotes:

"Since I entered this company I saw integrity in high level manager of the company, the CEO in here. It is enough for me; I like too much to work with honest people" (Sales employee, private company).

"Because of the relations of our middle managers, their actions are opposite to their words. Our CEO is good, but our middle managers allocate rewards based on the relations" (worker #5, Assembly Line, private company).

"You see, here everything is said about encouraging information and knowledge sharing is just a word. I have not seen it in action. If it (information and knowledge sharing) happens nobody encourages it" (worker #1, Painting Line, private company).

5.6.5.15.2. Lack of competence-based trust in managers by workers

Workers in the private company did not trust middle managers regarding the necessary knowledge and skills for success in their managerial role of educating employees. Workers viewed *“inexperienced managers”* as a *“problem”* that resulted in a lack of effective knowledge sharing and a low level of training of employees. Workers are not confident about the managerial skills of middle managers, as declared in the following quotes:

“If each person takes his own proper position, information sharing happens in the most effective way. I mean each person who is skilled in a job to be the manager. I mean someone to be manager who is really in the level of car industry” (repairman #2, private company).

“Let me start with managers, for example managers in some departments are not qualified for their job, because it is the manager who must educate employee for that work. When the manager himself is not qualified, the employee can not be educated for that job it is my viewpoint” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

“When you investigate you see that for example, as said that the basic foundation of that problem is the company itself” (worker #7, Assembly Line, private company).

Q: What do you think are the problems in the company that cause this?

“I think the problem is inexperienced managers” (worker #7, Assembly Line, private company).

According to the data analysis using the three components of trust, workers did not have trust in middle managers in the private company. The level of benevolence-based trust by workers in middle managers is extremely low, but workers did trust in the benevolence and the integrity of the CEO. This can be linked to the middle managers’ action against workers regarding knowledge sharing, and also to the appraisal and reward system in the company that is more tangible for workers.

5.6.5.15.3. Managers’ trust in their counterparts in the private company

Managers did not speak as much as workers did about the competence and benevolence of other managers, but some of them implied a low level of trust in their colleagues. For example, some described other managers as individuals who *“abused the good-intention of the CEO”* and also as those who do not share the right information with colleagues and give them *“the wrong answer”* when they ask for information; and are selfish individuals who feel themselves *“higher than other managers”* and *“hide some information from others”*. In terms of competence-based trust, middle managers pointed out that some managers *“exaggerate about*

information related to their performance”, and “they don’t know what to do with information” and many of them. The following quotes support the contention that middle managers do not trust each other in the private company and that such distrust has resulted in a low level of knowledge sharing between managers and departments:

“Sometimes some managers have abused the well-intention of the CEO and tried to exaggerate about information related to their performance and ideas to get personal advantage, and later it is being cleared that their claim has not been true” (consultant of the CEO and directorates, private company).

“The reason for these conflicts in (the company name) is that many individuals are appointed to improper positions” (supervisor, Electronic and Body Unit Department, private company).

“Because of improper organisational chart, some managers who work directly with the CEO they feel they are higher than other managers, and they hide some information from others” (manager, Painting Department, private company).

5.6.5.16. Unfair System as a Barrier to Knowledge Sharing

Workers in the private company frequently complained against discrimination in the existing appraisal and reward system, believing the unfair system to be the result of middle managers’ actions. For example, workers declared that *“the reward system in our company is weak”* and *“managers do not make a correct assessment”*. Workers believe that *“appraisal is based on relations”*, and *“managers’ taste”, “personal hostility”* of managers and supervisors. They also stated that managers *“do not give certain rights”, “there is no justice”* and *“justice is not respected”* in this system. One of the examples of injustice given by workers is that they struggle more for production, but *“non-production units gain more advantage than production units”*. For example, one of the workers declared that individuals who are *“working in official or financial departments”, “get much more benefits”* than workers. Workers believe that *“individuals with high feeling of responsibility who work very hard, they are not rewarded; but individuals who work much less than technical and engineering workers and get more reward”*. The other problem mentioned by workers, was the effect of personal hostility on the result of the workers’ appraisal. For example, *“because of some treatment, a supervisor has reduced the appraisal marks (of one worker) from 20 to 10”*. Additionally, they are not happy with the lack of feedback by managers to them about the reward system. For instance, workers are not aware of their weaknesses and strengths because managers fail *“to say where we (workers) are weak and where we (workers) are working well”*. The fact that *“workers see and are saddened by”* such injustice has reduced the level of knowledge sharing, and they

believe that in order *“to increase information sharing to an effective level, the company must decrease some of the problems like relations and favouritism... so that this existing injustice can be removed”*. The following quotes support the above statement:

“Appraisal is based on relations, is based on relations. At the end of the year the appraisal form is completed; but filling that form is based on relations. I mean to be pleased with someone or to be acquaintance with him/her or not” (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

“Yes I have seen some things, for example, that someone is a good employee and because of some treatments, a supervisor has reduced his appraisal marks for example from 20 to 10 as revenge... I mean I think they (managers) do not give your certain rights” (worker, Repair and Maintenance Department, private company).

“My feeling is that I say justice, in this company it is obviously observed that there is no justice, justice is not respected...for example, they appoint a new worker on a position with higher salary and other workers see and are saddened by it, and say it to colleagues and it continues like that” (worker #6, Assembly Line, private company).

Some managers in the private company supported the workers' viewpoint about the unfair appraisal and reward system. For example, managers view this system as *“anti-motivational”* because it *“is defective and judgement is not proper, then it decreases motivation”*. Managers declared that *“reward for suggestions is low”* and the motivation problem and weak performance of the system, has resulted in a reduction of knowledge sharing by employees, as mentioned in the following quotes:

“The reward system in this company, is not a motive, but is anti-motivational, because non-production units gain more advantage than production units in this system” (manager, Painting Department, private company).

“Some employees do not present their ideas because the reward for suggestions is low; maybe they want to postpone it until the company's production become more and ideas are more valued” (manager, Administrative Department, private company).

“The reward system is defective and judgement is not proper, then that decreases motivation” (manager, Painting Department, private company).

As a result, the majority of workers and some managers confirmed that an unfair appraisal and reward system in the private company plays a demotivating role, and has decreased the level of knowledge sharing and idea generation within the company.

5.6.5.17. Formal Relationship Between Managers and Workers

The relationship between managers and subordinates is a central issue in the organisational world. Relationships can be a source of tension for the workplace (Browoski, 1998), or a source of success for the organisation. For example, a good relationship with a supervisor, especially one who provides personal support, reinforces the employee's sense of identification (Hopkins, 1997) and these interactions make up the employee's mind about the ambiguities in the organisational environment and encourage positive attachment to the organisation (Ashforth and Mael, 1989).

The majority of the workers in the private company believed that their relationship with managers *"is a formal relationship"*. Workers described this formal relationship as *"boss and subordinates"* *"work relation"* and a relationship in which workers and managers *"have no contact with each other"*. Workers described the *"factory as a military base"* that *"everyday is getting more formal"* and *"really makes workers tired"* and *"makes information and knowledge sharing difficult"*. They believe that in this 'military base', managers keep themselves *"distant from workers"*, and *"hierarchy must be respected"* so that workers *"cannot easily go and speak four words with the managers"*. Therefore, *"workers experience a feeling of fear from the manager"*. They asserted that *"managers communicate with employees very little"* and *"find fault with workers"*. Workers view this formal relationship as a barrier to comfortable knowledge sharing, and they believe that *"to reach the best situation of knowledge sharing, first of all a friendly and brotherly environment must exist"*. They think *"to increase co-operation and decrease disputes"* is *"the best solution for effective knowledge sharing"*, *"being friendly is better than being formal"*. Workers believe this formal relationship between managers and shop-floor workers *"must be slightly decreased"* and the feeling of fear must be removed. They think *managers can decrease the distance between managers and workers"*, *"via meetings and group talks"*. Workers also stated the desirable behaviour from their managers was *"the behaviour that can supervise this information exchange"* and described it as a *"feeling of not being far from managers"*. The following quotes support the above sentiments:

"I think the relationship with our manager is a formal relationship. I think in our department the relationship is formal" (employee #1, Finance Department, private company).

"The workplace is going to be as formal as a military base, I mean every day new rules and announcements and every day getting more formal. It is like a military base, and really makes workers tired, and makes them forget their goals" (worker #4, Assembly Line, private company).

“When manager keep himself distant from worker well, basically workers experience a feeling of fear from the manager. I liked this fear to be removed; I mean to be a feeling of heartfelt” (worker #3, assembly Line, private company).

5.6.5.18. Perceived Harmfulness of Knowledge Sharing by Employees

Some workers in the private company stated that they feel knowledge sharing is harmful, and sometimes it is *“better not to say”* or better not to share knowledge. Workers declared that *“individuals try to hide their information”* because their *“position is in danger”* and they are scared of being criticised for mistakes that might occur during knowledge sharing. The following quotes support this statement:

“Well, sharing information depends on for example, there is something that is better to say, and something that is better not to say. Maybe I say, and it ends as a harmful thing for me, may be it is better not to be said” (security worker #1, private company).

“I think in (the company name) an individual evades information sharing when s/he thinks his/her position is in danger” (employee #2, Finance Department, private company).

“Honestly, now individuals try to hide their information. They are scared, they say, ‘if I know it myself, is better’. I liked it would not be like this, I liked the environment to be friendly” (worker #3, Assembly Line, private company).

As mentioned previously, workers felt insecure about critical information shared even with the researcher as a neutral person. For example, during his interview one of the workers (*worker #4, Assembly Line, private company*) asked for a guarantee of confidentiality in respect of the tape recording, a request which can be interpreted as a result of other aspects of the existing conditions such as middle managers’ resistance to knowledge sharing, the distant and formal relationship between managers and subordinates, and the absence of a system for knowledge sharing.

5.6.5.19. Licensing as a Barrier to Knowledge Sharing

Licensing was introduced by some managers in the private company as a barrier to knowledge sharing. For example, one of the managers believes that *“Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) of the Mother Company leads us to ignore some ideas which are not compatible with SOP”*. Managers regard licensing as a state in which *“most things are compulsory”* and which leaves no room for *“new ideas”*, as mentioned in the following quotes:

“Using Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) of (the mother company) leads us to ignore some ideas which are not compatible with SOP and it acts as a barrier for information/knowledge sharing” (manager, After Sales Service Department, private company).

“Our company is working one hundred percent under licence and most things are compulsory to do and it is not like that we can have new ideas, new ideas are very little. They ask very little for our ideas, if some thing is suggested is voluntary” (supervisor, Electronic and Body Unit Department, private company).

“Our company is an assembling company and the level of idea generation is low in the company, because I do not think it needs new ideas” (supervisor, Trim Department, private company).

5.7. Conclusion

According to the previous sections in this chapter, it is apparent that identification by workers with the private company, the CEO, and their co-workers, was high, but identification with the middle management by workers was low. Identification with the company by middle managers was also high. Managers identified with positive values that they think are more related to the beliefs, intentions, and behaviours of the owners of the company. Organisational identification satisfied different needs of managers compared to workers. For example, managers predominantly satisfied their holistic and belonging needs, while workers' identification was more linked to their lower levels of needs, such as needs for safety and sustenance. Some managers identified with positive values related to the CEO's personality and his communication with individuals. Identification with the company has had emotional effects on managers including improving their feelings of job satisfaction, feelings of duty and responsibility towards the company, and hopefulness about the company's future.

Workers and managers agreed on the identity of their company as a young one with some strengths and some weaknesses; and having a low level of knowledge sharing was identified as one of those weaknesses. Managers and workers both agreed on the low level of idea generation and knowledge sharing within the company. Workers believed that they have no role in idea generation, and some managers supported their claim. Because of the lack of a system in the private company, informal knowledge sharing happens between individuals. According to this study's data analysis, facilitators of knowledge sharing in the private company were identified as: employees' inclination towards knowledge sharing, and the CEO acting as a facilitator and encourager of knowledge sharing. Although workers are inclined to share their information with the company, there is no formal system to do that. Workers' view

was that middle managers can not be trusted as much as the CEO, to share their knowledge. Indeed, workers want middle managers to behave like the CEO regarding knowledge sharing. Some managers agreed with the workers' viewpoint about the CEO as a facilitator of knowledge sharing. The daily morning meeting called the 'Morning Market' was introduced as another facilitator of work-related knowledge sharing in the private company. A few workers confirmed the perceived usefulness of knowledge sharing, as a facilitator, and both workers and managers declared individual relationships as another facilitator of knowledge sharing within the company, but they described the facilitation role in different ways. Workers emphasised tribalism as the reason for friendly relationships, whereas managers also pointed to organisational identification as a complementary factor beside the personal friendly relationship as a facilitator of knowledge sharing.

According to the data analysis, barriers to knowledge sharing in the private company were established as: top-down idea generation, lack of a system for information/knowledge sharing, middle managers acting as barriers to knowledge sharing, high unemployment and lack of job security, and conflict between managers and departments. Some other barriers are: hiding information for self-interest, sharing information for self-interest, sharing information to please superiors, self-promotion through knowledge sharing, nepotism, lack of job description, distance between the factory and Head office, and licensing as factors that have resulted in a low level of knowledge sharing between departments and individuals in the private company.

Workers and managers in the private company acknowledged that top-down idea generation has caused the low level of idea generation in their company. As a new finding, the data from this study supported the contention that middle managers acted as barriers to knowledge sharing in the private company. This finding shows that managers' role as obstacles occurs in two ways: first, middle managers do not play their role as facilitators of knowledge sharing, they do not document and share information, and middle managers do not ask subordinates to share their ideas and knowledge. They have not collected employees' ideas to be used within the company, believing that workers' ideas have no value for middle managers, and they have not welcomed workers' ideas, when they have been forthcoming. Not only have middle managers failed to appreciate workers' ideas, but they have not co-operated with workers who have made suggestions for improved procedures. Secondly, it is clear that middle managers play a destructive role regarding knowledge sharing by stealing subordinates' ideas and later sharing these with higher ranking managers, decreasing social capital within the company by diminishing communication between workers and departments, and hiding information from other managers and departments. Middle managers respect relations more than rules, and hide

the mistakes of their friends from the CEO. They act against workers ideas by questioning them, and creating a military environment and using espionage against workers. Middle managers prevent knowledge sharing between departments and act as a barrier to workers' communication with the CEO.

Middle managers' motives for preventing knowledge sharing are introduced as: lack of job security, dictatorship, and self-interest. Considering other aspects of the data that indicate the existence of conflict between managers and departments, the reasons which are mentioned above can be interpreted as the surface of more deeply-rooted motives in the conflict situation between middle managers, who try to get a better position or at to least keep their current position safe from attack by other managers, in a growing company which they believe will face many changes in the future. Some managers supported workers' ideas about "middle managers as a barrier to knowledge sharing" in the private company; and supported workers' statements regarding the lack of job security and seeing knowledge sharing as a threat to their position, as the motive for middle managers who act as barriers to knowledge sharing. The CEO of the company confirmed the low level of knowledge sharing by middle managers with him, and expressed his dissatisfaction regarding the disorganised process of sharing information. Managers and workers mentioned high unemployment and lack of job security as barriers to knowledge sharing, and both agreed that conflict between managers and departments was an obstacle to knowledge sharing. Managers did not trust one another, their conflict decreased knowledge sharing between departments, and this conflict is transferred to the workers' level. Workers viewed this conflict situation between managers as harmful to themselves and their company.

It was also found that the level of knowledge sharing between departments was low, and individuals withheld their knowledge out of self-interest. Workers also confirmed that hiding knowledge prevails in their company and accepted the lack of job security as a reason for such concealment. They highlighted some other reasons such as over-ambitious feelings, envy, fear of disloyalty, misunderstanding their colleagues' intentions about knowledge sharing, and also the lack of value placed on knowledge sharing in the company. The last reason, which emerged from the analysis, relates to managers' performance that has not met workers' needs regarding facilitating knowledge sharing within the organisation. As another barrier, sharing knowledge to please superiors was cited by workers as happening continually within the company. Using information as a two-edged sword was found to be a reality, because there will always remain the question for individuals of whether to share or not to share, and the

answer depends on whether a specific person at a particular time feels that his/her benefits are guaranteed by hiding or by sharing.

According to the data analysis, the concealment of knowledge from colleagues happened because of self-interest, and there is some evidence that supports the argument that sharing knowledge with superiors does occur for this reason.

Self-promotion through knowledge sharing was introduced as another barrier to knowledge sharing. Workers in the private company believed that some of their colleagues hide their knowledge from workers and use that knowledge for showing off to their information with supervisors and managers. Nepotism was found to be another obstacle to knowledge sharing, since this was rife throughout the company, and workers believed that middle managers practice this in the appointment of new staff, and in their allocation of positions and resources to workers. This practice of nepotism is viewed by workers as unjust, and has created negative feelings among workers, resulting in conflict between them, and reduced knowledge sharing by them. Some managers also viewed nepotism very unfavourably, citing this as showing a *“lack of meritocracy”* that has caused a low level of knowledge sharing by workers with the company. Some managers introduced the lack of job descriptions as the basis of conflict between departments and as a barrier to knowledge sharing. Yet another obstacle identified from the analysis was the perceived harmfulness of knowledge sharing by employees, which resulted in the concealment of knowledge by them. Workers viewed information /knowledge sharing as harmful rather than useful and thus, did not share their knowledge. Some managers mentioned licensing as a barrier to knowledge sharing. Finally, the distance between the factory and Head office was the last barrier to knowledge sharing in the private company.

Regarding the level of trust, according to the data analysis regarding three components of trust (benevolence, competence, and integrity), workers did not trust the middle managers in the private company, showing their level of benevolence-based trust in middle managers to be extremely low, but workers did have trust in the benevolence and integrity of the CEO. Nonetheless, workers' trust in the suggestion box, which is used by the CEO for information/knowledge sharing, is low, and this can be linked with middle managers' actions against workers' ideas, and also the appraisal and reward system in the company that is more tangible for workers. Workers in the private company did not trust middle managers to have the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in their role as manager. They viewed *“inexperienced managers”* as a problem that resulted in the lack of effective information/knowledge sharing and a low level of training among employees. In terms of managers' trust in their counterparts in the private company, some of them showed indications

of a low level of trust in their colleagues. The majority of the workers and some of the middle managers confirmed that an unfair appraisal and reward system in the private company plays an anti-motivational role and has decreased the level of information/knowledge sharing and idea generation within the company. The majority of the workers in the private company believed that the relationship between managers and workers was a formal and distant one.

In conclusion, in the private company workers have high identification with the company and the CEO; therefore, this would be expected to motivate them towards sharing knowledge. Middle managers have high identification with the company; therefore this should motivate them towards facilitating information/knowledge sharing. It is expected that workers share knowledge at a high level, and middle managers support information/knowledge sharing at a high level; but according to the data analysis in this study, workers claimed that despite their inclination to share information, there is no system to do this; and middle managers act as a barrier to knowledge sharing. Therefore, the level of knowledge sharing within the company is low. The reasons behind this problem include: nepotism, the formal and distant relationship between workers and managers, and a fearful environment created by managers that has resulted in a low level of trust by workers in middle managers; and the low level of information/knowledge sharing by workers.

The other reason is the existing conflict between middle managers and departments; and a low level of job security in the company for both managers and workers that have resulted in the appointment of spies by managers, and the withholding of knowledge in their departments to use it for their self-interest. Thus, when middle managers are in a situation of war, they do not regard knowledge as something that should necessarily flow, and hide it from subordinates and other middle managers, sharing it only with high-level managers to get benefits in terms of securing their position and obtaining higher financial rewards.

Chapter Six: Analysis of Findings in the Public Company

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of data in the public company. The data is connected with the different topics mentioned in the literature review, these being: identification, relationships, conflict, bureaucracy, the suggestion system, and the reward system. In each section the existing situation of the company, which is related to the effects of Iranian national culture on organisational culture, has been described and the effects on the knowledge sharing behaviour of employees in the public company, are analysed. The first section considers identification by workers and managers, and the second discusses the relationship between managers and subordinates in the public company. The viewpoints of managers and workers regarding the appraisal and reward system in the company are then analysed, and the rest of the chapter is devoted to the analysis of facilitators of, and barriers to, knowledge sharing in the public company. In the conclusion section, the research findings are discussed in the context of the most important barriers to, and facilitators of, knowledge sharing behaviour, and the effect of bureaucracy as part of the organisational culture on the workers' knowledge sharing behaviour.

6.1. Identification with the Organisation

6.1.1. Workers' Identification with the Public Company

As mentioned in Chapter Five, in order to determine an individual's strength of identification with an organisation, the existence of certain feelings must be explored. In this respect, a feeling of belonging to the organisation, positive organisational goals and values, positive organisational membership, organisational support, recognition of distinct contributions, a feeling of acceptance, and a feeling of security are all important (Abrams, 1992; Lee, 2004; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Feather and Rauter, 2004). According to Pratt (1998), "Identification with social groups satisfies a whole range of human needs", such as those for safety, for affiliation, for self-enhancement, and the individual's holistic needs (Pratt, 1998, p. 183-184). To make clear the following statements, it is necessary to describe the three types of workers who are employed in the public company. The first group consists of those who are permanently employed by the company, and whose job security is higher than other groups. The second group includes those workers who have annual contracts with the company, and who can be dismissed if the company wishes at the end of the contract. The

third group consists of those workers who are hired through an external agency to work in the public company. The different payment and fringe benefits of these three groups of workers caused some feeling of discrimination among those workers who do the same job but get less benefit.

6.1.1.1. Safety Needs

Workers in the public company cited the satisfaction of their safety needs as the central aspect of their identification with the company. They described their feelings predominantly as *“a good feeling of working”* in the company that they considered as *“a good workplace regarding both payment and work environment”*. They stated two levels, macro-level and micro-level, regarding the satisfaction of their safety needs. The macro-level of safety needs satisfied by workers' identification with the company was introduced as national unemployment, which workers viewed as *“a big problem for young people”* in the country. Workers mentioned their struggle to get a job in the company. They commented on their travel from their local city to the capital city (Tehran) and remembered that they *“have tried too much to enter the company”* or stated that *“because of unemployment”* they had *“searched for job about eight-nine (8-9) months”* before getting one in the public company. As a result, with the *“existence of unemployment there are not many jobs for young people in the country”*, workers, who are mostly young individuals, are *“very happy that they have a job”*. Workers feel that because of their job, they *“do not go to streets”* to waste their time. Those who have been working hard in their own city, are happy to be employed in the company. The following quotes support these contentions:

“Honestly I have a good feeling of working in (the company name); because as you know, unemployment is a big problem for young people. Now in this condition, I am not from Tehran, I am from Toysergan (a city in another province of Iran); by God, I have tried too much to enter (the company name)” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

“By God, feeling regarding working here is that I am very happy that I have a job; I am very happy that I have a job in the society and I can do something” (worker, engine assembler, public company).

“I have a good feeling of working here, it is not bad. Before I get the job I had a bad feeling, because of unemployment. I searched for job about eight-nine (8-9) months; I applied here and there, and at last I got a letter from the Work Ministry and came here; now that I am working in (the company name) is better, I do not waste my time; now as said I do not go to streets” (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

Although workers feel secure at some level regarding national unemployment, some of them feel insecure because of their employment situation as contract workers. The workers viewed the current CEO as responsible for this situation, which they feel is a problem that has created “*dissatisfaction*” for them. Workers also referred to the long tenure of other family members to identify with the company, but they dis-identified with their CEO when they introduced him as the source of their feeling of lack of job security. They feel there is “*no difference between them (workers) and those who are introduced by Work Ministry*”. In sum, “*with the existence of unemployment there are not many jobs for young people in the country*”, and workers viewed even their temporary contract as a shelter that saves them from being jobless, as mentioned in the following quotes:

“I am dissatisfied with (the company name) because when we entered one and half year ago they said ‘you will be permanently employed’. We were trained for three and half months, but since 1382 (2003) when the old CEO of company was replaced by current CEO, they cancelled permanent employment; but at last with the existence of unemployment there are not many jobs for young people in the country, I am happy” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

“My father worked here for 25 years and retired. The problem is that when the CEO was replaced, the rules were changed here. Previously, during the management of the old CEO when someone was retired and his son wanted to get his place; it had no process to enter the company; I mean for example it was not so hard; but, now for example, my father is now retired and I have got his place; they did not give me his rank, and now we are working with contractor” (worker, Final Assembly Unit, public company).

The micro-level of safety needs which was satisfied by workers’ identification with the company was the personal income that they receive from it. Regarding safety needs, workers viewed their company as a place that they can “*earn bread from*”, or “*provide expenses from*”, or as a source for providing their “*living costs*”. Workers experience a good feeling about working in the company because they can “*get the result of their own work*” and have a sense that they are working for themselves. They believed that “*regarding financial aspect company supports completely*” and believe their company “*pays a good salary*” and “*compared to other companies (their company) is better*”.

Identification with the company has created a feeling of “*work conscience*” that resulted in workers “*working with inclination*” and helping the company “*to solve the problem*”. Besides their identification with the company, workers complained about “*work pressure*”, believing that the “*production line speed is high*”; but because of the risk of unemployment, they feel

that they *"must make do with its good and bad here (in the company) to continue working"*.

The following quotes by workers support these sentiments:

"Regarding financial aspect the company supports completely, but for me it is not satisfactory regarding the working aspect, I am not happy...I have a good feeling of working here because I provide my expenses from here. Up to some level, I am happy" (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

"My personal feeling is that compared to the other companies is better. The reality is that for us is good; when I compare to other companies that I have previously been working in; regarding psychological aspect and also relationship that they have with a technician is much better here...Yes, work conscience; certainly someone who has work conscience wants to solve the problem" (technician #2, Production Department, public company).

"I have a good feeling of working here. My feeling is that, I must make do with its good and bad here to continue working" (worker, Car door assembler, public company).

6.1.1.2. Belonging Needs

Workers identified with the company by declaring their feeling of belonging to the organisation, which was manifested in metaphors workers used to call the company their *"second home"*, or stating that they liked the company with the *"heart interest"*, and calling themselves *"a member of family"*, and feeling that *"all workers are brothers with each other"*. As mentioned in Chapter Four, in Iranian culture comparing something with the family or home shows the highest attachment and belongingness to that entity. One of the workers even went further and said, *"I feel that, the company is my home; a part of my existence"*. One of the workers who *"always liked to get a job in an industrial company"* believed his wish had come true by working in the public company, and this had caused him to *"be interested in"* his job.

Workers are *"proud of working in"* the public company, and have a *"feeling of pride and glory through working in this company"*. They believe that the company has a good reputation not only with them, but also with outsiders, and they feel that *"everyone wishes to work in this company"*. They are also *"very proud of the rules in this company that prevent disorder"*. Workers feel committed to other workers and they believe that their company is an extended family. They declared that they *"behave like brothers with each other in speech and behaviour"*, and *"if someone falls behind in work, the other one helps him"*. The following quotes offer support for these observations:

“(The company name) is my second home” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

“I have a good feeling of working in (the company name); I have a feeling that I can only say it is my heart interest that I like the company; I am a member of (the company name) family” (worker #5, Assembly Line, public company).

“If you are on the assembly line, if you observe, if you pay attention; it looks like that all workers are brothers with each other; if someone falls behind in work, the other one helps him; this one helps the other one. They behave with each other like brothers, in speech and behaviour” (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

6.1.1.3. Positive Values

Workers in the public company identified with the positive values of the organisation, the majority of them referring to the company's *“friendly environment”* as a positive value. Some called it a *“one hundred percent friendly”* environment, and an *“extraordinary friendly”* workplace. The workers viewed this *“honest working environment, moral environment and friendly environment”* as an important characteristic of their company. They believed that *“every department”* is *“friendly”* and viewed their company environment as *“much appropriate and better”*, than other organisations. Another aspect that workers considered positive about their company was that *“all of the employees are new”*, and *“all individuals are young and at the same level of age”*. Workers believed that this factor (same age) caused workers to be *“all friends with each other”*. They described their workplace as *“very friendly and companionship”*, and as *“an environment with the state of friendship”*. They believed that *“all workers are brothers with each other”*, *“are working next to each other very well”*, and they *“do not have any problem”* with each other. Workers stated that as a result of this brotherly relationship between them, if someone falls behind in his work, other workers help him. Workers also view their company as a place with a huge amount of potential that *“has much room for progress”*. They *“know the company as a place for growth, and progress”*, *“a place for learning”*, and also as a place that allowed them *“to serve the society and people”*. Workers believed that in order to serve society, in their company *“everyone joins their hands to produce good products”*. They also mentioned the *“financial resources and the size”* of their company as characteristics that gave it the power to carry out its mission, so that *“nothing is impossible for the company”*. Moreover, they viewed the company rules positively since they *“prevent disorder”*. Alongside all these positive aspects, workers acknowledged

that “sometimes some tensions occur” in their workplace but this was viewed as “regular for an environment like this”. The following quotes testify to these attitudes:

“Yes, workplace is a one hundred percent (100%) friendly environment; I can say that it is not possible even one percent less, one hundred percent is friendly. If its level is from zero (0) to twenty (20), I grade it at twenty (20)” (shift expert, Assembly Line, public company).

“Compared to the other workplaces, the environment here is much appropriate and better; for example I have been to some other workplaces; I mean honestly working environment, moral environment and friendly environment; these have been important to me” (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

“The environment of my workplace is an environment where all individuals are young and at the same level of age...work environment is friendly, very friendly and companionship (worker #5, Assembly Line, public company).

6.1.1.4. Holistic Meaning

A few workers identified with the public company to satisfy their holistic needs, by declaring their “feeling of pride” to be a member of the company, and calling the company a part of their “existence”, and viewing the company goals as their own by hoping these would be achieved. The following quotes refer to these predispositions among the workers:

“By God, feeling of working here is a good feeling. As said, individuals have a feeling of pride, when someone from outside the company and knows that you are working in (the company name). Well, I think regarding this aspect is good; is a good feeling” (worker #4, Assembly Line, public company).

“I have a good feeling about working here. My feeling about the company is that I feel that, company is my home; a part of my existence” (worker #2, Assembly Line, public company).

“By God, there is no more word to say; I hope that authorities of company can reach the goals of company” (worker, car glass assembler, public company).

6.1.2. Workers’ Identification with Co-workers

Workers in the public company identified with their co-workers “who are working friendlier in production line”. They describe themselves (workers) using the informal term “guys” that can be interpreted as a way of separating their group from other groups in the company. Workers feel that on the production line they are “closer then naturally they work more comfortably” with each other. The reason mentioned by workers for their closeness is that “all

individuals are young and at the same level of age". This age similarity has created a "state of friendship" between them so that they feel that "all workers are brothers with each other" and they work "next to each other very well". Workers believed that the relationship between them is "very friendly" and, based on existing "companionship", they help each other in their work. Workers also believed that they "are not ordinary workers", and described themselves as workers with a "high level of skills" and "experiences".

Another aspect in which workers identified with their co-workers is related to their role in idea generation and suggestion system in the company. Workers believed that they "have the greatest role in idea generation" in the company, because they think that "workers give a large number of suggestions and their suggestions are good". They regard the number of their suggestions as being "at a good level", and believe that "workers in production departments have more roles in suggestion system" compared to other workers. Workers also believed that their relationship with higher levels is not as friendly as with their co-workers. They described their relationship with foremen and supervisors as "a bit friendly at some limit, as long as they do not find useless faults and do not split hairs". Workers believed that the "relationship with top (level) is not good", and complained that the manager of the assembly line "has not come even for once to ask to guys (workers) to say for example, is your work difficult or not?" The following quotes support the sentiments expressed:

"By God it seems that those who are working in production line are working more friendly; relationship with top is not good; I do not mean that is not too good; down (production line) guys are more comfortable; because they are closer, then naturally they work more comfortably" (technician #2, Production Department, public company).

"By God environment between guys, between workers is friendly environment; again work environment with foreman or supervisor is a bit friendly at some limit; as long as they do not find useless faults and do not split hairs" (worker, engine assembler, public company).

"There is an environment with the state of friendship; and guys (workers) are working next to each other very well, and do not have any problem" (worker #5, Assembly Line, public company).

6.1.3. Workers' Dis-identification with the Public Company

Some workers dis-identified with their company by declaring their dissatisfaction at working there. These people are not satisfied with their situation, because the company environment is not favourable to them, they do not like the way jobs are allocated, nor the management, and they have a "bad feeling of working here (in the company)", believing that they are not given

their rights. Another worker dis-identified with the company at a high level when he mentioned that he was *“not happy about working in this company”*, and *“because of stress and psychological pressures”* lasting over two years, he was planning to leave the company. He declared that he *“did not want to stay and work in this company at all”*, but because he is married, and responsible for *“living costs”* he has *“to tolerate”* his situation. Another worker dis-identified with the job allocation, when he declared that his *“position in this organisation is not proper”* and is different from his expectation. He views his job as *“a bit useless”* and as something that he is *“not interested in”* and is not the job that he wants *“to do with attachment”*. The following quotes support the above statement:

“For me working in the company is not satisfactory regarding working aspect, I am not happy about eighty percent (80%)” (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

“By God, I have a bad feeling about working here. I am sad that I do not get my rights” (worker, engine assembler, public company).

“By God, working here for me, honestly because of stress and psychological pressures that I have had; since two years ago my plan was to leave this company; I mean I did not want to stay and work in this company at all...now because I am married, and because of our living cost I have to tolerate; because I am married, if I was not married, I was single, I would not stay here at all...I am not happy about working in this company” (worker #7, Assembly Line, public company).

6.1.4. Workers’ Dis-identification with the Company’s CEO

Workers in the public company dis-identified with high-level managers in the company, especially with the company CEO. They viewed their relationship with the manager of their own department who orders *“in a rational manner and not from a power stand”* as *“very excellent”*; they thought that their relationship *“with the management of the company is not too heartfelt and comfortable”*. They believed that other managers have *“a formal”* relationship with their subordinates that is based on *“very tight inflexible discipline”*.

Workers dis-identified with the current CEO because they viewed him as the obstacle to their permanent employment, when they talked about the promise made by the company regarding permanent employment of the workers that the current CEO countermanded. As a result of this decision made by the current CEO, workers feel insecure about their jobs. Another worker, who has replaced his father in the company, and expected to be a permanently employed worker, declared that *“the problem is that when the CEO was replaced the rules were*

changed”, and because of that change, he is not permanently employed and is working as a contract worker. The following quotes refer to this situation:

“The relationship with management in the assembly four is very excellent, but the environment that has been provided by other managers of the company, because they are somehow older, is a formal and I say to you that they have made a very tight and inflexible discipline for it; meanwhile I say in assembly line four is not like that” (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

“Previously, during the management of the previous CEO, whenever someone was retired and his son wanted to get his place; it had no process to enter the company; I mean for example it was not so hard; but, now for example, my father is retired and I am replaced; they did not give me his rank and now we are working with contractor” (worker, Final Assembly Unit, public company).

“Since the current CEO came here; they cancelled permanent employment...now many workers have a problem and they really do not know how with what language tell their problems to the managers and the CEO of (the company name)” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

From this data, it can be summarised that in the public company, workers identified with the company and its positive values. Their identification arose because the company satisfied their safety and belonging needs at higher levels, rather than needs in any holistic sense. Workers also identified with their co-workers as skilled and experienced friends of a similar age who help them when they need it. Some workers dis-identified with the company and declared their “bad feeling about working” there, and being “not happy about working in this company” because improper job allocation has made them demotivated and detached from their job. Workers also dis-identified with the company’s CEO as they view his decision regarding the employment rules in the company as a threat to their job security. In other words, workers’ dis-identification with the CEO is rooted in their safety needs. Finally, it can be concluded that identification with the organisation by workers in the public company is not high, because some workers dis-identified with both the company and the CEO.

6.2. Managers’ Identification with the Public Company

Managers in the public company identified with it by stating their positive feeling about being a member. They described their positive feeling in different words such as “a pleasant feeling”, feeling of usefulness, being “satisfied about working in the company”, having “a good feeling”, and a feeling of “happiness and joy” with the “heartiest satisfaction”, and “the highest level of satisfaction of working in this company”. Managers consider working in the

company *"very enjoyable"* and as something that. Some managers identified with the company's team working culture when they mentioned *"working with a group"* and that *"different departments work together"*; and they view this team working as *"useful and effective work for the progress of the industry and the factory"*. It makes managers feel useful and have *"a good feeling"* that they *"do not feel idle"*. Managers regarded the position of their company as being at a high level when they viewed it as a part of the car industry, describing it as *"a mother industry that takes the industry of the country ahead"*. They also identified with the positive values of their company when they described it as *"a working family"*, *"a good company"* with a *"very good"* and *"amicable environment"* and *"the house of amicable working"* that *"is progressing in terms of quantity and quality"*. Managers think that *"everyone likes to work in place like this, to be proud of working for his country"*. According to their statements, it can be said that identification with the company in terms of a positive feeling about membership and the values it upholds, satisfied both the belonging needs of managers and to a certain extent, their self-enhancement needs. In addition, managers' identification with the company has caused managers to be *"strongly attached"* to their company, creating a mind to be *"very busy"* with their work, and they are *"satisfied about working"* in the company. Managers positive feeling regarding membership of the organisation is directly related to their *"presence at the workplace"*, which they regard as their *"second home"* and *"spend much time for it"*.

Managers view their job as *"something further than eight hours working and acquiring income"*, some declaring that they work *"six days per week"* and *"eleven to twelve (11-12) hours per day"*. One of the managers even mentioned that he starts work at *"four thirty (4-4:30)"* in the early morning. Managers are *"proud of working in"* the company and having *"a role in producing the product of the company"*. Their positive feeling is not limited to their presence at the workplace, because they also *"have a feel of happiness and joy regarding cars that (they) see on the street"* and they feel happy when they know that they have played a role in the production of those cars. Managers' identification has resulted in their desires for the success of the company, and they *"like very much this company to be always on the move, and it can work years and years"*, to help progress in their country. A few managers mentioned the satisfaction of their safety needs by identification with the company when they commented about getting *"living expenses"* or *"gaining (their) needs"* from the company, *"I get salary"*, *"I try not to lose my job"*, and *"now is our turn, God willing other individuals can take bread from this table"*. The following quotes support these ideas:

“When you see that you are working with a group that they do a useful and effective work for the progress of factory and industry, and anyway it is a good feeling that you do not feel idleness. Especially, now that car industry is a mother industry that takes the industry of the country ahead. I feel I am useful here” (manager, Body Making Department, public company).

“I am very happy about working in (the company name), I consider it as a good company, and I am strongly attached to this company... (The company name) has a very good environment...(The company name) has an amicable environment. (The company name) is the house of amicable working” (manager, HR Planning Department, public company).

“The company is big and different departments work together...here (company) has become my second home. I spend much time for it and my mind is very busy with my work. It is something further than eight hours working and acquiring income, here I live with personnel” (manager, Production Department, public company).

6.3. Identity of the Public Company as a Large Organisation

As the answer to the question ‘who are we?’, organisational identity concerns those features of the organisation that members perceive as apparently central, continuing, and distinctive in character that contribute to how they define the organisation and their identification with it (Gioia and Thomas, 1996; p. 372). Managers in the public company defined their company regarding its *“size and the number of individuals who are working and producing”* as a *“large company”*, *“one of the largest automakers of the Middle East”*, and some managers even believed that the company to be *“the largest automaker in the Middle East”*. In this large enterprise that is viewed by the managers as *“a set of systems”*, *“directed like a big ship”*, *“different departments work together”* and *“try and produce a product”* to be used by their *“countrymen”*.

Characteristics of this large company can be categorised as strengths and weaknesses. The strengths are regarded by the managers as the *“pleasant image”* and *“team working”* culture of the company, and the fact that the company is viewed as a place for *“frequent learning”*. Managers believed that their company *“has gained a name and credit for itself during these recent years”* and recognised it as an *“attractive brand in Iran and even abroad”*. They are *“proud of working here (in the company)”* and are *“very happy with the team decision-making and team activities”* in the organisation. The company’s team working culture has created a *“positive feeling of frequent learning in the company”*. Managers viewed the strengths of their company as their *“glory”* and they are *“very happy”* and *“proud”* at working in the company,

and think that *"many of (their) friends have this feeling"*. Managers feel that their company has a good image so that *"everyone likes to work in this company"*. The following quotes support these feelings:

"(The company name) as the largest automaker in the Middle East and has an attractive image in Iran and even abroad, therefore I have a very good feeling of working here...(the company name) is a set of systems...I am proud of working here. I say honestly that many friends have this feeling" (manager, Accident Prevention Department, public company).

"I think regarding its size and the number of individuals who are working and producing, in the important area of production, (the company name) is directed like a big ship. I am very happy about team decision-making and team activities in here" (manager, Painting Department #2, public company).

"Anyway this company is one of the largest or maybe the biggest automaker in the Middle East; that has gained a name and credit for itself during these recent years and it is my glory, and I am very happy of working here" (supervisor #2, Assembly Line 4, public company).

Weaknesses of the large company mentioned by the managers were its *"tall hierarchy"* and formal and *"weak relationship"* between managers and subordinates, and low level of *"sincerity and communication"* between workers and managers. Some managers, declared a *"negative feeling about the size and hierarchy of the organisation that makes identifying talents difficult"*, and affects knowledge sharing. Managers believed that in this large company, *"relationships between managers and subordinates are not good"* and *"are weak"*. The reason for this weak relationship is identified as an organisational hierarchy that is *"tall"* with *"about seven, eight, nine and ten levels between workers to senior management"* in the company. This weak relationship is viewed by managers as *"natural"* in their large company. Managers think that, because of the company size, *"sincerity and communication is lower"*; as mentioned in the following quotes:

"I have a negative feeling about size and hierarchy of the company that makes identifying talents difficult" (manager, Quality Engineering Department, public company).

"Relationships between managers and subordinates are not good, are weak, because in our organisation the hierarchy is tall and if you look, there is about seven, eight, nine and ten levels between workers and senior management" (manager, Production Department, public company).

"At the level of the whole company, I see the relationship between employees and managers is weak, it can be said, and it is natural that

because of company's size, sincerity and communication is lower"
(manager, Press Engineering Department, public company).

Workers did not describe their company as having distinct characteristics. Only one agreed with the managers' idea about the identity of the company as a large company, whose size makes knowledge sharing difficult.

"By God, (the company name) is a very large company. Then I think that information sharing and things like this are difficult in the company"
(worker, car door assembler, public company).

As a result, workers did not declare that they identified with any particular company characteristic, but managers introduced the identity of their company as a large company with an *"attractive image"*, *"team working"* culture, and as a place for *"frequent learning"*. Managers also recognised the *"tall hierarchy"*, formal and weak relationship between managers and subordinates, and low level of *"sincerity and communication"* as weaknesses of their large company.

6.4. Relationship Between Managers and Subordinates in the Public Company

6.4.1. Managers' Viewpoints

Managers in the public company did not view the relationship between managers and subordinates in the company as a good and desirable one. They believed that at the managerial level *"formality is dominant, and this formality decreases the sincerity"*. The majority of managers described the relationship between managers and subordinates as *"not good"*, *"weak"*, *"low"*, *"not desirable"*, *"a very heavy relationship"*, *"very formal"* *"an imperfect relationship"*, *"not very good"*, *"usually harsh"*, and *"with a harsh manner"*; and a relationship that has *"a considerable distance with desirable situation"*. In this formal relationship *"managers are mostly in their offices"* and they have *"no contact"* and *"not much communication"* with their subordinates. Managers declared that the relationship *"in production departments is more formal"* and *"is better and closer in non-production departments"*. One of the supervisors believed that *"manager, boss, and supervisor have no relationship"* and *"do not see each other"*. In support of his idea, another supervisor declared *"we have not such a relationship with our managers, even our own manager"*. Managers believed that in their company, *"managers and workers have a distance"*, and *"as the manager is at higher level, the distance is more"*. Managers think that the *"distance between managers and workers"*, is *"too much"*, so that they describe their relationship as one *"between two strangers that have occasionally met each other and have no trust and inclination towards each other"*. One of the managers believed that *"a considerable distance"*

between the managers and workers in terms of their *"life level"* has the result that *"understanding a worker and his challenges in life"* is *"hard for some managers"*.

Some managers viewed the company as *"a paternalist family"* in which *"managers command their subordinates"* like a *"father who commands all the family members"*. Although because of the company size and hierarchy, managers do not expect a *"desirable relationship"* from the senior management; they think that the relationship at the level of *"departmental managers must be better"* than their existing relationship. They admitted that *"the shallow surface"* of their relationship with subordinates *"might be better than"* the existing relationship and some of them believed that the *"relationship between managers and subordinates is getting better"*. For example, in terms of knowledge sharing by managers with workers, one of the managers declared that *"if a manager acquires some information, s/he tries to transfer it to the shop-floor workers"*. One of the supervisors described the relationship between the manager of his department and workers as *"really excellent"*, since it was characterised by a *"sense of listening"* by the manager to what subordinates say. This supervisor told a story about a problem which he shared with his manager; and his manager *"took a seat kindly and listened"* to his story. When a supervisor declares that *"this sitting and listening had a high value for me; this sense of listening that he (the manager) created was enough for me"*, it can be interpreted as a lack of the compassionate relationship that workers, and even some managers, wish to exist in the company.

Managers introduced some reasons for this formal, distant, and heavy relationship between themselves and subordinates, mentioning the company size, tall hierarchy, and *"some compulsions and do's"* in the company. Some managers view it as *"natural"* that *"because of company size, sincerity and communication is lower"* in the organisation. They believed that *"there are some compulsions that do not let the relationship between managers and subordinates be friendly"*. Managers believed that *"some works are to be done in a commanding state"*; and as a result, subordinates feel that they are *"under oppression and do not see the relationship as friendly"*. Another reason given was the *"traditional culture"* that *"some of managers believed should not let worker become too forward, and must not communicate with worker"*. As a result of this culture, some managers are *"not fair with the workers"*. Managers justified their formal relationship which they believed is *"because of work conditions"*, *"related to the population"* and *"organisational levels"*, considering that because of the *"existing culture of production departments if the relationship becomes closer"*, work priority will be decreased. They believe that the relationship must be formal in

order *“to control the environment and do the job responsibilities”*. The following quotes support the above statement:

“Well, err... usually relationship between managers and workers in Iran are still far from that friendly relationship that you can believe. Our workers still have err...a considerable distance from managers regarding their life level; and this difference in life level causes difference in their viewpoints. We feel that err... understanding a worker and his challenges in life are still hard for some of our managers. There is a traditional culture in Iran and (the company name) that some managers believed they should not let workers become too forward, and must not communicate with workers. It causes some of managers not to be fair with the workers and still this contact is not established to say we are happy. I want to say that we have a considerable distance with desirable situation...this is an imperfect relationship...Because of mentioned reasons; workers do not feel comfortable with managers” (manager, HR Planning Department, public company).

“The relationship between managers and subordinates err... is not very good. Managers are mostly in their offices they have not much communication. The relationship is formal and with a harsh manner” (manager, Assembly Line #4, public company).

“I think this relationship in production departments is more formal that some part is related to the population and some part is related to organisational levels, these factors are not changeable by a manager, some part is related to the work nature that is according to the existing culture of production departments if the relationship becomes closer, maybe the work priority goes to the second and third stage. Then this formal relationship is because of work conditions to control the environment and do the job responsibilities...I think this relationship is better and closer in non-production departments” (manager, Press Engineering Department, public company).

As a result of the existing relationship, some managers are *“not satisfied with the relationship between the subordinates and managers”*. This formal and heavy relationship has resulted in *“much distance between the managers and workers”*, and lack of *“access to the high-level managers”* by the workers and lower-level managers, in order to have their say, and mention their problems. Another result of the existing distant relationship is that an environment of fear has been created, so that *“workers do not feel comfortable with managers”* and the *“worker seems to be scared of his manager”*. Although *“many of them (workers) are not satisfied”* with the existing situation, they *“are silent because they are scared of being fired”*; as mentioned in the following quotes:

“If I want to tell the truth, I am personally not satisfied with the relationship between the managers and subordinates...the relationship

between subordinates and authorities is like the relationship between two strangers, two strangers that have occasionally met each other and have no trust and inclination towards each other” (foreman #2, Assembly Line 4, public company).

“In sum, I do not think that the relationship between subordinates and the managers to be friendly, no...well, this relationship is a very heavy relationship, because we have no access to the higher manager at all... to have our say, to say our problems. In my viewpoint, there is much distance between a manager and a worker or a foreman who is working on the assembly line” (foreman #3, Assembly Line 4, public company).

“The relationship between managers and subordinates is not desirable. Because many of the workers that I have encountered, are not satisfied. Some are silent because they are scared of being fired. It (relationship) is not too desirable, I grade it at three (3) out of ten (10)” (the CEO Executive Consultant, public company).

Contrary to the above quotes, some managers described their relationship with subordinates as “good”, a “close relationship”, and a “good and heartfelt relationship”. Those managers believed that “formality is not dominant too much” in their relationships with their subordinates, and they assess these to be at “a good, normal and acceptable level”. They believed that compared to previous years when “the amount of production was not so high” and “managers had more free time, communication was not good like recent years”. To support their ideas, one of the managers referred to the “weekly meeting” with subordinates, declaring that “workers come and we talk about their problems”. One of the managers declared that “the nature of production environment causes this warm and heartfelt environment”. The following are quotes from managers:

“I remember those early years when I came here although the level of production was not so high, it was 150 per day (not 2,000 per day), at that time managers had more free time; communication was not good like recent years ... Now workers really say the words of their heart...the average relationship is good” (manager, Accident Prevention Department, public company).

“Regarding the relationship between managers and subordinates, I think it is at a good and normal level, and is at an acceptable level. I mean now, managers in (the company name) have a good and heartfelt relationship with their subordinates, and formality is not dominant too much, although, you might find a manager that his relationship is not good with subordinates, in one sentence I say that managers in (the company name) have an acceptable relationship with their subordinates” (manager, Quality Engineering Department, public company).

“By God, workers come to my office and we talk to each other. Mostly once a week I go to the workers’ restaurant and have lunch there and then

stay there until 4 pm and workers come and we talk about their problems. We have a group meeting with supervisors and foremen...In our meetings we announce to these men that we are not boss and you are not subordinates, if you have any problem declare it. Its procedure is that they tell their problems to the supervisor, if they did not get the answer then tell it to the boss and then to the manager, everybody who comes here, there is no state of boss and subordinate, they say their words and we write it down and follow it up; and mostly reach their answer. Other departments are not like this, because it depends on personal beliefs how much believe it and spend time for it" (manager, Body Making Department, public company).

This claim contradicts the previous statement by the majority of the managers that *"because of work conditions"* the relationship *"in production departments is more formal"* and justified their claim by pointing to the existing culture of production departments, saying *"if the relationship becomes closer"*, the work priority would be decreased. Thus, they believe the relationship must be formal in order *"to control the environment and do the job responsibilities"*. These contrary quotes are from managers who are working in non-production departments, and naturally the work process and its sensitivity is less than in production departments. Therefore, it might be true that in those clerical offices, the managers have a friendly relationship with their subordinates, but the majority of company employees work in the production departments. In addition the only manager from a production department who declared his friendly relationship with his subordinates (*manager, Body Making Department, public company*) believed that *"other departments are not like this, because it depends on personal beliefs"*.

Apart from the manager's personal belief, there are some other factors that might cause the difference between the relationships in the clerical and production departments. For example, production departments work 24 hours per day on a shift system, whereas clerical departments only work for one daily shift. Also, the difference between the education levels of employees and their managers in the clerical departments is less when compared to this difference in the production departments; some of the subordinates in the clerical departments are even at an equal or higher level of education compared to their managers. Therefore, managers are less formal with their subordinates in these environments.

As a result, the majority of managers in the public company described the existing relationship between managers and subordinates as formal and not desirable, but a few managers, who were mostly from the clerical departments, described the relationship as a close and heartfelt one. Although this can be explained by some characteristics of the clerical departments, such

as a smaller gap between the respective educational achievements of managers and subordinates, the majority of employees are working in the production departments. Indeed, during the data collection, it was apparent when visiting departments and the assembly lines, that there was a formal relationship between managers and subordinates. For example, when workers came to the management building for interview, their behaviour showed that they did not feel comfortable when they occasionally encountered higher-level managers. And on the special occasion when, during the researcher's observation of the assembly line, the company CEO and a group of parliament members came to visit, it was clearly visible that workers' way of working changed to become very formal, workers pretending, for example, that they were busy and only concentrating on their work.

6.4.2. Relationship Between Managers and Workers: Workers' Viewpoints

Some workers in the public company did not talk explicitly about their relationship with their managers. When those workers talked about their relationship with the managers, they used conditional sentences (e.g. *"if relationships become a bit closer"*, *"if friendship exists"*, *"if relationship is not good"*, *"if this communication increase"*, *"if it (relationship) becomes friendly"*, *"if it (friendship) is more is better"*) to describe the situations that they considered necessary for their relationship with the managers. These 'if' sentences can be interpreted as a lack of a desirable relationship between workers and managers in the public company, and also can be linked with the managers' viewpoint that a formal and distant relationship has created a feeling of fear among workers; as a result, workers spoke in conditional terms as a way of softening their criticism.. However, there were workers who openly expressed their belief that their relationship with managers was not appropriate, *"bad"*, and *"formal"*, saying that *"individuals can not declare, what they want to declare easily"* and that *"sincerity and friendship"* between supervisors/foremen with and workers is low. They believed that in older departments where *"a very tight and inflexible discipline"* exists, and where managers *"have little communication with the workers"*, the relationship is extremely distant.

In contrast, one of the workers in assembly line four department, which is a new department, declared that the *"relationship with the manager is very excellent"*, but *"with the management of the company is not too heartfelt and comfortable"*. He believes that the manager of assembly line four *"treats individuals more friendly and more comfortable"*. This does not mean that there is no formality in that department but rather indicates that *"commands are given in a rational manner and not from a power stand"*. It does not seem that in the public company lower-levels are pleased with higher-levels, because workers believed that

supervisors “care about position”, show a “bossy behaviour”, “have little communication with the workers”, and “do not join with others (workers) much”. Workers believed that one reason for the existing formal relationships in the public company is that if a relationship becomes too friendly, “managers think that the worker possibly abuse the relationship”. Another reason is that some of the older departments have a traditional style of management and the relationship between workers and managers “is a formal” one with “very tight inflexible discipline”. The following quotes support the above statement:

“If relationships become a bit closer and supervisors do not care about position; additionally if respects are deserved, information sharing will be increased. I think if friendship exists, information sharing happens automatically...to increase information sharing if I want to say it in popular word; it can be said being pleased with each other” (technician #2, Production Department, public company).

Q: Who do you mean of being pleased with each other?

A: “For example lower level with higher-level, in order to solve the problem; but if relationship is not good, worker does not care and in popular word says ‘what the hell do I care’” (technician #2, Production Department, public company).

“I say that altogether the relationship between employees and managers in (the company name) is almost formal; in sum, it is not much friendly; because now many workers have problem and they really do not know how, and with what language tell their problems to the managers and the CEO of (the company name)...bad relationship between worker and supervisor; something like this; causes information sharing to not happen” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

“The relationship with the manager in assembly four is very excellent; but with the management of the company is not too heartfelt and comfortable. As said now management in assembly four treats individuals more friendly and commands are given in a rational manner and not from a power stand” (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

As the effect of the formal relationship and “bossy behaviour” of the managers, workers declared that managers “do not join” the workers and have “little communication with” them. They believed that in this type of relationship, they are not respected, and this “formal relationship that individuals have with their superiors” is “one of things that makes knowledge sharing difficult in the public company”. They believed also that a “bad relationship between the worker and supervisor creates an environment that an individual cannot declare easily, what s/he wants to declare”. As one of the workers mentioned “now many workers have problems and they really do not know how, and in what language tell their problems to the managers and the CEO of (the company name)”. This whole atmosphere

decreases worker commitment to the extent that they say *"what the hell do I care"*, which in Farsi language means that the worker will not respond to a request (e.g. to share knowledge) again, and eventually, will become totally alienated. One of the workers stated that the *"relationship with top (management) is not good"*, and another worker said that the *"bad relationship between worker and supervisor; something like this, causes knowledge sharing to not happen"*. The following quotes support the sentiments expressed:

"I say that things that make information sharing difficult in (the company name), are some arguments about for example, environment of bossy behaviour like 'I am foreman, supervisor'; I have seen these much. I mean someone might for example say 'I am supervisor or technician' and do not join with others (workers) much" (technician #2, Production Department, public company).

"One of the things that make information sharing difficult in (the company name) is formal relationships that individuals have with their superiors; I mean an individual can not declare easily what s/he wants to declare" (worker #1, Assembly Line, public company).

"The thing that makes information and knowledge sharing difficult in (the company name), I say at some level, is that authorities and supervisors, have little communication with the workers. It causes that information sharing happens less; If this communication increase, or (I don't know); boss, supervisor, foreman have more communication with the workers; I think knowledge transfer becomes easier" (worker #4, Assembly Line, public company).

6.5 Existence of Unfair System in the Public Company

Workers criticised the existence of unfairness in the public company, mainly targeted at two issues relating to financial reward, these being payment, and appraisal. Firstly, the payment system was considered to be unjust, because the amount of payment *"is important for a worker"*, and the system differentiated between three different groups of workers who actually perform the same job, but whose contracts reward them differently. Compared to permanent employed workers, the *"salary and benefits of contract workers is low"*. Another aspect of unfair payment is that there are *"three working shifts"* in the company and *"shift differentials must be paid; but are not being paid"* to the workers. The belief among workers was that the unfair payment system is rooted in the company's employment policy that allows it to *"hire contract workers"*, and furthermore, that *"there is no labour board in this company"* to follow-up the workers' demands. Consequently, a *"worker can not defend his own rights"* in the company. The following quotes support these sentiments:

"Because there is no labour board, a worker can not say his problems comfortably. Because of three working shift in this company; shift differentials must be paid; but are not being paid. Because the working hours are half an hour less than a full shift, shift differentials are not being paid; well, it is important for a worker" (worker #1, Assembly Line, public company).

"A problem in this company is that the company hires contract workers; in our assembly line one person is a permanent employed worker, another is a contract worker...for example I am a contract worker myself; I do not have job security" (worker, seatbelt assembler, public company).

"The salary and benefits of contract workers is low; if this problem could be solved, is good" (worker #4, Assembly Line, public company).

Another injustice that aggravated workers was related to the company's appraisal and reward system. Although workers accepted that this system *"might be better than other places in Iran"*, they believed that *"it is not what is supposed to be"*, viewing the existing appraisal and reward process as *"practically not correct"*, and *"not a right system"*. Workers stated that the existing *"appraisal and reward system in the company is not fair"* and is not *"something systematic"*. They firmly believed that assessments are made according to the managers' *"feeling"*, *"personal taste"*, and *"relations"*, and that *"assessing subordinates by superiors is not really based on useful work"*, but is rather founded on what attracts managers' attention. Workers considered that managers *"do not pay attention to the details"* for a correct appraisal, but *"do it based on their feeling"*, and they *"only look at the external appearance of work"*. As a result of this unfair appraisal, workers believed that *"someone who works more has no difference with someone who does not work at all"*. Their complaint was that appraisal and reward *"is mostly based on relation"*, that they *"have not seen work quality be appreciated"*, and that managers *"do not consider the main efficiency"* of individuals. The result is that *"reward is being paid based on (managers') taste"*, and the following quotes support these concerns:

"Performance appraisal is being done by the foreman and supervisor; as I have seen it is mostly based on relations. I mean if the foreman or supervisor has a good relationship with someone; his appraisal is good. They do not consider his main efficiency to see whether he knows the work or not. That is at some level, I do not say they do not consider efficiency at all; they consider, but is more based on relations" (worker, engine assembler, public company).

"In my viewpoint the reward system is not fair. This system exists; yes, but well, for example, the reward which is being distributed between employees and workers; it is not fair" (worker, car glass assembler, public company).

"I think judgement about performance appraisal is based on personal taste. In our work has no difference with someone who does not work at all" (technician #2, Production Department, public company).

As effects of the existing unfair system, *"contract workers feel deficiency"* when comparing themselves with permanently employed workers, and are concerned that they *"do not have job security"*. Additionally, workers mentioned that *"some individuals are not happy with their job or their promotion"*. These problems have resulted in the situation where some workers *"have a bad feeling of working in the company"* and being *"sad"* that they do not get their rights. The injustices in the system have also influenced workers' motivation to be involved in knowledge sharing, so that some *"keep their information to themselves, although they know they lose the rewards that they can get by sharing their information; but they keep it (information) to themselves"*. The following quotes demonstrate these feelings:

"Compared to an employed worker, a contract worker feels deficiency; that for example I am a contract worker myself; I do not have job security" (worker, seatbelt assembler, public company).

"By God, it can be said that reward is based on (managers') taste" (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

"I think if the performance appraisal and reward system are correct; that practically are not, individuals will get needed information by all means from different persons or units...Because the appraisal system is not fair in this company, and some individuals are not happy with their job or their promotion, I have seen that sometimes they keep their information to themselves, although they know they lose the rewards that they can get by sharing their information; but they keep it to themselves" (expert, Production Engineering Department, public company).

Managers supported workers' ideas regarding the unfairness of the system mostly in appraisal and reward. According to the managers, although their company *"is a pioneer in this field"*, and its system *"is better than many companies"*, *"it has major problems"* that can be categorised into two main difficulties, these being its procedures and *"assessments"*. Managers believed that the *"appraisal and reward system in the company is weak"*, and *"has some problems"* such as *"some incomplete procedures"* and *"many are not happy with that"*. They feel that *"in some aspects it needs to be improved"*. In terms of assessment, managers think that reward is *"based on taste"* and *"some emotional problems are attached to assessments"*. Indeed, they criticised those who take account of emotional factors when make worker assessments (e.g. *"this worker is married, has children, and has problems"*) since this leads to unfair evaluations of worker performance; and they believed that a *"culture must be*

created that case like this to be removed” and that “everyone should pay the fine for his wrong action”. Regarding the process of appraisal and reward, managers believed that “its executive methods and its formulation are not satisfactory”. They did, however, indicate some improvement in the system, such as an increase in appraisal that was previously conducted annually, but “now is being done each three months once”. Another improvement is that the “quality factor has been involved since 2 years ago” but they think “it is not matured yet”. Managers considered weaknesses of the appraisal system to be the “quota” for different levels of appraisal; the reward calculation in general, which “is not detailed” for each department; and “omitting contract workers from the list of efficiency”. They believed that “appraisals are limited to some quota that ties the hand” of managers. Supervisors grade workers’ performance at four levels: “less than expected level, at the expected level, more than expected level, and excellent”. Each department has a quota in respect of each of the four mentioned levels, a system that is viewed by managers as unfair, because “if there are no efficient individuals in a department, this quota is distributed in that department, and if somewhere the number of eligible individuals is more than the allocated quota, they have to omit some of them”. The following relate to the managers’ views in these respects:

“Our managers assess their subordinates, but unfortunately some emotional problems are attached to our assessments...it seems that there are some problems that many people are not happy with the reward system” (the CEO Executive Consultant, public company).

“At the first stage, this reward was based on taste; but later they issued some procedures that its draft was reviewed by workers and they gave their viewpoints and involved in procedures, and now reward is being paid based on those procedures” (manager, Body Making Department, public company).

“Performance appraisal was done previously annually; but now is being done each three months once. These appraisals are limited to some quota that ties the hand. I mean they give a quota to each department based on its population, if there are no efficient individuals in a department, this quota is distributed in that department, and if somewhere the number of eligible individuals is more than allocated quota, they have to omit some of them” (manager, Press Engineering Department, public company).

Another aspect of procedures that are viewed differently by production and non-production managers, is the amount of reward for different departments. The production managers “are happy that production departments that take more trouble regarding manual work than other departments get more reward than other departments”; however, non-production managers do not regard this as fair because they think that “payment is based on traditional thought” and

“reward is being paid based on physical work”. They claim that *“other departments including engineering departments are involved as well, and they are the main factor of increasing quantity and quality of production; then they must not be regarded less than production departments”*. Two managers provided the following quotes:

“At last we are happy that production departments that take more trouble regarding manual work than other departments, get more reward than other departments” (supervisor #1, Assembly Line 4, public company).

“In the reward system, payment is based on traditional thought, because the reward is being paid based on physical work. I think this is a weakness in this company; because if we have a high quality production, or a high number of productions, the workforce is one factors. Other departments including engineering departments are involved as well, and they are the main factor of increasing quantity and quality of production; then they must not be regarded less than production departments” (manager, Press Engineering Department, public company).

The other problem of the reward system is that the *“reward is calculated in general”* for all of the departments and is not detailed, nor calculated separately for each assembly line. For example, they calculate and pay the reward in sum for *“all passenger car assembly lines”*.

One of the managers did not view this as an *“accurate method”*, saying:

“I think the reward is calculated in general, it is not detailed that calculate for assembly line four or other department that how is its situation. All passenger car assembly lines are under the supervision of a department named passenger car department that they calculate and pay to them in sum, I do not think their system to be so accurate that can calculate and pay the reward based on quantity and quality of production for each department” (manager, Painting Department #2, public company).

Lack of reward for the contract workers is another problem of the system, with managers believing it *“causes a decrease in motivation”*, because contract workers and permanent employed workers work at the same workstations, and discrimination regarding their reward affects the morale of contract workers.

“Omitting contract workers from the list of efficiency causes a decrease of motivation especially because some workers had a contract with the company and they have changed their contract with another contractor; it decreases the motivation of personnel” (supervisor #2, Assembly Line 4, public company).

Managers believed that *“improvement is possible”* to enhance the existing system via *“some comprehensive training classes”* that can give workers an *“idea about the process”*. Managers also believed that they *“need to involve indicators that are new standards of the world car industry”* in their appraisal and reward system. It seems that a high level manager is also informed about the existing problems and has decided to make *“some basic changes in this system”* via the ‘Human Resource Committee’ that *“has a mission to revise this system based on its performance in past years, in order to put its weaknesses aside and make fundamental change in this system”*. The following quotes support the above statement:

“I think in this case (appraisal and reward system) improvement is possible. I mean we expand it and explain for our workers that these measures exist and at last you will be assessed by these measures. It needs some comprehensive training classes for everything to be explained and a training course that workers can have an idea about the process. I mean so that we do not have to be worried that someone in a department has not been trained” (manager, Painting Department #2, public company).

“It seems that we are at the stage that we need to involve indicators that are new standards of the world car industry, in our appraisal and reward system; because of that we are doing some basic changes in this system...We are one of the companies that is a pioneer in this field (appraisal and reward), but there is a Human Resource Committee that I am a member of that committee, and this committee has a mission to revise this appraisal and reward system based on its performance in past years, in order to put its weaknesses aside and make fundamental change in this system” (manager, HR Planning Department, public company).

The findings in this section are clearly that both managers and workers in the public company agreed on the unfairness of the overall reward system, and the resulting decreasing satisfaction of workers and managers. However, managers believed that the company has recognised this problem and is trying to improve it.

6.6. Knowledge Sharing in the Public Company

Introduction:

In this section the situation of knowledge sharing in the public company is described in three main parts. In the first part, the focus is on knowledge sharing by the company with employees. In the next part, the facilitators of knowledge sharing in the company are analysed, and the last part is devoted to the analysis of barriers to knowledge sharing in the public company.

6.6.1 Knowledge Sharing by the Company with Employees

Workers declared that *the company shares information with them* “about rules and general issues of company”, and “*events that happen in the company*”. Such information is shared via the “*automation system*”, “*bulletin*”, “*announcement board*”, and “*periodical*”. There is also verbal knowledge sharing in “*classes*”, and by foremen and supervisors at the workplace. The following quotes support this statement:

“There are a large amount of rules and regulations in (the company name); we are informed about them via the announcement board and supervisor and foreman; the supervisor tells to foreman and foreman tells us” (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

“You see there are some notices about rules and general issues of the company that are very general these are good and they send it to us via the automation system; yes those are good but there are some things that are not clear. About thirty percent (30%) is not clear” (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

“Notification regarding rules and regulations is done via announcement. There is a weekly periodical named Karamad; they write down some things in that; and it contains news about condition of company. Usually they put news and events that happen in the company on it (periodical)” (worker, car door assembler, public company).

Some workers criticised the quality of knowledge sharing by the company with employees, which they believed is “*very weak*”. They declared two aspects of this weakness, one related to information sharing about rules, and the other concerning information regarding “*work related information*”. Workers think that “*a huge amount of rules and regulations exist in their company*”, but information sharing regarding these rules and regulations “*is generally weak*”, and they “*learn about rules and regulations verbally, from experienced workers*”, foremen and supervisors. In terms of “*work-related information*”, one of the employees believes that because of weak information sharing by the company, to “*communicate with an experienced expert in the other department of company for some work related information*” they “*need to ask some individuals*”, and “*get information verbally from others*”. The following are workers’ quotes:

“Information sharing regarding rules and regulations is generally weak” (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

“The information sharing system is very weak here and we usually get information verbally from others; meanwhile they could give it to all in writing. I mean for example to communicate with an experienced expert in the other department of the company for some work-related information; I

need to ask some individuals to see how his method is” (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

“What I have learned during the last 12 months, I learned via experience; they have not told us these things during training” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

6.6.2. Facilitators of Knowledge Sharing

In this part, factors that workers and managers in the public company introduced as facilitators of knowledge sharing, are analysed. These are: having a system for knowledge sharing, IT infrastructure, training, job rotation, weekly periodical, friendly relationship between workers, workers’ inclination towards knowledge sharing, team work culture, and meetings as a facilitator of knowledge sharing for managerial levels.

6.6.2.1. System for Knowledge Sharing

Workers in the public company are well informed about the existing suggestion system, its procedures, and its effects on knowledge sharing in the organisation. They believed that *“idea generation in the company is via a suggestion system”* that creates an environment *“for generating new ideas”*, and is seen as *“a separate system for suggestions”*. Workers described the suggestion system *“as one of the biggest successes of this company”*, as *“a good system”*, that *“is very effective”*, and *“is at a high level”* that has allowed *“all of the employees from different levels to propose their suggestions”*. The suggestion system is regarded as *“a manner of encouraging information sharing”* and *“a good ground for individual progresses”*. Workers are also aware of the procedures of this computerised system, which allow them to register their ideas by putting *“their names on the computer”* and writing their suggestions on a printed form, which the system’s staff then *“send to higher authorities”* where *“ideas are evaluated in a committee”*. Workers do not experience any problem regarding access to the system, because *“everywhere there is a suggestion kiosk in each line”*, and also there are *“some suggestion boxes”*. This means they *“can write suggestions down and throw them in the box”*, or *“talk verbally with the relevant person”*, but they *“mostly throw suggestions in the box”*. *“When these suggestions are transferred to the suggestion office, they transfer them to maintenance or other relevant places and they evaluate the suggestions, and investigate them”*. After assessment, *“if the suggestion is feasible it will be accepted and a reward will be paid to the person who made the suggestion”*. If the suggestion maker *“wants to execute it (suggestion) he gets more reward; if not he gets the regular reward for the suggestion”*.

Workers recognised the differences between the suggestion system in the old and new departments. For example, a worker who had previously worked in another line, believes that *"the suggestion system in that line was more progressive than here (assembly four)"* and he thinks that *"they (previous department) were valuing suggestions very much"*. Workers are familiar with the purposes of suggestions, purposes which they think must be *"related to the manner of working or enhancing the work"*, to *"decrease the costs"*, and to enhance *"performance and efficiency"*. Workers are well informed of the effects of the suggestion system in the company. They believed it *"makes knowledge sharing easier"* and *"individuals are encouraged to share their information"* because the suggestion system pays *"money as reward"* to suggestion makers, and therefore, workers have the *"role in idea generation"*. Because the system *"values workers by giving rewards"* for their suggestions, *"everyone at every level gives suggestions about his work"*. The following quotes demonstrate the feeling in this respect:

"In recent years a suggestion system has been established in the company; this system can be one of the biggest successes of this company to be benefited from viewpoints of roughly 20,000 persons" (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

"We have a suggestion system; you register your idea in this system and then ideas are evaluated in a committee, it is the general state...Approximately all of the employees from different levels propose suggestions" (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

"For new ideas everywhere there is a suggestion kiosk in each line we go and get a suggestion form, they check if your suggestion has not been given before; we can suggest it. Then it goes to the related section that is suggestion evaluation; they evaluate it, if it is acceptable they ask you whether you want to execute it yourself or to be done by maintenance department or suggestion department. If for example, we want to execute it we get more reward; if not we get the regular reward for suggestion" (worker, engine assembler, public company).

As a result of the existence of the suggestion scheme, individuals are encouraged to share their information with the company and *"hoarding knowledge happens rarely"* with the result that *"idea generation in the company is at high level"*. Workers said the following on this issue:

"Yes, individuals are encouraged to share their information; because this suggestion system gets their views, I think they are encouraged to do that. I think this suggestion system is very effective" (worker, car door assembler, public company).

"Hoarding knowledge is very little, because when they acquire something, some information, they try to reveal it for example as a suggestion. I mean it happens too much that they give suggestion. Now for example, what you said that someone hides his suggestions; it is seldom the case that you do not tell someone. It happens rarely" (worker, Final Assembly Unit, public company).

"I think idea generation in the company is at a high level. We have a room in the assembly hall that is called the secretary room (suggestion room); everyone who has a suggestion goes there and they put his name on the computer and they give him a printed form and he writes his suggestion down and they get his suggestion and send to higher authorities. They assess the suggestion and then for example, about cost reduction; they give its money as reward to suggestion makers" (worker, car door assembler, public company).

Managers also introduced the existing suggestion system as *"one of the best systems that values employees' ideas"* and as *"a base and a framework"* for encouraging, *"getting and using ideas"* in the company. They viewed the suggestion scheme as *"one of the motivational factors in the company"*, and *"a very helpful and effective system regarding employees' participation"* and something that *"workers can participate in very easily"*. Managers believed that the suggestion system *"has made all individuals think"*, *"has motivated all individuals"*; and has created the feeling that to enhance the organisation is the duty of all members. They declared that the suggestion committee in every department is responsible for *"goal setting for each year"* regarding *"the number of suggestions and number of executive suggestions for each department"* which *"is targeted and is controlled monthly"*. Managers believed that *"since the suggestion system was established in the assembly halls, a kind of competition has been created"* and *"many types of suggestions"* are submitted on a wide range of subjects. In this respect, managers made the following comments:

"I think this suggestion system in (the company name) is a base and a framework for getting and using ideas, and is one of the best systems that values employees' ideas and encourages them" (manager, Accident Prevention Department, public company).

"We have a system named a suggestion system. In fact in this system, suggestions are defined for every level. Workers level can participate very easily" (manager, Painting Department #2, public company).

"One of the motivation factors is the suggestion system in the company, that every individual in the company can have a suggestion regarding everything that she/he can see in the company, from production line to building or work clothes" (manager, Quality Engineering Department, public company).

Managers viewed the existing suggestion system as “*very active*”, and as having resulted in a high level of idea generation in the company and the implementation of a large number of individuals’ suggestions during recent years. Additionally, they believed the suggestion scheme to be a way of providing financial support for workers, and one of them stated that “*many of these workers get more money from suggestions than from their salary*”. In sum, managers believed that “*the company has been successful*” regarding the suggestion system and has been able to reduce “*a high level of cost*” by implementing some of the ideas. The following quotes demonstrate the views on this issue:

“I think because of the existence of the suggestion system, and individuals’ motive for getting reward, idea generation is good here and every year a large number of individuals’ suggestions are implemented” (the CEO Executive Consultant, public company).

“We have a suggestion system that is a very helpful and effective system regarding employees’ participation. It has made all individuals think, has motivated all individuals; and has created this feeling that enhancement of this organisation is the duty of all of us” (manager, Press Engineering Department, public company).

“Well, at this time the company has focused on useful and constructive suggestions in the form of a suggestion system. Yes it is very active. Many of these workers get more money from their suggestions than from their salary” (foreman #1, Assembly Line 4, public company).

6.6.2.1.1. Strengths of the suggestion system

A few workers commented on the strengths of the suggestion scheme in the company, saying “*the suggestion system department is more active than other departments*” because “*it gets viewpoints well, and distributes them well between different departments*”. Workers viewed the “*computerised system*” as “*one of the most dynamic systems even in Iran*” that enable employees to submit their suggestions “*via an automated system*” and observed that “*the speed of its process and evaluation is higher than when workers submit it via manual system*”. The following quotes show the beliefs in this respect:

“To take into consideration that I have been working in the suggestion system for a period of time; regarding system work and investigating the level of suggestions and issues like these as I can see (the company name) the suggestion system is one of the most dynamic systems even in Iran” (shift expert, Assembly Line, public company).

"I think regarding the effective information sharing; the suggestion system division is more active than other departments; it gets viewpoints well, and distributes them well between different departments" (worker, engine assembler, public company).

"Individuals like me have a role in idea generation; via technical suggestions; there are many technical suggestions, and they are very effective" (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

Managers in the public company regarded the strengths of the suggestion scheme as being "continuous" motion, that encourages idea generation and team work among employees that have together resulted in "a very high level of cost reduction" in the organisation. Managers believed that although employees' ideas "are little ideas, and the motion is a little motion, is nevertheless continuous"; they think that the company "really values employees' ideas and really encourages them" via the suggestion system. For example, there has been an idea that has been "implemented for the first time in Iran". At the individual level "the number of suggestions given by the individual" is viewed "as a distinction and affects the annual reward and promotion of the individual". According to the managers, group suggestions "are more constructive and have a hundred percent more positive results, and this increases the morale of team work". Managers believed that the suggestion system has created a "team work" culture in the company, because "based on the new procedure, the reward for group suggestions is more than individual suggestions" and the result is that most new ideas are "group suggestions". In fact, the suggestion scheme has expanded, so that "family members of the employees can give suggestions to the system", thereby encouraging individuals to remain attuned with the enterprise even when they are at home. The following quotes support this statement:

"I said in the suggestion system these ideas are little ideas, and the motion is little motion, but it is continuous, I mean it does not stop" (manager, Body Making Department, public company).

"In the suggestion system, they really value employees' ideas and really encourage them. We have had a large number of suggestions that have caused millions of Toomans (Iranian currency) cost reduction" (manager, Accident Prevention Department, public company).

"Most of our suggestions are group suggestions, because we have practically encouraged personnel to give group suggestions. Because group suggestions are the result of group thought, they are more constructive and have one hundred percent more positive results, and this increases the morale of team working. The rewards for group suggestion

are much more than for individual suggestion" (manager, Painting Department #2, public company).

6.6.2.1.2. Weaknesses of the suggestion system

Although workers in the public company described the suggestion scheme "as one of the biggest successes of this company", and as "a good and very effective system", they criticised the system's authorities by describing the scheme as being "in a weak state". Workers believed that "the suggestion system has not done its job well", because authorities "do not use it (system) properly" and "this computerised suggestion system does not work well at all". One problem mentioned by the workers was that the company has "focused more on quantity instead of quality" of suggestions and production, and subsequently, they "make individuals (contract workers) give suggestions to renew their contract". Workers do not view this "compulsory" state of idea generation as "something right". Workers made the following comments:

"Unfortunately, this system has never been used properly. Sometimes giving suggestions has been compulsory for renewing the contract; they say you have to go and give a suggestion. In this company we have focused more on quantity instead of quality; such as emphasising more on production quantity rather than quality. In order to say we have many suggestions they make individuals give suggestions to renew their contract. In my viewpoint it is not something right that when they want to renew the contract to see whether an employee has given suggestion or not...Here ideas are generated but are not used at all; I think is weak, is weak" (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

"Individuals are not encouraged to share their information; well I say the suggestion system has not done its job well; I said that if it was doing its job it much" (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

Another problem is related to the assessment of suggestions. Shop-floor workers believed that usually, their suggestions are "not registered under their own name" and because of their work position "their say has no influence". They think that when "a worker and a boss gives the same idea, when the idea is from the worker this is not accepted, and nobody values it, because his (worker's) job position is low". Workers viewed "the lack of valuing ideas which come from worker levels or subordinates or lower levels" as "the reason for the suggestion system being unsuccessful" in the company. Some workers believed that "in the whole company suggestions are not taken seriously", because "those who follow these ideas when they see that it is a bit hard, they do not work on it much". Meanwhile suggestions are given by individuals who "are more in the heart of work" and "know the problems more" and know

reply to suggestion makers, authorities must come and ask the individual quickly about his suggestion to justify his suggestion". Workers are not happy that authorities are "careless about suggestions", viewing this behaviour as "a barrier to information sharing". They argued that "when they send their answer they do not satisfy the suggestion maker" in terms of telling "the reason so that the suggestion maker knows why his suggestion was rejected". Moreover, workers are not even sure "whether they (authorities) review suggestions or not" or "implement suggestions or not". One of the workers declared that from his "forty (40) suggestions in one year", only "one was accepted" by the suggestion committee, and he was not satisfied with those decisions because he believes that some of his ideas were good, but were nevertheless, rejected. Workers' quotes are as follows:

"Barriers to information sharing; for example this being careless about suggestions causes this. Then, err... err... this being careless about suggestions or for example, when we give suggestions, when they send its answer, they do not satisfy the suggestion maker. For example, when they reject a suggestion to tell the reason so that suggestion maker knows why his suggestion is rejected" (worker, Final Assembly Unit, public company).

"Explaining something by someone in practice is more better than writing; I think the suggestion system is a bit weak regarding this aspect; I mean instead of taking one month, one week that it takes to ask about suggestion; authorities must come and ask the person quickly about his suggestion to justify his suggestion" (worker #4, Assembly Line, public company).

"It takes too much time to reply about our suggestions; I do not know whether they review suggestions or not; if you took the answer you took it; if not, not. It depends on them, now I do not know they implement suggestions or not; but they reply us too late; it takes one month, one month. For example there has been one guy (worker) who has not been replied to at all" (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

Another weakness was introduced as island planning in the different departments regarding the implementation of suggestions, so that a set of works are done in some departments based on suggestions, but are not done in others. For example, *"some works have been done in assembly line one and have not been done in assembly line three"*. In such cases, workers feel that they repeatedly have to suggest the same idea when it has already been implemented elsewhere. Workers believed that encouraging workers to generate ideas *"differs from place to place"*, and that the suggestion systems in older departments that are *"valuing suggestions very much"* are *"more progressive"* than those in newer departments. For example, in some departments the suggestion system is *"well matured"*, supervisors ask workers *"to take part in the suggestion system"* and *"if your suggestion was rejected you (worker) could complain and ask*

for a reason, and somehow you could get satisfied by their explanation” but “it is not sensible” in some departments because their system “is a bit weak, and is not well matured”, maybe because the system is new. Workers believed that the suggestion system was “weak” regarding the method of proposing suggestions (in writing), because they think “it is not possible to explain suggestions in writing”, and “explaining something by someone in practice is better than in writing”. Some observed that the authorities consider workers who give more suggestions to be better than others, and those workers view this as “discrimination”. They believed that a “lack of discrimination between workers makes information and knowledge sharing easier”. The following quotes were given by workers:

“Some works have been done in one assembly line; we need to suggest it to be done in another assembly line. For example, I was in assembly line three (3), a set of works is done there but not done here; and we need to suggest it to be done in here. Or some works have been done in assembly line one and have not been done in assembly line three” (worker, engine assembler, public company).

“I say in the whole company suggestions are not taken seriously; but it differs from place to place. I mean when I was there (Shuttle line) it was well matured and the supervisor was coming and asking workers to take part in the suggestion system; but here it is not sensible; it does not look like they come and ask that. But here in assembly line four; maybe because it is new in this line; is a bit weak, and is not well matured. They say ‘you tell your suggestion title first, to see it is feasible or not; and is not given by someone else and then we give you form to fill it’. Meanwhile I think they must give the form very easily to write his suggestion and then ask the person to explain the suggestion; because it is not possible to explain suggestion in writing” (worker #4, Assembly Line, public company).

“I mean between workers; for example not to be like this, that if I give suggestion they consider me better than others. If the contents of suggestions are different, they encourage it; but it must not be like this, that if such a person gives less suggestion; they discriminate much between him and me. In my viewpoint lack of discrimination between workers makes information and knowledge sharing easier” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

Another weakness of the suggestion scheme that was indicated by workers was the lack of promotion as a reward for producing a good idea because they had “not seen someone progress and get to a higher position because of his good suggestions”, and the realisation that promotion was not part of the reward system for participating in the suggestion scheme has resulted in it having “a lower effect” on workers’ motivation.

“I have not thought much to give a specific suggestion...it (suggestion system) has a lower effect; because I have not seen that someone progress

and get a higher position because of his good suggestions” (Technician #1, Production Department, public company).

Workers consequently believed that the weaknesses of the suggestion system have resulted in less rather than more employee motivation, with the outcome that their inclination to make suggestions is reduced.

Managers also identified some weaknesses of the scheme, believing that *“the suggestion system is not working as well as is expected”*. They declared the weaknesses to be more focused on the quantity rather than the quality of suggestions, the lack of using ideas from outside the company, the delay in feedback and implementing suggestions, and the hiding of information from individuals because of the possibility of getting a proper reward from the suggestion system. Managers believed that quantity *“is dominant”* and quality *“is weak”*, and one stated that *“although there are ideas that come from outside the company, there is nevertheless no system to use those ideas”*, and it is one of the downfalls of the scheme. Another disagreed and did not believe that they must *“use ideas from outside the company”*; because he considered that company employees *“can find more faults and weaknesses than customers”*. However, the problem is that managers and workers are not ultimately the users of the cars, whereas the customers have all the experience of this in the real situation. The following quotes were given by managers:

“Regarding quantity, I think because the suggestion system is dominant in here; is good and works are done well; but regarding quality I say that it is weak” (boss, Production Engineering Department, public company).

“Unfortunately, although there are ideas that come from outside the company, there is no system to use those ideas, and it is one of our weaknesses” (manager, HR Planning Department, public company).

“I do not believe that we must use ideas from outside the company, because we and workers, who are working on assembly line, can find more faults and weaknesses than customers” (manager, Assembly Line #4, public company).

Managers confirmed workers’ idea regarding the slow speed in feedback of the system, and the time taken for accepted suggestions to be implemented. They believe poor feedback *“causes workers’ motivation to decrease”*; because when someone makes a suggestion, regardless of its acceptance or rejection, that person wants *“to see why it was rejected”*. Another weakness declared by managers is that *“individuals share their knowledge via the*

suggestion system with the company” but they do not do it with other individuals. As a result, because of “the financial benefits” of the suggestion system; “knowledge sharing from individual to individual is weak”. The other weakness is that “the suggestion system does not introduce suggestions and creativities to departments”, by using a special brochure “to encourage the suggestion maker”. It causes less encouragement for “creativity and inventions in the company”. The following quotes support this statement:

“I think if this suggestion system becomes a bit more active, I mean to respond about suggestions quicker, faster, is much better. There have been some suggestions that have not been responded. It causes workers’ motivation to decrease. When I give a suggestion, I am waiting to get its answer, regardless of its acceptance or rejection; at last I want to see if it is rejected what the reason is. But suggestion system is working weaker, I mean you see that a long time is passed and there is no news. It causes the worker’s motive to be decreased, to say that ‘well’ I did it once but there is no news” (supervisor #1, Assembly Line 4, public company).

“Individuals share their knowledge via the suggestion system with the company, not other individuals. Knowledge sharing from individual to individual is weak...because in my viewpoint the majority of individuals give suggestion to the company mostly because of its financial benefits” (foreman #1, Assembly Line 4, public company).

“I have seen this, that for example, one of the workers said ‘when we give suggestion and is not accepted, why we do it again?’ I mean it must be somehow that satisfy worker, to say that because of this reason his suggestion is not accepted” (foreman #1, Assembly Line 4, public company).

As a concluding remark in this section, the majority of the workers and managers stated the existence of the computerised suggestion system was a facilitator of knowledge sharing by individuals with the company, and were also able to identify its strengths and weaknesses. The success of the suggestion system depends on the individuals who administer it, because it involves human beings, human judgment, and human motivations (Reuter, 1977, p. 89). One of the company scheme’s benefits is that it values workers by giving rewards, and encourages knowledge sharing and idea generation in the company. Managers also viewed rewards given by the suggestion system as a financial support for workers, and a motivating force that has prompted workers’ participation in idea generation.

Two weaknesses of the suggestion system, which were given by both workers and managers are: the low speed of feedback, and the focus on quantity instead of quality of

suggestions. Other weaknesses highlighted by workers are: unfair assessment of suggestions, lack of implementation of some of the useful ideas, and island planning regarding the implementation of suggestions in different departments. Another weakness was identified as the lack of relationship between individuals' promotion and the level of their participation in the suggestion system. The existing method of giving suggestions in the form of writing and lack of verbal explanation was criticised by workers, because they believed that some suggestions were not possible to articulate in writing, and hence, these were lost to the enterprise. Managers also criticised the failure to take up ideas coming from outside the company, and the lack of implementation of suggestions and other creative ideas in different departments. This point is a signal that in the public company non-monetary rewards (e.g. introducing and recognising suggestions) are not considered to be as important as monetary reward (e.g. money). Managers viewed the personal rewards given by the suggestion system to individuals as a barrier that caused individuals not to share their knowledge with other individuals. Because of the mentioned weaknesses workers' motivation has decreased, and consequently the workers' participation in the suggestion scheme is less than expected. Also the financial rewards associated with the system have resulted in limited knowledge sharing among individuals in the public company, as people keep any good ideas secret until they find out whether they can earn a financial reward before sharing them with fellow workers .

The problems of the suggestion system seem to be the same as problems of old suggestion systems which are: bottlenecks in the flow of ideas because of the high population, and the lack of management responsibility for making employee involvement happen as a day-to-day reality, because managers have no responsibility regarding the idea generation process (Savageau, 1996, p. 86). The centralisation of the suggestion scheme is the basis of some weaknesses such as a low speed of feedback, and a lack of verbal explanation of ideas by workers. As a solution, decentralisation is one characteristic of world-class suggestion systems, so that the direct manager or supervisor is the first recipient of ideas. Under such a process, *"the responsibility to review ideas moves to all managers"*, which results in high-speed feedback typically in three working days (Savageau, 1996). In this situation because of access to the direct manager, workers are able to explain their ideas verbally. Clearly, however, this requires workers to have trust in their managers. As the last point, although the suggestion system in the public company does display weaknesses and definitely needs to be improved, it does play a facilitating role in idea generation in the organisation.

6.6.2.2. IT Infrastructure as a Facilitator of Knowledge Sharing

Workers declared the high level of *“using up-to-date technology and IT”* in the public company as one of its strengths in terms of knowledge sharing. IT usage comprised *“an increasing number of individuals who have access to computer; using the telephone system”*, *“automation system”*, and the existing *“Intranet inside the company”*. These workers viewed these innovations as *“effective things”*, and reported that *“about ninety percent (90%) of clerical employees have access to the Internet”* and use IT for information searching and knowledge sharing. The company uses IT for both information dissemination to workers about rules, events, general company matters, and also to receive information from workers via the computerised suggestion system. Workers confirmed that clerical employees receive information about rules *“via the automated system”*. The contents of information shared with employees include *“rules and general issues of the company”*, *“news about the condition of the company”*, and *“events that happen in the company”*; as workers mentioned in the following quotes:

“Things that make information sharing easier in (the company name) are that an increasing number of individuals have access to computer; using the telephone system and verbal information transfer is good as well; I think these are effective things... they send some notices about rules and general issues to us through the automation system” (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

“Things that make information sharing easier in (the company name) are somehow using up-to-date technology and IT. You see now about ninety percent (90%) of clerical employees have access to the Internet; I mean access to IT and then it can somehow help. Needed technical information inside the company is available via automation or Intranet inside the company... there is a representative of the suggestion system in every production line; everyone can go and register his/her suggestion in the computerised system. We type our suggestions and when it is complete; we submit it via the automation system; and the speed of its process and evaluation is higher than when workers submit suggestion via manual system” (shift expert, Assembly Line, public company).

Managers in the public company also regarded IT infrastructure as a facilitator of knowledge sharing. They believed that the IT infrastructure (e.g. *“automation, Internet access, and computer networks”*) that has been established in different departments, has made *“access to information”*, and *“knowledge sharing easier”*. Clerical departments use the IT infrastructure for knowledge sharing more than production departments. For example, *“everyone, from boss level upward and some of the experts has access to this system”*. Managers believed that they

“use Internet and intranet at a high level for information sharing”; and *“because of the facilities provided, individuals are encouraged to share information”*; *“so that if a person finds a useful article on the Internet, he sends it to everyone he knows; including managers”*. In one of the departments *“employees who are using Internet”* must provide and *“send a professional report to his superior and colleagues, once every six months”*. The researcher’s observation during data collection supports the statement of the workers and the managers. His request letter for access to the company site was passed to different departments via the automated paperless system of the company, and followed up easily when visiting the training department that was responsible for the arrangement of access to the other departments. The following quotes support the above statement:

“Things that make information sharing easier in (the company name) regarding communication facilities, we have an automation system that has made access easier; so that if a person finds a useful article on the Internet, sends it to everyone he knows; including managers or others. In the company from boss level upward and some of experts everyone has access to this system it has made information sharing easier” (manager, Production Department, public company).

“I think include this mechanisation, automation, and computer networks that have been established in different departments, and access to the Internet by experts and technicians, and increasing the level of the employees’ information via training by the company, has made information sharing easy in (the company name)” (boss, Production Engineering Department, public company).

“We use Internet and intranet at a high level for information sharing; and because of provided facilities, individuals are encouraged to share information” (manager, HR Planning Department, public company).

6.6.2.3. Training as a method of knowledge sharing with the employees

There is a formal training system that supervises the planning and execution of training programmes in the company. The majority of the workers mentioned the training system *“which the company has invested in”* as *“a facilitator of information sharing”* that *“makes knowledge sharing easier”*, and reported that *“information that they put in the hands of employees”*, *“leads to good information and knowledge transfer”* in the company and as a result, *“employees have a high amount of information”*. Workers actually considered training as *“the first”* factor *“for the most effective information sharing”* in their company. Two types of training are in existence, these being general training and speciality training in the departments. General training is done *“when the worker enters the company”*, and workers *“are informed about rules and regulations”*, thereby functioning as an induction programme.

Speciality training facilitates the learning of a specific job by each worker, and is conducted via "training classes", "training video tapes", "handouts", "booklets", "periodical", and by supervisors and foremen who give "practical training" and "observation in practical training". Workers regarded "talks that happen" during training as "very effective". They reported that the company runs "training classes for the foremen", and then "increases skills of the workers via practical training by foremen and classes". Workers learn to do their job "from foremen" or by observing a colleague "who has a high skill" and workers learn "by practical exercise" "at the work station". The contents of this verbal and practical training include "technical skills, skills related to doing a job quickly and accurately", and this is intended "to make doing a job easy". The following quotes support the workers' ideas:

"Information transfer from company is via booklets, through handout, by theory, practical, and verbal during resting times by foreman or supervisor who explain it verbally. There are more than ten (10) booklets and handouts about skills for information sharing; and also there are some classes by instructors from the company that they teach in order to increase skills" (worker #2, Assembly Line, public company).

"Things that make information and knowledge sharing easier in (the company name) are those training classes that they run, classes that are beside the assembly line and talks that happen are helping much; and handouts that are given about workplace information and knowledge; and training video tapes that they show us about the workplace, are very effective" (worker #5, Assembly Line, public company).

"For example technical skills, skills related to doing a job quickly and accurately, and based on a process; and to make doing a job easy. I learnt it for example, by training, training by foreman or supervisor; by exercise, and practical exercise" (worker, Final Assembly Unit, public company).

Besides the advantages of the training system, workers mentioned some weaknesses that have decreased its success in the company since the last year. They felt "there is no time during work to train workers" and "workers must spend their own time on it". They also complained that "there were training courses for enhancing skills of the employees" previously, that are not running now, and the period of the existing training courses has become "very short term". Workers also stated that "there are some courses about pure production for foreman and upper levels", which have resulted in workers' learning "via experience" gained from observing other staff, rather than via being properly trained themselves. However, although they considered the existing training as being at "a very low level" that "has been successful on average", they nevertheless regarded it as one of the "characteristics that make information and knowledge sharing easier" and "can make effective information and knowledge sharing happen" in the company. The following quotes are offered in support:

"Before 1382 (2003) there was training for enhancing skills of the employees; but now training is very short term; before there was some training courses, but this year not" (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

"I have learned what I learnt during the last twelve months via experience; they have not told us these things during training...again in my viewpoint, training that exists at a very low level are characteristics that make information and knowledge sharing easier in (the company name)" (worker #1, Assembly Line, public company).

"There is no time during work to train workers; there is a training when worker enters the company; but during the work there is no time, there is no time; workers must spend their own time for it" (worker, car glass assembler, public company).

A few managers declared training as a method of knowledge sharing with the employees, regarding on-the-job training such as *"work with experienced employees"*, workshops, and training courses as *"really effective"* methods. New employees *"work with experienced employees"* in order to learn those aspects of the job that new employees do not know. Workshops are used for supervisors and *"800 supervisors"* have been trained using these. Managers believed that supervisors are *"skilled persons"* because *"many of them are young individuals who had 7-8 years of tenure"*. They stated that supervisors *"know the job well and share information with the workers paternally and help them during the training"*. Another method is the use of training courses by experts for the other experts of their group, to disseminate the knowledge gained from attending training courses outside the company. The following quotes support this statement:

"We send new employees to work with experienced employees and to be trained for that part of job that he wants to do. I introduced a new expert to another expert who is doing the job to train him. I think it is very effective, I mean it has been really effective...I think what increases information sharing in (the company name) are workshops that we have had for 800 supervisors and trained them. Many of them are young individuals who had 7-8 years of tenure and they were skilled persons. I have seen that workers respect them, because they know the job well and share information with the workers paternally and help them during the training" (manager, Accident Prevention Department, public company).

"Supervisory training that we had, and usually individuals are interested to transfer their knowledge to their subordinates. For example, we can see training courses run by the experts for the other experts of their group; to diffuse their achievement from a training course" (manager, Painting Department #2, public company).

"Before 1382 (2003) there was training for enhancing skills of the employees; but now training is very short term; before there was some training courses, but this year not" (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

"I have learned what I learnt during the last twelve months via experience; they have not told us these things during training...again in my viewpoint, training that exists at a very low level are characteristics that make information and knowledge sharing easier in (the company name)" (worker #1, Assembly Line, public company).

"There is no time during work to train workers; there is a training when worker enters the company; but during the work there is no time, there is no time; workers must spend their own time for it" (worker, car glass assembler, public company).

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6.6.2.4. Job Rotation as a Facilitator of Knowledge Sharing

Workers in the public company viewed job rotation as a way of knowledge sharing at the workplace, saying *“individuals work in different places”*. They considered such job rotation as *“practical training”* and a way *“to learn all works”* via observing the work of colleagues. Workers believed that *“when work is rotational, everyone learns the work”* and *“the company increases skills of the employees via rotation in work”*. This strategy was held up as a useful means of knowledge sharing, but some workers criticised it as being *“very limited”* and pointing out that it *“does not exist in some departments”*. The following quotes support this statement:

“I have learned my work via observing my colleague; observation in practical training. If they changed my work station; the person who was previously doing my new work, assembles one or two units; and when I learned he goes to his new work and I do my work and I become skilled” (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

“For example, once a week our work station is changing; for example, if I am at the start of line, my place changes to the end of line; in order to learn all works” (worker, car door assembler, public company).

“Job rotation does not exist in some departments; and some departments that have job rotation; is very limited” (worker, engine assembler, public company).

Managers also believed that *“job rotation”* is *“happening in many departments”*; and is *“one of the things that make knowledge sharing easier”* in the public company. According to the managers, job rotation happens in different ways in different departments. For example, one manager mentioned that they *“have propounded job rotation at worker level”* and they *“are going to diffuse it at supervisor level”*. Another declared that *“job rotation is planned for our supervisors and foremen. We must plan for our workers to rotate them in different departments”*. Managers believed that job rotation *“can motivate individuals so that they think if they change their workstation and share their information, none of them will lose, but all of them are benefited, because when they share information and knowledge, their information and knowledge increase”*. Managers considered that as a way of knowledge sharing, job rotation has been *“one hundred percent (100%) effective”* and has *“achieved good results”*. As a good outcome of the strategy, the *“culture exists that nobody keeps his knowledge to himself”*, and generally knowledge sharing happens via job rotation *“between individuals who work in the production line”*. The following quotes support this statement:

"I think one of things that make information sharing easier in (the company name), is job rotation. It can motivate individuals so that they think if they change their workstation and share their information; none of them will lose, but all of them are benefited, because when they share information and knowledge, their information and knowledge increase. Job rotation is happening in many departments" (manager, Press Engineering Department, public company).

"We have propounded job rotation at worker level and we are going to diffuse it at supervisor level. By job rotation, if a foreman achieved needed skill in his unit, by rotation in other units, he will get all needed knowledge and expertise. I can particularly mention that I have seen myself that this culture exists that nobody keeps his knowledge to himself, and generally we have information sharing between individuals who work in the production line...These (job rotations) have been one hundred percent (100%) effective and we have reached good results. But it can be better. I mean we must plan for our workers. Currently, our job rotation is planned for our supervisors and foremen. We must plan for our workers to rotate them in different departments and teach the whole process to all of our personnel" (manager, Painting Department #2, public company).

6.6.2.5. Periodicals as a Facilitator of Knowledge Sharing with Employees

The public company uses a weekly periodical named *Karamad*, for knowledge sharing with employees. *Karamad* is a Farsi word that means 'efficient'. Workers viewed this periodical as "one of characteristics of the company that makes knowledge sharing easier", since they "are informed about rules and regulations of the company" via this. They believed that the *Karamad* periodical "has good titles" and is "one of the things that increase information and knowledge sharing" in the company. Workers are informed about the contents of the periodical, which provides evidence that they are actually interested in it and read it. According to the workers, the periodical has "some questions such as puzzle, or IQ tests", and "announcement or article", and "questions about the company". Workers reported that the periodical "explains about units or the product" of the company, and that they use it to keep informed about "news and events that happen in the company", including "the problems" that exist. They feel that the company shares information with them via its weekly periodical.

Karamad is regarded by workers as a source of information "about everything" from the past to the future of the company, including "figures of last months", "about production and whatever exists in the company" and "works to be done in the future and cars to be produced in the future". As part of the case study, the researcher reviewed several issues of the periodical. These were produced in colour, seemed to be well organised and rich in terms of contents and in the way of presenting different information about the company, departments, products, individuals, events, rules, puzzles, and included social elements such as greetings to

the employees for different occasions, e.g. marriage and retirement. Workers identified some advantages of weekly periodical as the chance to win gifts, and the fact that it encouraged and facilitated knowledge sharing in the company. When workers *“answer the questions, they give some gifts”*, to those whose responses are correct. Workers believed that the weekly periodical *“is very important for facilitating information sharing”* in their company, and confirmed that they *“acquire plenty of information from this periodical”* with the result that they are *“encouraged to share their knowledge in this organisation”*. One of the workers criticised the lack of equal opportunity for having access to the paper, saying *“some lines get more volumes of the periodical”* than others. The following comments were made by workers:

“For example Karamad periodical that has some questions such as puzzle, or IQ questions, or other questions about the company that when you take part and give correct answer to questions they give some gifts... Yes, they distribute this periodical once a week in the whole company”... for example, in periodical they mention and explain about units or product itself that what it is” (worker, Final Assembly Unit, public company).

“Another way that we are informed about rules and regulations of company is via this periodical that we read. We have a periodical named Karamad, that for example, announces the problems and events that happen in the company; about production and whatever exists in the company; works to be done in future and cars to be produced in future; figures of last months basically about everything” (worker #4, Assembly Line, public company).

“This weekly periodical which is being published every week; I think is very important for facilitating information sharing in (the company name); we acquire plenty of information from this periodical” (worker, Car door assembler, public company).

A few managers regarded *“the weekly periodical”* as a way of knowledge sharing by the company with the members. One believed that *“the periodical”* is one of the mechanisms whereby he learns *“what is really happening”* in the company, and another manager stated that the periodical *“has attracted personnel very much”*, and can be a tool for the *“encouragement to information and knowledge sharing”*, as mentioned in following quotes:

“One of the factors is this Karamad periodical that when I read it, I find out what is really happening in (the company name)” (manager, Quality Engineering Department, public company).

“Recently a weekly periodical is being published that has attracted personnel very much; it may be an encouragement to information and knowledge sharing can be done at some level via this periodical” (manager, Production Department, public company).

6.6.2.6. Friendly Relationship Between Workers

Despite formal relationships between managers and workers in the public company, workers believed that they operated in a *“state of friendship”* with the other workers, giving the basic reason for their friendship as being that *“all workers are at the same age and understand the word of each other better”*. They viewed their existing friendly relationship, *“friendship feeling and co-operation feeling”* as a factor that *“makes knowledge sharing easier”*, and *“increases knowledge sharing among employees”*, so that workers *“voluntarily”* solved each other’s problems at work. The following comments relate to this issue:

“Factors that increase knowledge sharing among employees to tell things to each other; this can be only friendly relationship; for example, between employees, between workers” (worker, Final Assembly Unit, public company).

“I think the existing friendly relationship and little age differences between workers cause information sharing to happen better; and understand each other in information sharing better. I think these two are enough. I mean all workers here are at the same age and understand the word of each other better” (worker, car door assembler, public company).

“It (information sharing) happens between workers itself. For example, I have new information about the work; someone has a problem, I go myself voluntarily and solve his problem. It is not like this that superior tell me to do that” (worker, engine assembler, public company).

6.6.2.7. Workers’ Inclination Towards Knowledge Sharing

Workers in the public company declared their inclination to share knowledge with their colleagues, believing that because of their existing friendly relationships with each other, they *“must have information sharing”*, and *“they like to share information with each other”*. They reported that *“regarding working aspect everyone likes to share information”*, and *“everyone is inclined to teach something to another one”*. One of the workers mentioned that the *“majority”* of the workers like to teach a piece of work that they have learnt, in the best way to their colleagues, so that they do not face the problem in doing their work. They perceived *“this willingness to share information and knowledge”* as *“more personal will”* and believed that *“if the company wants to make it compulsory, it cannot do that”*. Workers are inclined to share information because it helps them for *“the improvement of works”* and *“to control the faults”* in their work. Some workers referred to their religious belief as the basis of their inclination to share knowledge, referring to the teachings of their religious leader, and using terms such as *“work conscience”* and *“Halal salary”*.

The Arabic word Halal means 'lawful, allowable, or permitted and legitimate', and it is a fundamental concept in Islamic rules that is used in connection with food and income as well. In general terms it is something that is done in accordance with the spirit of Islamic rules. In this particular instance "*Halal salary*" means an income earned by someone after due contribution, and represents only what he is entitled to be paid. It is a salary that is pure, clean and deservable. Workers believed that compared to other companies, theirs "*pays a good salary*", and if they want their salary to be "*Halal*" and "*not to be doubtful*", they must "*really follow the problem*", and "*when an individual follows the problem, he needs to share information*". The following quotes support this statement:

"Some others want their salary to be Halal. If you compare (the company name) with other companies it pays a good salary. Why I do not work so that this salary that I get and take for my family not to be doubtful" (technician #2, Production Department, public company).

"Workers like to share information with each other" (worker, car glass assembler, public company).

"Regarding working aspect, everyone likes to share their information; the majority are like this; I like myself that I like a work I have learnt, to teach in the best way to my colleague; that person who is learning from me; person who has come recently and does not know the work. I would like to teach him so that he does not face problems in doing his work; and to be able to do his job at the start" (worker #4, Assembly Line, public company).

6.6.2.8. High Level of Informal Knowledge Sharing Between Workers

Despite time limitations, workers' inclination towards knowledge sharing resulted in high levels of knowledge sharing between them. They viewed their friendly workplace as "*the best place where information transfer is happening*" in their company. In fact, some believed that "*knowledge sharing is not encouraged*" by the company, but that "*it happens between workers itself*", and "*workers do this work themselves*", the reason being that workers "*have no problem with each other*" and "*each person who has knowledge or information, shares it very easily with new colleagues who have not done the job before*". "*It is not like that their superior tells*" them to do that, but they do it voluntarily to solve their colleagues' problems in their work. Workers share information with those who are doing the job for the first time and as a result new "*workers are encouraged to transfer their knowledge and information to each other*". They considered the current situation between themselves as "*very good*" and the method of sharing which they think is done "*via heartfelt behaviour with each other and*

kindness and co-operation”, as “*a good*” and “*effective method*”. Workers confirmed that knowledge sharing happens in a friendly way when they help other workers “*to learn*” the work and “*remove the fault*”, but “*sometimes individuals share information to cast it in others’ teeth*”. The following quotes support the above statement:

“In my viewpoint the best place that information transfer is happening now in our company is between us, colleagues in our department; between me and other workers. It can be said that we have no problem with each other and we get needed information from each other easily, each person who has knowledge very easily present it to others” (Technician #1, Production Department, public company).

“By God basically, encouraging information sharing is the custom of the company. Workers themselves do this work; I went to a station that I had no idea about its job; when I go there as said that information related to the work trick, the manner of work, the manner of doing work correctly by tools or equipment; they share this information with someone who is doing that job for the first time. Workers are encouraged to transfer their knowledge and information to each other. In my viewpoint, it is very good” (worker #2, Assembly Line, public company).

“If I share information, of course I have liked that the other side learn it; for example, I see that a job is being done incorrect; I like my colleague to learn it and remove that fault; and also cast my information in his teeth” (worker, engine assembler, public company).

6.6.2.9. Meetings as a Facilitator of Knowledge sharing for Managers

Some managers mentioned meetings as a facilitator of work-related knowledge sharing in the public company. They have a short daily “*meeting at the start of the shift between the foreman and the workers*”, and “*a 4-5 minutes meeting between the supervisor and the foremen*” in the assembly line where “*the supervisor notifies important points and weaknesses*”; and “*at each shift supervisors have a meeting with their boss*”. There are some meetings for managers and supervisors where there is “*knowledge sharing via the meeting with higher levels and lower levels*”. Additionally, there are “*some co-ordinating meetings between different units of the assembly line*” where managers and supervisors “*explain about their work*” for other colleagues. These meetings are a useful way of departmental knowledge sharing with the higher levels, in which respect one of the managers declared that “*as a result of this communication higher levels find out which department has a problem regarding knowledge sharing with employees, and tries to develop this activity via training*”. During the data collection, the researcher participated in a meeting with one of the managers and 26 foremen that took 75 minutes. In that meeting the manager informed the foremen about the existing threats in the market, and spoke about goal setting, and emphasised self-control in production

to improve the quality. Thereafter, they spoke about the existing problems in the production line and changes in the production process. The following quotes support this statement:

“We have a quick meeting at the start of shift between the foreman and workers that takes about 2 minutes and they discuss the weaknesses of previous shift. After 30 minutes of starting the shift, there is a 4-5 minutes meeting between the supervisor and foremen when the supervisor notifies important points and weaknesses; and at each shift supervisors have a meeting with their boss...there has been some information sharing via meetings with higher levels and lower levels. For example, the deputy of department of passenger car and the assembly line managers with 12,000 subordinates. Now there are two meetings per week, supervisors come and present the activities of their departments. As a result of this communication higher levels find out that what department has a problem regarding information sharing with employees, and try to develop this activity via training and valuing it” (manager, Body Making Department, public company).

“We have some co-ordinating meetings between different units of our assembly line that they explain about their works, I have created a proper environment that everyone who has any ability, can come and let me know, to use them in some special cases” (manager, Production Department, public company).

6.6.2.10. Teamwork Culture as a Facilitator of Knowledge Sharing

Managers in the public company believed the teamwork culture to be a facilitator of knowledge sharing, saying the company has encouraged *“individuals towards teamwork in the form of projects”*. Managers believed that basically their work *“is teamwork”*, and *“almost all projects are done by teamwork”*. They reported that *“during these past few years, teamworking has been valued”* by the company, and the CEO was keen to spread this culture throughout the whole organisation. In his meeting with the managers, the CEO *“criticised one of the clerical departments that had no project”*, but managers declared that *“there are too many (teamworking) projects in the production departments”* and gave some figures to support their claim. For example, in 2004 there were *“170-180 projects at different levels”* of the production departments, involving *“6-7 persons”* in each; and in the Human Resource Department *“64 research teams”* were active in 2003, and there were *“many employees involved”* in those teams. In 2004, another department had *“36 projects”* and with *“teams of 3-5 members”* involved in them. Managers *“encourage experts and teams who have shared their information”*. For example, when they send experts on expensive courses abroad, *“they (experts) are obliged to prepare a training handout and teach to about 300 other employees”*. Managers believed that when the expert sees that a manager regards knowledge sharing as important, he *“tries to transfer his/her information”*. Managers pointed out that basically, they

“do not ask individuals about their responsibilities” but, they “ask the team”, and “those whose teamworking results are better, are valued more”. Managers viewed teamworking as “a basic cultural issue” and that the proper selection of managers and authorities “from supervisor to CEO” in the company, is an important factor for its support. They believed that if proper selection of authorities “does not happen somewhere”, teamworking would fail, because “ideas and procedures of authorities are very far from each other and they can not work with each other”.

As the result of *“establishing work groups and a teamworking culture”*, managers believed that there have been *“good effects”*, and they have achieved *“very good results”*. The majority of managers introduced knowledge sharing, as the most important outcome of the existing culture. Managers regarded knowledge sharing as *“one of the necessities of work”* because they believed that *“projects must progress with information sharing”*. They declared that *“because of teamworking, communication is extraordinarily high”* in the company, and *“individuals have to reveal what they know”* because they are *“stimulated by team behaviour”*, so that team members obtain information from one another and this *“creates a warm and heartfelt environment between all employees”* where *“everyone can easily transfer his/her knowledge”* to the other workers. The following comments were made by managers in this respect:

“We have tried in (the company name) to encourage individuals to teamwork in the form of projects. It was very interesting that during reports by managers to (the CEO name) at the end of last year, he criticised one of the clerical departments that had no project. There are too many projects in production departments. I think there are 170-180 projects in different levels of (the company name) and 6-7 persons are involved in each project” (manager, Accident Prevention Department, public company).

“It can be said that establishing work groups and a teamworking culture so that team members get information from one another is the next item to create a warm and heartfelt environment between all employees so that everyone can easily transfer his/her knowledge” (manager, Painting Department #2, public company).

“In (the company name) because teamworking communication is extraordinarily high, individuals have to reveal what they know because they are stimulated by team behaviour and if they do not do that (information sharing) they will never be successful in teamworking” (manager, HR Planning Department, public company).

6.6.3. Barriers to Knowledge Sharing in the Public Company

According to the data gathered, the barriers to knowledge sharing in the public company have been analysed, from which it is clear that these are comprised of culture, lack of value for workers' ideas, lack of encouragement for knowledge sharing between individuals, lack of job security, work pressure, lack of time for sharing information, discrimination between workers, hiding information for self-interest, sharing information for self-interest, stealing ideas, sharing information for pleasing superiors, self-promotion by knowledge sharing, sharing information to please superiors, segregated planning by departments, and lack of trust.

6.6.3.1. Culture as a Barrier to Knowledge Sharing

Managers in the public company regarded culture as *"the reason for hiding information"*, but workers did not mention this as an obstacle. Managers believed that *"the problem of knowledge sharing is something cultural"* (e.g. corporate culture or national culture), and some managers felt this behaviour is rooted in national culture that is *"not specific for"* their company, but *"is specific for Iranian society"*. Some considered that it is related to the organisational culture (e.g. *"a cultural problem that unfortunately we have in our company"*). One aspect of traditional national culture is *"the master-apprentice relationship"* that *"has been common in Iran"* and in which *"usually the master does not tell the secrets of his job to the apprentice"*. Managers believed that *"this master-apprentice relationship has not changed to allow teamwork behaviour so that individuals who work with each other see the support of others as a support for themselves"*. As a result, they behave like traditional masters and hide some secrets for a rainy day.

Individualistic behaviour in the company has also been intensified by the high rate of unemployment. For example, workers who have unpleasant memories and have *"been harmed"* because of knowledge sharing (e.g. *"because of knowledge sharing they have lost their job security"*) do not share their information easily, because *"it is not possible to create this belief"* among those individuals *"to share information"*. Another aspect of this cultural problem mentioned by managers is that because of *"the wrong cultural environment"* they *"can not identify skilled individuals in the company"*. One of the managers declared that *"everyone thinks that if a skilled individual was identified in the department he will overtake them regarding his position and hierarchical level"*. Therefore, managers think that because of the existing culture even if they *"can provide a system for information and knowledge sharing"* they will *"have a problem"* in identifying knowledgeable individuals in the company. The following quotes relate to these issues:

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“Well, anyway the problem of hiding technical information and knowledge is a cultural problem that unfortunately we have in our company, and we regard it in works that we do in our company” (manager, Body Making Department, public company).

“The problem of information sharing is something cultural. I was working at the project for a period of time; I was working in TAM (One of subsidiaries of the company) with a customer of (the company name). Sometimes I needed to get some information and sometimes I had to give some information. We had many problems regarding information sharing. This is a cultural problem that is not specific for (the company name); it is specific for Iranian society” (manager, Assembly Line #4, public company).

“Regarding information sharing, something considerable for me is that even if we can provide a system for information and knowledge sharing, we have a problem that we can not identify skilled individuals in the company. The reason is a wrong cultural environment where unfortunately, everyone thinks that if, for example, a skilled individual was identified in the department he will overtake them regarding position and hierarchical level” (manager, Production Department, public company).

6.6.3.2. Low Valuation of Workers' Ideas

Workers in the public company considered *“workers' involvement with work”* as *“a factor for generating new ideas”*, and they thought that *“the most effective information and knowledge sharing in every company happens via communication with the workers of the assembly line”*. They were of the opinion that *“one of the most important ways to progress for a company is by valuing its workers”*, believing that *“valuing viewpoints and suggestions of the workers can make effective information and knowledge sharing happen”*, because workers view themselves as *“those who are at the heart of the work”* and those who *“know the problems more”*. Workers used conditional *“if”* sentences to describe the existing situation in the company regarding their ideas (e.g. *“If they value it”*, *“if managers and authorities ask shop-floor workers”*), all of which can be interpreted as a sign that workers' ideas are not valued. They reported that although *“idea generation is high”* in the company, it *“takes time until ideas become practical”*. They also believed that because their *“job position is low”* *“when idea is from the worker's mouth it is not accepted”*, and that *“nobody values”* ideas which come from the worker level, so they *“are not used accurately”*. Workers complained about managers who had not approach them to *“we have this problem”*, and who had not arranged for *“some groups (of the workers) ... to sit comfortably and talk to each other and share their working information”* as a way to ease the job or solve the problem. Workers also stated that the *“formal relationship”* with superiors had resulted in a situation where *“the individual can not*

declare what s/he wants to declare easily". They believed that superiors do not value "information that the individual wants to share", because when workers "verbally tell foremen" or supervisors that "they do this work wrong"; "they do not follow it up". As a result, this situation "makes knowledge sharing difficult" in the company, so although "the level of idea generation in the company is high" it "is not at the expected level" and "it is not what it is supposed to be". Workers viewed the "lack of valuing" their ideas as a "reason for the unsuccessful suggestion system" in the company. The following quotes pertain to these feelings:

"Regarding work position, their say (workers' say) has no influence. It is possible that a worker and a boss give the same idea, but when idea is from the worker's tongue it is not accepted...Worker's idea is not accepted, nobody values it because his job position is low" (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

"Well, the reason for the unsuccessful suggestion system is lack of valuing ideas which come from for example, worker levels or subordinates or lower levels that are more in the heart of work, and they know what the problem is" (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

"One of the things that makes information sharing difficult in (the company name) is the lack of valuing information that the individual wants to share. I mean so that the individual can not declare what s/he wants to declare easily...If they value it, workers' involvement with work is a factor for generating new ideas" (worker #1, Assembly Line, public company).

6.6.3.3. Lack of Encouragement for Knowledge Sharing Between Individuals

Although workers confirmed that because of having a suggestion system, knowledge sharing by individuals with the company was high, they nevertheless believed that "individuals are not encouraged too much to share their information with others". Their opinion was that knowledge sharing among individuals "is not encouraged" by the company, and where it does occur, this is not because of the company being willing to transfer information that one individual possesses to the next person. Workers believed that "there is no plan for encouraging information sharing" among individuals in the company, "as is expected", and that this practice "is limited to personal relations", "depends on the inherent interest of individuals", and that "they do it when they think it is necessary". For example, regarding working aspects, the majority of the workers like "to teach a task" that they have learnt in the best way to their colleagues. Workers believed that knowledge sharing "happens between workers", to solve problems that colleagues encounter in their work, and it does not take place because superiors instruct this. One reason indicated by workers for the lack of encouragement

is that *"its cultural background is not provided"* and individuals are scared that if they share information they will lose their value or position in the company. Another reason is that *"regarding financial aspects individuals are not encouraged to share their information and knowledge"*. Workers viewed the managers' statement that *"the number of subordinates is too many and we cannot thank and appreciate them as is expected"*, as *"an excuse not reality"*. Another reason is *"improper encouragement"* based on relations that affect knowledge sharing among individuals. In this connection, one worker said *"someone is doing work correct and in the best way, instead of encouraging him, based on relations of family or friendship they encourage someone else"*.

Another reason is that *"individuals wish to reveal more information to get a higher position"*, but *"because assessment and promotion of personnel is not related to their technical knowledge"*, *"individuals have no motive"* and they develop a *"prejudice regarding the internal environment of the company"*, and *"do not feel sympathy"* with it. As a result, *"whatever condition and background is ready, when a motive does not exist"* workers *"do not share information"* with each other. Workers suggested that *"managers must use some encouraging ways. For example, there were rewards for the selected exemplary worker of the year who has done the highest knowledge transfer to others"*. In order to create the *"feeling of knowledge sharing between the workers"*, they also suggested that the practice should be encouraged via *"lectures by managers in celebrations and meetings that workers take part in"*, or *"via a periodical which is distributed between all colleagues"*. The following quotes support the above statements:

"Unfortunately, individuals are not encouraged to share their information, because its cultural background is not provided and we are scared if we share information we lose our power" (shift expert, Assembly Line, public company).

"I said in previous questions, individuals have no motive. I mean maybe they do not feel sympathy; as I said because assessment and promotion of personnel is not related to their technical knowledge, and rules that they want to transfer it to the superior; it does not exist then individuals have no motive; prejudice regarding the internal environment of company by personnel is very low" (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

"No, there is no plan for encouraging information sharing in (the company name); there is no plan as is expected. Encouraging people to this (information sharing) depends on the inherent interest of the individual" (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

6.6.3.4. Lack of Job Security as a Barrier to Knowledge Sharing

As mentioned in previous sections, there are three groups of workers, these being: permanent employed workers; workers who have annual contracts with the company, and who work for contractors that are commissioned by the company; and those workers whose contracts are changing frequently. Contract workers believed that they *"have no job security"* and viewed this situation as *"the biggest problem of the workers"* in the company. As a result of lack of job security *"individuals are scared of information sharing"* because they say *"if such a person learn that work"* and *"can do the job better"*, *"he will come and get my place"*. Lack of job security has also affected the life of single workers. One of the workers declared *"I want to marry, but because my situation is not stable I do not dare to get married, because I am a contract worker, I am scared that tomorrow or the day after tomorrow they will tell me 'Mr., the company has said you must leave'"*. Workers believed that creating a feeling of security is the solution for facilitating knowledge sharing, as one of the workers stated *"when personnel have security, including job security and other kinds of security, I think usually this knowledge sharing happens easier"*. The following quotes support the above statement:

"I think mostly is job security; for example someone who does not want to share information thinks that if he shares this information maybe the second person can do the job better than him and maybe he lose his job" (Technician #1, Production Department, public company).

"The biggest problem of the workers is being contract workers that recently happened. I think that I really do not have job security; I mean honestly, I am single now; I want to marry, but because my situation is not stable I do not dare to get married because I am a contract worker, I am scared that tomorrow or day after tomorrow they tell me 'Mr., the company has said you to leave'; there is no job security" (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

"Another thing is that I think individuals are scared of information sharing because they say for example, if such a person learn that work; if learned that work he will come and get my place; some reasoning like this; his own position, I think in some amount is because of this" (worker #4, Assembly Line, public company).

Managers also viewed the lack of job security as *"one of the things that makes knowledge sharing difficult"* in the public company. One believed that because of this situation, *"lack of job security is increasing everyday"* and *"nobody has job security in this company"*. Managers confirmed the workers' dissatisfaction regarding lack of job security, especially *"contract workers mostly are not happy"*; and during their rest time they talk only about this problem. Despite the common practice in Iran that contract workers are employed after some

years, in the public company there are contract workers with more than five years of tenure, who are not yet permanently employed. Managers believed that *“because of lack of job security individuals might keep information to themselves”*. Indeed, one blamed the lack of job security as *“the most important reason that individuals keep their information to themselves”*. The problem was regarded by managers as a *“cultural issue”* for example, *“someone has been harmed because of knowledge sharing or has lost his job security”*; and *“because of those experiences”* individuals do not share information. The following quotes relate to these issues:

“Now in our assembly line, contract workers mostly are not happy and say ‘we have no contract with the company’. Or others who have a contract with the company say ‘this is 5-6 years, we are contract workers and we are not employed yet’. During the rest time or when the line is stopped, their talks are only about these things. Workers have some dissatisfaction regarding lack of job security, I mean contract workers feel that maybe tomorrow the company asks them to leave; because of this, guys (workers) are discouraged” (foreman #3, Assembly Line 4, public company).

“The reality is that although the company has tried to create job security, during this period of time that I am working here, these worries of the employees show that it has not happened... I mean because of lack of job security individuals might keep information to themselves” (manager, Accident Prevention Department, public company).

“One of the things that make information sharing difficult in (the company name) is that nobody has job security in this company. Because some workers are not employed by (the company name) and work for contractor companies and these contractors are changing regularly, I mean that lack of job security is increasing every day. This is the most important reason why individuals keep their information to themselves to keep (the company name) needy to themselves” (the CEO Executive Consultant, public company).

6.6.3.5. Work Pressure as a Barrier to Knowledge Sharing

The majority of the workers in the public company believed that *“there is no attention regarding worker’s comfort in process design”*. Although workers confirmed their *“good workplace regarding both payment and work environment”*, they did frequently complain about the work pressure at the assembly line, describing this in different words such as *“busy time”*, *“being busy too much with work”*, *“high work pressure”*, *“line speed is high”*, *“being too much occupied by work”*, *“no opportunity to use this knowledge”*, and *“most important problem of this company”*. They considered *“work pressure”* and *“being occupied by work”* as the *“characteristic that makes knowledge sharing difficult”* in their company. Workers believed that work pressure has affected them physically and psychologically, and described

the physical effects in sentences such as an *“individual gets really tired”*, *“the line speed was so high that it was tiresome”*, and *“some workers are really suffering”*. In terms of the psychological aspects, workers think that their *“mind is occupied by work during working time”* and *“because of busy time”* workers have *“no opportunity”* to use their *“knowledge which is related to their work”*. Various reasons were offered for the high speed of the assembly line and work pressure, such as the company focus on quantity rather than quality, job rotation, job dependency, compensation of line stops, and over-ambitious annual targets. Some workers declared that *“in order to learn all works”*, the *“work station is changing”* once a week, and *“because line is moving”*, they *“must be quick”* to learn and do the job at the new station. Consequently, they feel the work pressure.

Regarding job dependency, *“jobs are almost all dependent on each other”* and each worker has to *“do some part of the job in order for the next section to be able to do the rest”*; and because the line speed is high it causes pressure on workers, because if they do not do the job on-time, work will be defective.

Workers also complained about managers who *“never value the quality”*, and declared that *“when an electricity disconnection occurs; they increase the speed of the assembly line to compensate for the numbers of production which were decreased because of the electricity disconnection”*. Therefore, because of the high speed, *“the worker is not aware of doing his job right”*. Workers also referred to the company decision to set an annual production target of *“six hundred thousand (600,000) cars before summer holiday”*, with the result, because of the high and tiresome line speed, that workers had no time to check the quality of their work. Another reason that seemed to underpin others, was the lack of workers in the departments based on the standard time. It was mentioned that in some departments, *“compared to their allocated position and their work process; in some places there are really small numbers of workers”* and *“because of lack of workers, their work is hard”* and consequently, *“some workers are really suffering”*. Workers' comments are as follows:

“Yes, occupation by work is too much; in my department friendly relationship exist between workers and they like to share information with each other; this being occupied too much by work; does not allow free time for it (information sharing)” (worker, car glass assembler, public company).

“Honestly, in this company they only talk about quality. Quality will exist when a worker can check his work; when a worker has time to check his work; for example, when an electricity disconnection occurs, they increase

the speed of the assembly line to compensate for the numbers of production which were decreased because of the electricity disconnection; it decreases the work quality. I mean a worker is not aware of doing his job right. This is the most existing problem in this company; they never value the quality, it is only verbal" (worker, seatbelt assembler, public company).

"The reason for lack of information sharing for group benefits is fatigue; workers' fatigue; tiredness of the workers and employees; it is not possible, especially in morning shift when we start work at 6:55 am; individual gets really tired. I can only say it is because of worker's fatigue; I can only say this" (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

As a result, work pressure in the public company is a barrier to knowledge sharing because "lack of time" has made "knowledge sharing difficult" among the workers. The effect of work pressure is so high that one of the workers stated that he has "not seen something else (except work pressure)" as a barrier that prevents knowledge sharing in the company. Workers believed that a "friendly relationship exists between workers and they like to share information with each other", but "being occupied too much by work does not let free time for it (sharing)". Therefore, workers in the production departments and the assembly lines feel that they "sustain the highest loss and get the lowest benefit" from knowledge sharing. This is because "occupation by work is too much", "their mind is busy for assembling car", "everyone is thinking of himself to finish assembling his car to pass it forward" and "they do not do anything else". Workers mentioned their "fatigue", as "the reason for the lack of information sharing", emphasising that knowledge sharing does not occur because "the worker is really tired". Workers referred to "difficulties and usefulness of the workers' work" in the assembly line, which they believed "is more than the work of clerical personnel", and declared that clerical workers have "more free time, their mind is more free to give suggestions", but workers can not do that because "worker's mind is occupied by work during the working time". Consequently "clerical personnel get the most value from information sharing". Another effect of work pressure was the decreasing product quality. Workers believed that their managers "only talk about quality" and "never value the quality" in practice. Their feeling was that "quality will exist when the worker can check his work", but because of the line speed, they have no time to do this, so despite having "a good factory" and "a good condition", because of "the high speed of the assembly line", "the quality of its product is not compatible with its price". The following comments were made by workers:

"For example, I have no time to check my work in order to do it right; most problem of this company is this. It has a good factory, a good condition, it can export; the most important problem is this high speed of

assembly line that for example, the quality of its product is not compatible with its price” (worker, seatbelt assembler, public company).

“Now in my viewpoint, how I can say; for example some departments have working problem compared to their allocated position and their work process because of the lack of workers their work is hard; some workers are really suffering. In my viewpoint, in some departments there are enough workers; but in some places are really small numbers” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

“It is obvious that workers, workers who are working in the assembly line get the lowest value from information sharing because their mind is busy for line, their mind is busy for assembling car; they come here from morning and when work finishes they go home; they do not do any other thing” (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

Managers in the public company seemed to be conservative or ignorant about workers' feelings of work pressure, only two supervisors mentioning this as a barrier to knowledge sharing. Such ignorance can be seen as further support for the workers' complaint that *“there is no attention regarding worker's comfort in process design”*, and testifies to the distant relationship between managers and workers that does not allow managers to become informed of a problem that the majority of the workers have frequently complained about and believe to be the *“most important problem”* of their company. One of the supervisors believed that *“work pressure makes knowledge sharing difficult”* in the company. He declared that training classes are carried out at improper times and *“because of fatigue they (workers) are runaways from these classes”*. *“Work pressure is so high that when workers go to the class, their mind is not concentrated on the class, they are runaways (fugitives) from these classes”*. Another supervisor believed that *“as a result in one hundred percent it (work pressure) has negative effects and decreases the motivation”* so that *“the worker has no inclination and tendency”* to spend extra time for learning in the company. The work pressure has even decreased the supervisor's inclination compared to the early years of his tenure. The following quotes support these arguments:

“I think work pressure makes information sharing difficult in (the company name). It has happened that in training classes their number is limited; personnel do not pay attention, and because of fatigue they (workers) are runaways from these classes. I mean work pressure is so high that when workers go to the class, their mind is not concentrated on the class, they are runaways (fugitives) from these classes... Well, because of physical work pressure, my inclination is decreased compared to the early days I came here” (foreman #1, Assembly Line 4, public company).

“The thing that makes information sharing difficult in (the company name) is that usually training sessions are carried out at improper times. It has been usually like this. The worker is tired, they invite him to the class, he does not go, or if he goes does not get something from the class, one of the biggest problems is that these classes have no needed efficiency. For example, when they (workers) go to the class an entertainment can remove their fatigue easily, but it has been very little, or has been for some special levels. As a result in one hundred percent it has negative effects and decreases the motivation so the worker has no inclination and tendency to it so that spend two more extra hours for it” (supervisor #1, Assembly Line 4, public company).

6.6.3.6. Lack of Time for Sharing Knowledge

As a result of the high-speed of the assembly line, workers introduced lack of time as the barrier to knowledge sharing, and *“the most important issue that makes knowledge sharing difficult”* in the public company. They described their time as *“being too occupied by work”*, *“being too busy with work”*, and *“high work pressure”*. Workers believed that *“they do not have time”* to share information, because *“individuals’ time is so full that there is no time left to communicate with each other”*. Although workers think that *“if this access was possible individuals could make friends and transfer information to each other”*, a lack of time has created a situation for workers where *“there is no access to other departments”*, and they *“have no free time”* to move from their assembly line *“to go somewhere else to share information; or someone else cannot come and give”* them information, because they can not move from their workplace, and if they want to go somewhere else and come back, their *“work will pass”*. Such time restrictions have deeply affected the workers’ opportunity to get value from knowledge sharing, and have also affected their on-the-job training, thereby decreasing the social capital in the production departments. Workers believed that *“difficulties and usefulness”* of their work *“are more than the work of clerical personnel”*, and hence, the *“support departments”* and *“clerical personnel get the most value from knowledge sharing”*, because *“they have more free time, their mind is free to give suggestions”*; and *“workers minds are occupied by work during working time”*. Workers believed that the opportunity for non-production departments *“regarding the amount of free time for access to information and processing information in their mind and using and combining them is more than operational workers”*; *“production departments have no time for using this information”* and as a result although they *“have rich resources”* but *“they have no time to use them”*.

Another result of the time limitation is that *“there is no access to other departments”* and it decreases social capital in production departments, because *“if this access was possible, individuals could make friends and transfer information to each other”* across departments.

The other result of lack of time is that *“there is no time during work to train workers”*. Workers believed that if the basic conditions of *“free time and sincerity exist, knowledge sharing happens”*. They believed that *“friendly relationships exist between workers and they like to share information with each other”* but *“being occupied too much by work does not allow free time”* for knowledge sharing. The following quotes support the above statements:

“In most places time is the most important issue that makes information sharing difficult in (the company name); they do not have time to do this job. There is no access to other departments; if this access was possible individuals could make friends and transfer information to each other” (Technician #1, Production Department, public company).

“A factor that makes information sharing difficult in (the company name) is that well, individuals’ time is so much full that there is no time left to communicate with each other and as said can spend half an hour of their time to talk to each other and someone can transfer his knowledge to another one” (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

“I have no free time to move from my assembly line for example, to go somewhere else to share my information; or someone else cannot come and give me that information unless when the line is stopped or I have no job to do” (worker, engine assembler, public company).

6.6.3.7. Discrimination Between Workers

As explained earlier, there are three types of workers in the public company with different payment and fringe benefits, A feature which has created a feeling of discrimination between contract workers who perform the same jobs as permanently employed workers, but who receive lower salary and benefits. Because there is no Workers’ Board, the workers cannot do anything about this discrimination, and contract workers felt this to be *“the biggest problem”* since they *“really do not have job security”*, and are *“scared”* that *“tomorrow or day after tomorrow”* the company will ask them to leave. Lack of job security has affected the life situation of contract workers; for example, one of the single workers declared that *“because there is no job security”* he does not dare to get married. Because the man is responsible for all family expenses in Iran, a job is a necessary condition for marriage. The basis for discrimination is that although contract workers *“are working like employed and formal workers”*, they *“are not benefited from many benefits of the company”*; for example, getting *“a loan from the company”*. Contract workers believed that permanent employed workers *“get the most value from information sharing”*, because *“they are experienced”*, and compared to contract workers *“more information is shared with them; and they are nurtured more regarding everything”* in the company. This problem of discrimination was readily appreciated also by the permanent employed workers, one describing the contract workers as *“God slaves”*

who “*get the lowest benefit from information sharing*”. In Farsi language the term “*God slave*” is used to denote that the person spoken about is in a pitiful situation, and to be given mercy. Workers believed that this situation must change and “*contract workers must benefit more from the company*”. They think that a “*lack of discrimination between workers makes information and knowledge sharing easier*”. The following quotes support this argument:

“The biggest problem of the workers is being contract workers that recently happened... I am a contract worker, and I am scared that some day they tell me to leave the company; there is no job security” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

“I think contract workers get the lowest benefit from information sharing. A group of the workers that work in (the company name) but they are not workers of (the company name); they work for private companies that are contractors of (the company name); I think they (God’s slaves) get the lowest benefit from information sharing” (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

“Permanent employed workers get the most value from information sharing. Because well, they are experienced, they have been here for some years; compared to contract employees, more information is shared with them; and they are nurtured more regarding everything. Permanent employed workers receive benefits more than contract workers...I think contract workers must benefit more from the company” (worker #6, Assembly Line, public company).

6.6.3.8 Hiding Knowledge for Self-Interest

The majority of the workers in the public company believed that “*hiding information or knowledge for personal benefits happens*” in the company; and it happens among workers who “*are working in the assembly line*”, but “*it is gradually getting less*”. There were different viewpoints about the level of, and reasons for, hiding information. Some workers believed that it happens “*at the highest possible level*”, some assessed it “*at average level*”, and some believed that it happens “*at a low level*”. Some workers think that “*it is natural*” and “*everybody would do it*”, because “*everyone is thinking of himself*” and personal knowledge “*is something that s/he has learned and has found*” and individuals “*share it when their benefits demand*”. The general state of hiding information is that “*individuals know something and they do not release it to the others*”. One of the workers told a story about some information that he had and “*did not see any benefit for its sharing*” and “*did not reveal*” that information, but he used it when he needed it. Workers believed that hiding information happens by “*experienced colleagues*” who do “*technical jobs*” such as those in the “*computer field*”. Workers declared that experienced workers “*do not accept new workers at first, and give the poorer work to them, and they try to postpone teaching them as much as they can, in*

order to learn with delay”, and they “do not teach it well” to other workers. For example, one of the experienced workers who wanted to solve the problem of a car “did not allow other workers to observe his work and did not share his knowledge and experience with others”. Another example was a “person who was skilled in the field of computers” and “he did not want someone else to learn his job easily”.

“Individuals must hide their information and share it when their benefits demand. It happens here at the highest possible level; for example, because of lack of cultural background, individuals in the Production Engineering Department here share information with delay” (shift expert, Assembly Line, public company).

“Another example is experienced workers that do not accept new workers at first, and give the worse work to him and they try as much as they can to postpone teaching him in order to learn with delay. It is because of personal benefit and also maybe they are scared about their position and they want somehow to keep it. They are scared; their mind is not relaxed where they are working...Hiding information for personal benefits happens more in worker environments; it exists in worker environments that are working in the assembly line as foreman and supervisor; but in my viewpoint it is gradually getting decreased” (Technician #1, Production Department, public company).

“I have seen here that individuals hide information and share it when their benefits demand. I have seen one case in assembly Line four (4); it was related to the computer department; that person was skilled in the field of computers; had a high skill; but he did not want someone to learn his job easily” (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

The reasons mentioned by workers for hiding information included: lack of cultural background, suggestion system, lack of job security, keeping acquired position, and protecting ideas from stealing, and getting personal benefits and encouragement from superiors. Workers believed that because “the cultural background is not provided”, “individuals are not encouraged to share their information” and they view their knowledge as “power”, and are scared that if they share information they “lose power”. Although the suggestion system is a good way for sharing information with the company, it has nevertheless acted as a barrier to knowledge sharing among individuals. To prevent the theft of ideas by others “every person who has got a suggestion does not reveal it until he writes it down, and after writing, informs it to the suggestion authority; and then tells it to his colleagues”. One of the workers declared that his colleagues “have gone and submitted” his suggestion “in their own name”, and because of that he does not share his information or an idea before registering it with the suggestion system. Workers mentioned lack of job security as the next reason for hiding

information from their colleagues. For example, someone who *“does not want to share information”* thinks that if he shares this *“maybe the second person can do the job better than him and maybe he loses his job”*. Workers *“are scared of information sharing”* because they are *“scared about their position”* that *“they want somehow to keep”*. When the company or the department *“faces a problem”* a specific worker who can solve the problem *“becomes dearer”* and *“can show himself more than others”*. Therefore, these workers *“do not like to teach their skills to the others”*; because they think if they do so *“it decreases their current position”*. Some workers conceal their information in order to gain advantages such as promotion, and are afraid of to sharing *“technical information”* with others, because they think; others can get promotion using their information and overtake them. Some workers hide information *“because of personal benefit”*. One of the workers mentioned a story about his colleague who refused to allow others to observe him and learn his work when he was working on a car to solve a problem, and *“he was encouraged by the supervisor because of that work”*. The following comments relate to these issues:

“Yes it happens sometime that because of their position, because of something individuals know something and they do not like to release their knowledge to the others” (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

“Unfortunately, individuals are not encouraged to share their information because its’ cultural background is not provided; and we are scared if we share information or knowledge we lose our power” (shift expert, Assembly Line, public company).

“For example, someone knows a technical job; he might not like others to learn it; as said each person who has more ability can show himself more than others. When he distributes that ability and everyone learn that; certainly its value decreases. They maybe do not like to teach their skills to others; this kind of individuals exist and they are right” (technician #2, Production Department, public company).

The main effect of the characterised situation is a reduction in trust and knowledge sharing among workers, and also those workers who hide their specific knowledge abuse this situation. For example, they *“attend the work late”* because they think that the company needs them and must tolerate their behaviour in order to retain them. To solve this problem and facilitate knowledge sharing, workers believed that *“individuals must not be afraid of sharing information”* and they think that *“it depends mostly on a heartfelt environment where individuals trust”* each other so that workers *“do not abuse information”* which belongs to the others *“for personal benefits”* and *“to be used for the work progress”*. The following quotes support this statement:

"The person was skilled in the field of computers, he was abusing this situation at some level; as said to come to attend the work late and thinking that they need him and because of that they have to keep him and tolerate him" (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

"To facilitate information sharing, the individual must not be fearful of sharing his/her information; this fear must not exist that if I taught this to another one; I lose it. I say it depends mostly on a heartfelt environment where the individual trusts that you do not abuse information which s/he shares with you for personal benefits; and to be used for the work progress; I think it is good" (worker #4, Assembly Line, public company).

Managers in the public company corroborated workers' self-disclosure regarding the concealment of knowledge by workers for self-interest. They confirmed that *"hiding information for self-interest has been happening too much and is happening now in the company"*. They believed that *"when individuals feel that knowledge sharing has no benefit for them, they hide their information"* and *"it happens at a high level"*. Meanwhile one of the managers viewed this action as *"a wrong idea"*, although emphasised that it *"is natural"*. One of the managers declared that *"still some information is located in the drawers of the desks and drawers are locked"*, intimating that the concealment of information is not restricted to production workers, and also happens in managerial, experts and clerical circles, where people usually sit at desks in their daily work. Managers think that a lack of job security, work complexity, and nepotism are the reasons for hiding knowledge by individuals. For example, one of the managers believed that *"if someone possesses knowledge, they are always worried that if they teach it to their colleague, they will lose their daily bread and later might be replaced by that colleague"*. Another manager declared that *"because work is technical, some individuals keep some part of their work-related information to themselves and do not declare it"*, because *"individuals like to get more benefit from their information"*. In some cases hiding knowledge is a way of making a job more secure for individuals by making the system require their knowledge. Those individuals hide their knowledge *"to prove that the system has weaknesses"* and the individual *"lets that weakness be demonstrated, and when the system faces a problem, he then reveals his information"*.

One of the managers regretfully mentioned nepotism as another cause of this problem. He reported that *"payments to individuals are not based on their knowledge and efficiency"* but rather on relationships with managers, and such a practice causes skilled experts (e.g. *"a skilled engineer who can solve many problems"*), who are not personal friends of their managers to be *"fallen in a corner and his salary is much lower than the other one who has*

not that knowledge” but is the manager’s friend. The following comments were made in this respect:

“When individuals feel that knowledge sharing has no benefit for them; they hide their knowledge” (manager, Production Department, public company).

“Hiding information for self-interest has been happening in (the company name) too much and is happening now. Still some information is located in the drawers of desks and drawers are locked” (manager, Body Making Department, public company).

*“Hiding information for self-interest is natural is natural, is natural. Yes, it happens at a high level, anyway it is natural that individuals like their life to become better and get more benefit from their information”...
“There are many examples of this case; its reason is that unfortunately, in our country, payments to individuals are not based on their knowledge and efficiency. I mean there is a skilled engineer who can solve many problems, but because he is not my (manager’s) friend you see that he is fallen in a corner and his salary is much lower than the other one who has not that knowledge and is my (manager’s) friend” (the CEO Executive Consultant, public company).*

6.6.3.9. Sharing Knowledge for Self-interest

As mentioned in the previous section, workers who keep information to themselves, *“share it when their benefits demand”*, and some workers admitted that if knowledge sharing *“has no benefit”* for them, they *“never do that”*. The benefit they refer to can be a reward from the suggestion system, and also one from superiors. Workers hide information and knowledge from their colleagues *“but share it with a superior”*, *“for their own encouragement”*, believing that *“it is natural”* to profit from their ideas. It seems that superiors’ actions regarding knowledge sharing has caused the current situation in which workers think if they *“tell it (information) in secret”* to a foreman and *“do not tell it to colleagues”* the foreman encourages them, whereas if they *“tell it to both of them, he (foreman) does not encourage”* them. Workers felt it should *“not be like this”* and said the following in support of their opinions:

“If I want to share information and it has no benefit for me, I never do that. But, when I see it has a benefit for me I do it” (worker #7, Assembly Line, public company).

"It happens sometimes very little that workers hide information and knowledge from their colleagues but share it with superior. This condition is more for their own encouragement...for example; one is the suggestion system that they mostly like to give suggestion because of its rewards...another is because of being encouraged in company" (worker, Final Assembly Unit, public company).

"For example, it must not be like this that if I have a suggestion; if I tell it in secret to my foreman and do not tell it to my colleague; he (the foreman) encourages me; but if I tell it to both of them, he (the foreman) does not encourage me" (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

6.6.3.10. Stealing Ideas

Workers in the public company introduced the theft of ideas as one of the reasons for hiding information. According to them, individuals and departments do steal ideas. At the individual level, it happens more, e.g. workers steal ideas and submit them to the suggestion system *"in their own name"*. Workers also declared that *"when a department shares its information with another department, then tomorrow you see they report it in their own name to superiors"*. As a result, *"If someone has a suggestion he does not declare it to colleagues until he writes it down and submits it to the suggestion system"* to prevent the theft of his ideas and suggestions by colleagues and departments. Workers viewed this action as the abuse of their information by other individuals and departments, and such an atmosphere of distrust has decreased knowledge sharing between individuals and departments. Individuals *"do not share"* information because *"other persons and departments abuse"* that information, and *"report it in their own name"*, ignoring the person or department that has had a *"role in the production of this information"*. The following quotes support this statement:

"Regarding suggestions, I have seen many of them (workers) that I have had a suggestion, they knew that I want to go and submit it; in my absence they have gone and submitted my suggestion in their own name...now after that (stealing my suggestion) first I submit my suggestion; and after its registration when for example my suggestion was accepted I tell my colleagues; so that next time it (stealing my suggestion) does not happen again" (worker, engine assembler, public company).

"If someone has a suggestion does not declare it to colleagues until he write it down and submit it to suggestion system, then tells it to colleagues" (worker #3, Assembly Line, public company).

"People are not encouraged to share their knowledge, because when a unit shares its information with another unit; then tomorrow you see they report it in their own name to superiors and say, "We have done this project and solved this problem" and practically do not consider the main person who has done the job. It has happened to me about two three times,

then if someone asks to get my information I do not give him" (expert, Production Engineering Department, public company).

6.6.3.11. Sharing Knowledge to Please Superiors

The majority of the workers in the public company believed that *"sharing information for pleasing superiors happens"* in the company; but there is no consensus regarding its level. Some workers declared that *"it happens too much"*, *"it happens a lot"* and *"at a high level"*, and *"happens very much"*, and *"happens everywhere"*. In contrast, some workers believed that *"it happens at a low level"*, *"rarely"*, and *"a little"* in the company. Some considered that it *"does not happen much"* but is done by *"some individuals"*, because workers are working *"in a state of friendship"*, then they reveal information with colleagues, before they share it with superiors. Workers mentioned some narratives about colleagues who *"hide information and knowledge from colleagues but share it with superiors"*. Most of these stories were about hiding technical information from co-workers and sharing it with their direct superiors such as with foremen and supervisors. For example, *"there has been a problem"*, one of the workers *"had learned to solve"* the problem *"somewhere else"*, *"has done this job in front of foreman and supervisor and he has been rewarded"*. Another example is about *"finding and informing faults by an operator"* who did *"not tell it to colleagues"* but told it *"to the foreman"*.

Workers believed that information sharing also happens from *"the foreman to the supervisor, or by the supervisor to his boss"* to show to the superior that he is concerned about the work (e.g. *"I have found or solved this problem or I am following it"*). The other example was a worker who *"could tell directly to the workers how to prevent a fault; but he went to the supervisor or the foreman to tell them and the supervisor came and told it to the workers"*. This behaviour is not limited to production departments; for example, a clerical worker who *"had some information about a computer software and had no desire or patience to share it with other colleagues; but when the boss asked him he exercised all of his force to solve the problem in order to show his expertise"*. The workers' motives for hiding knowledge from their colleagues and for sharing it with their superiors are to *"show-off"* their knowledge and information *"to the higher level"* in order to get *"reward"* or *"get a state of promotion"*, as workers mentioned in the following quotes:

"Yes, I think sharing information for pleasing superiors happens; it happens at a high amount. Yes it happens. For example, it has happened that something was not related to myself; someone had some information about a computer software and did not want to share it with others" (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

“Information and knowledge sharing for pleasing superiors happens everywhere. When I was working in assembly one (1); when there was a problem that someone could solve, it was possible that does not tell it to colleagues; for example goes to the higher level to show himself or get a state of promotion” (office secretary, Production Department, public company).

“Information sharing for pleasing superiors happens; by God it has happened, that one of the workers wanted to give a suggestion, it could be given to the workers; but he was going and giving it to the supervisor or the foreman. He could tell it directly to the workers how to prevent a fault but he went to the supervisor or the foreman to tell them and the supervisor came and told it to the workers” (worker, car door assembler, public company).

Managers in the public company also confirmed that *“knowledge sharing for pleasing superiors happens”* in *“all departments”* of the company *“too much”* and *“at a high level”*. Some managers think that it *“is natural”*, and *“depends on how the higher level reacts with that”*. This kind of knowledge sharing happens in different ways such as reporting *“faults”*, solving problems, and sharing information at different levels in the company. For example, *“when there is a fault”*, workers *“do not tell it to anyone”*, but when managers ask them, *“very easily they explain it from A to Z”*. When there are *“solvable problems”*, those who can solve them, like to be seen by their superiors and they *“keep information to themselves until their superior realises it”*. Some individuals deny having some information when their colleagues ask for information; but when the manager contacts them, they realise that *“information exists”* and they send it to the manager *“quickly”*. One of the managers declared that, workers’ motives are *“to show their art to their superiors”* and *“put themselves under consideration”*. Another manager stated that workers *“do not like to transfer”* their knowledge *“to be done by someone else”*, and yet another mentioned that the reason *“is related to culture”*, although he was not sure whether it was to the *“national culture or organisational culture”*. As a result of this kind of knowledge sharing, *“many of the problems are left unsolved”* in the company, because those who can solve them are waiting to do so on an occasion when they can be seen by superiors. The following comments relate to this issue:

“I have seen much that when there is a fault, well, they (workers) do not tell it to anyone, but when I (manager) ask a question, very easily they explain it to me from A to Z” (manager, Assembly Line #4, public company).

“Individuals like to show their art to their superiors to put themselves under consideration. They do not like to transfer it to be done by someone

else, it is happening in all departments. There might be some solvable problems, but those who can solve them, like to be seen by their superiors. Because of this, they keep information to themselves until their superiors realise it. Because of this case many problems are left unsolved” (the CEO Executive Consultant, public company).

“In my viewpoint, information sharing for pleasing superiors happens here too much. For example, when I send some colleagues to get some information they come back and say that person did not have such information; but when I contact myself, I see that information exists and send it to me quickly. I think its reason is related to culture, I do not know national culture or organisational culture” (boss, Production Engineering Department, public company).

6.6.3.12. Self-promotion by Knowledge Sharing

Workers in the public company stated that some experienced colleagues use knowledge sharing as a way to show themselves off, because *“each person who has more ability can show-off himself more than others”*. Workers believed that *“experienced colleagues do not share their knowledge and experience with new workers and hold it to themselves to show it somewhere else to say ‘I am better, I am more qualified’ to get its benefits”*. Self-promotion by knowledge sharing happens in different forms. Some workers who see that *“a job is being done incorrect”* help the other workers *“to learn it and remove that fault”* and also to cast their information and knowledge in their teeth. Some workers do not share information with colleagues, but do so *“much better”* with *“higher level”* to *“show-off their skills and get its reward”* or to *“get a state of promotion”*. Another form of self-promotion is *“finding and informing faults”* to a higher level as a means of demonstrating their concern about the work to superiors. For example, such faults are informed *“by operator to foreman, by foreman to supervisor, by supervisor to boss”* to show that *“I have found or solved this problem”*. The following quotes offer support for these statements:

“I mean if I was asking him he had no patience to answer, but when the boss asked him he exercised all of his force to solve the problem in order to show-off his expertise. Now I think it is the same about all of information” (technical expert, Production Department, public company).

“I was working with an expert; well, he was not transferring information in that form that was supposed so that we understand it; meanwhile he was submitting that information much better to the boss; so that he wanted to show-off his information to his superior” (Technician #1, Production Department, public company).

“Three of our colleagues who are more experienced than us, solved the problem of a car in front of our supervisor to show-off their skills and get its reward” (worker #7, Assembly Line, public company).

Some managers confirmed that self-promotion by knowledge sharing is “a reality” in their company. They did not point to a specific organisational level, and did not limit it to showing off to higher levels by lower levels. One manager stated “everyone puts himself under consideration of the higher level or of subordinates using his information”. This behaviour is not limited to individuals, but sometimes happens by groups. One of the managers told a story about two groups of “experienced technicians” and “less experienced experts”, in which “each group wants to show that they are more skilled” with the result that there has been “conflict with each other”. The following comments relate to this problem:

“Everyone puts himself under consideration of higher level or subordinates using his information” (boss, Production Engineering Department, public company).

“Well, we must accept this as a reality that many individuals like to put themselves under consideration” (manager, Body Making Department, public company).

“I have a team of experienced technicians with more than 15 years tenure, and less experienced experts with less than 5 years tenure. During these two years that they are working together, they have had conflict with each other. Each group wants to show, that they are more skilled than the other group” (manager, Quality Engineering Department, public company).

6.6.3.13. Segregated Planning by Departments as a Barrier to Knowledge Sharing

Workers viewed segregated planning in the public company as “one of the biggest problems” that “makes knowledge sharing difficult”, describing the existing situation as a discordant music group, because “each department wants to play on its own musical instrument”. Workers declared there were a “high number of parallel administrators of projects and works” in the company, as the basic feature of the existing situation where “each department wants to plan for its own goals”. They believed that although “planning is done at a higher level”, nevertheless “when it reaches the lower level, everyone wants to say that ‘I am doing this plan better’”. As a result, there is an environment in which “everyone feels that they are against each other” and “instead of supporting each other” departments “act against each other”. Workers believed that “it causes disunion between departments” and “it never happens that they all go towards one goal”. They reported that in this situation, departments

“are not encouraged to share their knowledge”, because “when a department shares its information with another; they report it in their own name to superiors” and “do not consider the main person who has done the job”. One of the workers declared that it has happened to him “about two three times”, and now “if someone asks to get information” he will not share it. As “one of the biggest reasons” for the lack of knowledge sharing between departments, workers believed that this situation is rooted in the lack of teamworking culture in their company. They even viewed it at a higher macro-level when they mentioned that in their “education system they have never had teamwork culture” taught to them “in a desirable manner”. For example, workers mentioned that “rewards for suggestions are more individual rewards rather than group reward”. As a result, “lack of co-ordination” between departments “decreases knowledge/information sharing”, and “makes knowledge sharing difficult” in the company. They claimed that generally “knowledge sharing does not happen between departments” and if it does it is “very weak”. As a solution, workers suggested that if they “decrease the number of administrators, knowledge sharing happens when it is needed”, and would result in progress for the company, which they believe there is “much room for”. The following comments are offered in support of these views:

“The high number of parallel administrators of projects and works decreases knowledge/information sharing; this is one of the biggest problems in (the company name). At last you see that from 10 administrator units, one or two units do the job. If we decrease the number of administrators, knowledge/information sharing happens when it is needed” (expert, Production Engineering Department, public company).

“In my viewpoint planning is being done from the top, but when it reaches the lower level everyone wants to say that I am doing this plan better; and it causes disunion between departments. I mean in fact there is an environment here that everyone feels that they are against each other; it never happens that they all go towards one goal. If they do this (the company name) has much room for progress; but what I see is that each department wants to play on its own musical instrument; wants to say ‘I am working better, I can do it better’; because of this information sharing happens very weak” (Technician #1, Production Department, public company).

“Yes, friendly relationship between departments and individuals increases information and knowledge sharing. As an example I can mention a good relationship between Engineering Department and Production Department of assembly line four (4) that helps very much and decreases problems to half. In other places (other assembly lines) instead of supporting each other these two departments act against each other; the Engineering Department thinks that everything they say is right and the Production Department must just be executive and do not give any viewpoint; meanwhile here, for works they want to do, the viewpoint of the

*Production Department is asked and the results have been better as well”
(office secretary, Production Department, public company).*

One of the managers in the following quotes, supported workers’ statements regarding segregated planning, using the “*island organisations*” metaphor. He believed that “*organisational walls are very high*” in their company, and these walls and “*the structure of existing organisations*” were barriers to knowledge sharing. The reason was “*knowledge sharing for sectional interests*” in island organisations that “*creates some problems*”. For example, “*some of the departments think that some information is the result of their own efforts and it must be kept in their own departments*”, and consequently do not share it with other departments.

“One of the barriers to information sharing in (the company name) is organisational walls; organisational walls are very high in (the company name). I mean the walls of island organisations that are established in (the company name) and have made it very large. The organisation itself, and the structure of existing organisations are barriers to information sharing” (manager, Quality Engineering Department, public company).

“Information sharing for sectional interests creates some problems. Usually some departments think that some information is the result of their own efforts and it must be kept in their own departments; meanwhile it is wrong and all departments that work with each other, need some information from other departments... keeping information by some departments makes the problem regarding information flow in the projects and even in production processes” (manager, Quality Engineering Department, public company).

6.7. Conclusion

In this section, the results of the data analysis are synthesised and the themes of identification, relationships, and facilitators of and barriers to knowledge sharing, and their effects on knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals in the public company, are discussed.

Some workers identified with the public company and its positive values, and their co-workers. Workers’ identification satisfied their safety needs and belonging needs to a much greater extent than their holistic needs. Some workers dis-identified with the company, and the company CEO. From this it can be concluded that identification with the organisation by workers in the public company is not high, and workers’ identification and their dis-identification with the company and the CEO are mostly rooted in their safety needs. The majority of managers in the public company identified with the positive values of the company by stating their high positive feeling of membership. Managers’ identification mostly satisfied

their belonging needs and their self-enhancement needs, and in a few cases their safety needs. Regarding the company identity, workers did not conceive of a collective identity for their company, as their managers did. Managers introduced the identity of the organisation as a large company with various strengths such as an attractive image and teamworking culture, and as a place for frequent learning. They recognised the tall hierarchy, the formal and weak relationships between managers and subordinates as the disadvantages of this large enterprise.

The majority of managers in the public company believed that the relationship between managers and subordinates was distant and formal, and in the production departments was even more so. Managers introduced the company size, tall hierarchy, work conditions and traditional management style as the antecedents of this situation and accepted that it has created a fearful environment, so that workers and lower-level managers can not have their say, and declare their problems. Many of the workers are not satisfied with the existing relationships but remain silent because they are scared of being fired. The majority of the workers supported this statement, because they did not talk explicitly about their relationship with their managers, and instead used conditional sentences to demonstrate a fearful environment and a lack of desirable relationships between themselves and managers in the public company. Those workers who openly declared their ideas, believed that their relationship with managers was a formal and distant one characterised by very tight and inflexible discipline, low levels of sincerity and friendship, and poor communication between managers and themselves. They believed that the relationship was more formal in the older departments.

Workers referred to the traditional style of management, and managerial communication with them as the causes of the existing formal relationship that in turn reduces their commitment and overall levels of knowledge sharing in the company.

Workers also referred to the existing payment system, and the appraisal and reward system as unfair, their criticisms mainly targeting those aspects of the system related to their safety needs. They considered the absence of shift differentials, and different salaries and benefits for the three groups of workers who do the same job in the company, as unjust and exploitation, believing the existence of such problems to be the result of the lack of a labour board in the company. Workers also believed that assessment in the company's appraisal and reward system is not conducted fairly, because managers do not consider the quality of work produced

by workers, and instead make their evaluations according to personal taste, and family and friendship relations.

In fact, managers supported the workers' complaint regarding the unfair appraisal and reward system. They believed it has two procedural problems, the first being the fact that the appraisal system involves manager having to adopt quotas for different levels of appraisal, and the second the fact that there is a general calculation of reward that is not detailed for each department, and excludes contract workers. These features of the system ultimately mean that people who deserve a good appraisal and hence reward, may not receive it, whereas others who do not merit a good appraisal and reward, do receive it. Managers in the production and non-production departments had different viewpoints regarding the amount of rewards for different departments. Currently more is paid to the production departments than to the other departments.

As a result, workers and managers in the public company confirmed that the payment and reward and appraisal system are not fair and that decreased motivation and morale and knowledge sharing of workers, are the result. Knowledge sharing with employees in the public company about rules, general issues and events is done via an automated system, bulletin, announcement board, and weekly periodicals. Foremen and supervisors at the workplace share information verbally, regarding the rules and the work-related issues. Some workers believed that the quality of knowledge sharing from the company to the employees was weak, and that they only learned about rules and regulations verbally (and informally) from experienced workers, foremen and supervisors.

Facilitators of knowledge sharing in the public company were introduced by workers and managers as the system for information/knowledge sharing, IT infrastructure, training, job rotation, weekly periodical, friendly relationship between workers, and workers' inclination towards knowledge sharing. Managers also introduced two extra factors, these being teamwork culture, and meetings as facilitators of knowledge sharing in the organisation.

The majority of the workers and managers declared the computerised suggestion system to be a facilitator of knowledge sharing from individuals with the company, but managers mostly referred to its strengths and workers mostly referred to its weaknesses. Workers described the suggestion scheme as one of the biggest successes of the company, and as a good and very effective system for encouraging idea generation by everyone at every level. They believed

that because the suggestion system values workers by giving rewards, individuals are encouraged to share their information, and consequently, idea generation in the company is at a high level. Managers also described the suggestion system as a very active, very helpful and effective system; and one of the best systems that values employees' ideas, and as a financial support for workers, and a motivation factor that has created a sense of competition and duty regarding company enhancement. Additionally, it is believed to encourage workers and their family members to participate very easily in ideas generation and has resulted in a high level of idea generation in the company.

In terms of the weaknesses of the suggestion system, however, workers believed that the speed of feedback is low, and the company has focused more on the quantity of ideas submitted instead of their quality, such that workers are involved in a compulsory state of idea generation, and contract workers even have to make suggestions in order to have their contracts renewed. Moreover, workers noted that sometimes, the assessment of suggestions was unfair, and ideas were generated but were not used well. Another weakness mentioned was a lack of promotion reward based on participation in the suggestion scheme, and the problem of island planning in different departments was raised in connection with the implementation of suggestions, so that suggestions might be introduced in some departments and completely ignored in others. This resulted in procedural differences. A further issue was raised by workers regarding the necessity to make suggestions in writing, since they considered it was not possible to explain every new idea that way, and that explaining something by someone in practice is better in some circumstances. Managers in the public company also believed that the suggestion system is not working as well as was expected., and they too were of the opinion that the scheme has focused more on quantity rather than on quality of suggestions, and that the low speed of feedback was detrimental to its take-up.. They also viewed the reluctance to adopt ideas from outside the company as another weakness of the system.

Yet another disadvantage referred to by managers was the fact that because of the promise of a personal reward, individuals share their knowledge via the suggestion system with the company, but not with other individuals. The data analysis also identified another weakness, this being that the suggestion system does not introduce suggestions and creativities to departments. Overall, the weaknesses of the suggestion system were that it resulted in depressing workers' motivation, and consequently some workers did not participate in it, thereby reducing idea generation in the company. Because of financial benefits of the

suggestion system, the knowledge sharing from individual to individual in the company was decreased.

Workers and managers introduced IT infrastructure as the second facilitator of knowledge sharing in the public company. IT is used for both knowledge sharing with the workers about rules, events, and general issues of the company and also to receive information from workers via the computerised suggestion system. Workers stated that the factors such as the increasing number of individuals who have access to the computer, telephone, automation system and Intranet inside the company were indicators of effective IT usage in the company. Managers also believed that IT infrastructure and a high level Internet and Intranet usage had made access to information, and knowledge sharing easier. According to the workers and managers, the clerical departments use the IT infrastructure for knowledge sharing more than the production departments. Managers believed that because of the facilities that were provided, individuals were encouraged to share their information using those facilities.

The public company has a formal training system that was introduced by the majority of the workers as another facilitator of knowledge sharing with the employees. Departmental training occurs via classes, practical training by supervisors and foremen or experienced workers, training videotapes, handouts, booklets and the periodical. Workers mentioned some weaknesses of the training system, however, such as a lack of free time for workers during working hours for training, and the suspension of some training classes that had previously been run in the company. A few managers declared training as a facilitator of knowledge sharing in the public company, regarding on-the-job training that included working with experienced employees, workshops, and training courses by experts for other experts of their group, as useful mechanisms in this respect.

Job rotation was introduced by workers and managers as another facilitator of knowledge sharing in the public company. Workers viewed this as practical training that increases skills, and as a useful way for learning and knowledge sharing for everyone at the workplace. Managers also believed that job rotation was an effective method that happened in different ways in different production departments, and made knowledge sharing easier in the company.

A weekly periodical named *Karamad*, was distributed by the company for the purpose of sharing organisational information with the employees, and this was introduced by workers as a facilitator of knowledge sharing.

Another factor that led workers to understand each other better, and work with friendship and co-operation, was seen by them as their age similarity. This friendship has made information and knowledge sharing easier among employees, so that workers voluntarily solve each other's problems in the workplace. Friendly relationships have increased workers' inclination to share information with their co-workers. The majority of workers believed that everyone is inclined and likes to share his knowledge and information in the best way with others for the improvement of work and for the control of faults in their work. Some workers referred to their religious belief as the base for their predisposition towards knowledge sharing, via referencing its confirmation by their religious leader, and using terms such as work conscience and Halal salary. Workers believed that compared with other companies theirs paid a good salary, and if they want their salary to be Halal they must really follow a problem that arises, and in doing so, share knowledge. Despite the time limitation, the friendly relationship between workers, and their inclination towards knowledge sharing means that a high level of knowledge sharing happens voluntarily and very easily with new colleagues in the public company. Although knowledge sharing happens among workers is a good and effective method to teach something, sometimes individuals share information to cast it in others' teeth.

Managers in the public company referred to two last factors (meetings, and teamwork culture) as facilitators of knowledge sharing. They mentioned different types of meetings in production departments such as short daily meetings between foremen and workers at the start of each shift, meetings between supervisors and foremen, and meetings between supervisors and their bosses at each shift. Some co-ordinating meetings also exist between different units of the assembly line that managers and supervisors use to explain elements of their work for other colleagues. Moreover, there are some meetings for managers and supervisors in which they share information. Managers believed that these meetings are a useful way of sharing work-related information between higher and lower managerial levels. They regarded knowledge sharing as one of the necessities of teamwork, and believe that because of teamworking, communication is extraordinarily high in the company. The majority of managers introduced knowledge sharing as the most important result of establishing the existing teamwork culture.

Workers and managers referred to barriers to knowledge sharing which comprise the culture, lack of appreciation of workers' ideas, lack of encouragement for knowledge sharing between individuals, lack of job security, work pressure, lack of time for sharing information, discrimination between workers, hiding information for self-interest, sharing information for

self-interest, stealing ideas, sharing information to please superiors, self-promotion by knowledge sharing, and segregated planning by departments. Culture seems to be a double-sided blade in relation to knowledge sharing, because managers see it as both a facilitator and a barrier. They considered that the sharing of knowledge is a cultural exercise, and some considered that the predisposition to hide information is rooted in national culture, while others were of the opinion that it is related to organisational culture of their company. For example, one aspect of traditional national culture is the master-apprentice relationship that has been common in Iran. In this relationship, the master does not usually reveal all the secrets of the job to the apprentice. Managers believed that this traditional master-apprentice relationship still prevails and has not been changed by teamwork behaviour, despite the fact that teamwork is necessary in the new industrial environment. As a result, individuals behave like traditional masters and hide some secrets for a rainy day. Moreover, the high rate of unemployment in the country has intensified this individualistic behaviour in the public company. Regarding the aspects of organisational culture, the individuals' perception of the unfairness of existing practices in the company such as the appraisal and reward system, and the assessment of suggestions in the suggestion system, are important. Unpleasant memories about previous knowledge sharing, and a misunderstanding about the effects of knowledge sharing can also be part of this problem. Another aspect of the cultural problem introduced by managers was a misunderstanding among some individuals when a skilled individual was identified in their department because they consider this as a threat to their position. Therefore, because of the mentioned cultural factors, identifying knowledgeable individuals in the company is difficult.

Workers used conditional sentences to describe the existing situation in the company regarding their perceptions of how their ideas are valued, as a signal that there is no appreciation of such contributions. Workers believed that because their status is low, any ideas that originated with them are not accepted, and as a result, the level of idea generation in the company is not as expected. Workers regarded a lack of encouragement for knowledge sharing between individuals as a barrier to knowledge sharing. They believed that because of the suggestion system, knowledge sharing by individuals with the company (high ranks) was high, but the company did not encourage knowledge sharing among individuals. This was limited to personal relations and depended on friendship. According to the data, lack of encouragement is rooted in the cultural background of individuals, whereby information is seen as power. Another reason is that because of the financial rewards offered for suggestions that are implemented, individuals are not encouraged to share their information and knowledge with

others. Workers believed that because assessment and promotion of the workers was not related to their technical knowledge, individuals had no motive for sharing information with each other. Position in the organisation (actually having a job) was seen as extremely important, and both workers and managers referred to the lack of job security as an important barrier to knowledge sharing. Indeed, for workers this was the biggest problem, as they were scared to share information with others lest those other people should become more proficient and take over their jobs. Managers also viewed lack of job security, as having resulted in dissatisfaction of the contract workers, and believed this situation as the most important motive for individuals to keep information to themselves. The majority of the workers declared work pressure to also be an important obstacle to knowledge sharing, complaining frequently about work overload on the assembly line, and for some, this appeared as the most important problem. Workers believed that work pressure had affected them physically and psychologically, resulting in there being no opportunity to use their work-related knowledge. They felt that the company focus on quantity rather than quality, job rotation, job dependency, compensation of line stops, and reaching the annual production targets, all contributed to the work pressure, as did the under-staffing situation which left some departments with insufficient numbers of workers. Workers believed that friendly relationships existed between themselves and they liked to share information with each other, but because of work pressure and lack of free time for knowledge sharing they were unable to do this. They considered that production workers, who have more potential regarding idea generation, have less opportunity to participate in the suggestion system and benefit by it, because they have less free time than clerical workers, who have freer minds and can concentrate on idea generation, and who consequently get more benefits from the suggestion system than workers.

Managers, however, seemed to be conservative or ignorant about the workers' ideas regarding work pressure. Only two supervisors mentioned work pressure as an obstacle to knowledge sharing, demonstrating an ignorance that supports the workers' argument that no attention is paid to worker comfort in the process design, and that there is a distant relationship between managers and workers that prevents the former from becoming informed about a serious problem (work pressure) about which the majority of the workers have frequently complained. It can be also interpreted as a demonstration of the secretive environment of the company that makes managers reluctant to share sensitive information about their company with outsiders. As a result of the high-speed assembly line, a time limitation has also affected the on-job training of the workers, and has decreased social capital in the production departments.

Workers referred to discrimination between them as another barrier to knowledge sharing. The three types of workers in the organisation receive different payment and fringe benefits for the same work, but the absence of a Workers' Board leaves them with no vehicle for dealing with this problem. Contract Workers viewed their situation as the biggest problem, and their continual worries about job security for them, have made knowledge sharing difficult.

The majority of the workers believed that hiding technical information or knowledge for personal benefits happens in the company; and it occurs more with experienced workers in the production departments. There was no consensus regarding the level and reasons for concealing information, but some workers thought that it was natural that individuals kept their personal knowledge to themselves, and only shared it when it could bring personal benefits demanded. The reasons mentioned by workers for hiding information included lack of cultural background, suggestion system, lack of job security, keeping acquired position, protecting ideas from being stolen, and gaining personal benefit and encouragement from superiors. The main effect of the characterised situation was reduced trust and knowledge sharing among workers.

Managers in the public company supported the workers' idea regarding hiding information for self-interest, and they believed that it happened at a high level in the company. Some managers viewed this action as wrong, but others believed that it was natural. Managers considered the lack of job security, work complexity, and nepotism as the reasons why individuals concealed information, and then shared it when they could receive some benefit, either in the shape of a reward from the suggestion system, and/or one from superiors. Workers hid information and knowledge from their colleagues but shared it with superiors for their own encouragement. Workers believed that superiors' actions regarding knowledge sharing had caused the current situation and they thought if workers shared information in secret with foremen, they should not be encouraged. The theft of ideas was introduced by workers as one of the reasons for hiding information. At the individual level, it was known for workers to have their ideas stolen by colleagues who later submitted them to the suggestion scheme in their own name. Workers also declared that when a department shared its information with another department, that department often took the credit for the new idea. As a result, this situation has decreased knowledge sharing among individuals and across departments. The majority of the workers believed that sharing knowledge in order to please superiors happens everywhere at different levels within the public company, but there is no consensus regarding its frequency. Managers also confirmed that knowledge sharing in this respect happened at a high level in all

departments of the public company. Some of the managers thought that it was natural, and depended on how the higher level reacted to it. This kind of knowledge sharing happened in different ways such as through reporting faults, and in solving problems. Managers believed that this kind of behaviour was rooted in culture, and workers used it to put themselves under consideration of their superiors. Consequently, many problems were left unsolved in the company, because those who could solve them were waiting to do that at a time when superiors became aware of them. Workers in the public company stated that some experienced colleagues did not share their knowledge and experience with new workers, but that they used knowledge sharing as a way to show off their skill to superiors and colleagues.

As another barrier, segregated planning was cited by workers, who believed that although planning is done at a higher level, when it reaches departmental level, everyone wants to say that they are implementing this plan better than others. Workers described the existing situation as a discordant music group, in which each department wants to play on its own musical instrument. They referred to a high number of parallel administrators of projects and works in the company, as the basic feature of the existing situation whereby each department wanted to plan for its own goals. As a result, departments felt that they were in competition against each other, and hence, were not encouraged to share their knowledge, for fear of a rival department taking the credit. Workers believed that this situation was rooted in a lack of teamworking culture in their company. Meanwhile managers claimed that the existing teamworking culture was a facilitator of knowledge sharing in their company. Lack of coordination between departments resulted in very weak knowledge sharing between departments. As the final conclusion to be drawn, in the public company workers have medium identification with the company and dis-identified with the company CEO. Therefore, workers are expected to have a less positive motive towards sharing information. Middle managers have a high identification with the company. Therefore, it is likely they have a positive motive towards facilitating knowledge sharing for workers. The data analysis suggests that workers and managers have a formal and distant relationship with each other and that identification with middle managers by workers is low. Work pressure is high and because of a lack of a "Workers' Board in the company, workers' power is low, and therefore, managers' control of workers is high. Trust in the suggestion system by workers is high, but their trust in middle managers is low. It would be expected that workers would share knowledge only minimally, and that middle managers would support knowledge sharing at a high level. Because of the existence of a suggestion system and financial rewards for knowledge sharing, and despite existing barriers to knowledge sharing such as a formal relationship between

managers and workers, workers share information with the company via the suggestion system at a high level. Therefore, the level of knowledge sharing with the company is high, but the level of knowledge sharing among individuals is low. Because of the company size, and many island organisations in the company, and segregated planning in the departments, the level of knowledge sharing between departments is also low.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter contains a concluding statement regarding the research findings, which are the result of the analysis in Chapters Five and Six. With regard the research questions relating to different aspects of organisational culture, that emerged in Chapter Two, the discussion will be in terms of their effect on knowledge sharing in the two companies.

In the first section, based on the data analysis in the previous chapters, the differences between the organisational cultures (values, norms, and practices) of the two companies are summarised. In the second section, the research questions are answered, and the links between the findings from the empirical work and the literature are discussed in order to explain how the research findings are significant, what they mean to the literature, and where and how they challenge it. Finally, the limitations of the study are considered, and a future research agenda is indicated for the better understanding of the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing.

7.1 Research Questions

The main research question was as follows:

‘What is the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing in the two companies?’

There are two questions about the values (e.g. identification, bureaucracy) and their effect on knowledge-sharing behaviour as follows:

1. What is the association between identification and knowledge sharing in the two companies?
2. Does bureaucracy moderate work conflict in the two organisations?

There are four questions about the effect of practices on knowledge sharing in the two companies as follows:

3. Does the existence of a suggestion/reward system influence the degree of knowledge sharing in the two organisations?
4. As far as the two companies are concerned, are middle managers a barrier to knowledge sharing and can bureaucracy be a means of protecting workers from middle managers’ abuse of power?

5. What are the main facilitators of, and barriers to, knowledge sharing in the two companies?
6. Do workers behave differently with regard to knowledge sharing in private as opposed to public companies?

In order to answer the research questions, the differences between aspects of the organisational cultures (values, norms, and practices) of the two companies, as identified in the data analysis in Chapters Five and Six, are introduced, and their effects on the knowledge-sharing behaviour of individuals are then investigated.

7.2 Differences Between the Organisational Cultures of the two Companies

The differences in the cultural factors of the two companies are categorised in Table 7-1. Although there are many more cultural factors that could be considered, those dimensions, which seemed to be more related to knowledge-sharing behaviour of employees in the two companies, have been considered. These topics include trust, identification, bureaucracy, suggestion system, middle managers, the language used by workers and managers for telling organisational stories, and the facilitators of, and barriers to, knowledge sharing. Additionally, practices such as existing systems in organisations (e.g. employment and training systems, the appraisal and reward system, the system for knowledge sharing, and production system); openness and secrecy, conflict, labour union, production technology, IT infrastructure and its usage, nepotism, and the location and physical layout of departments, are also considered and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 7-1: Differences between the organisational cultures of the two companies

Dimensions of organisational culture (Values, norms and practices)	Public company	Private company	Explanation of the effect of differences between cultures of two companies
Values; Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low trust in middle managers by workers - High trust in the suggestion system by workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low trust in middle managers by workers - Low trust in the suggestion box by workers 	<p>High level of knowledge sharing with the company by workers in the public company</p> <p>Low level of knowledge sharing with the company by workers in the private company</p>
Values; Bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High level of bureaucracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low level of bureaucracy 	<p>Clear job description and less personal effects on the accomplishment of work, therefore less potential for personal conflict in the public company</p> <p>No job description and high personal effects on work accomplishment, therefore higher potential for personal conflict in the private company</p>
Values; Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medium identification with the company, and dis-identification with the CEO by workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High identification with the company and the CEO by workers 	<p>More inclination to help the company and the CEO, thus higher inclination to share knowledge with the private company</p> <p>Less inclination to help the company and the CEO, thus less inclination to share knowledge with the public company</p>
Values; The language used by workers telling stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Critical of the CEO's employment policy, middle managers' formal behaviour, high speed of assembly line, and unfair appraisal system - Appreciative of comprehensive rules and system (e.g. good IT infrastructure, suggestion system, job description) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciative of the CEO personality and behaviour - Critical of the middle managers' formal behaviour, nepotism, lack of comprehensive rules and systems (e.g. suggestion system, and job description), and unfair appraisal system 	<p>In the public company workers dis-identified with the CEO, but good IT infrastructure and the existence of a system for encouraging workers to share knowledge at a high level with the company</p> <p>In the private company workers identified with the CEO, but the lack of a system for sharing, and middle managers' action as barrier discouraged workers and caused a low level of knowledge sharing with the company</p>
Values; The language used by managers telling stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciative of the company's rules and systems (e.g. good IT infrastructure, suggestion system, job description, training system, and job rotation), and team working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciative of the positive values of the company owners - Critical of the other managers (e.g. their management style, 	<p>Indicated the existence of inter-departmental rivalry in the public company, and interpersonal conflict between managers in the private company</p>

<p>Norms; Workers' norms</p>	<p>in projects - Critical of island planning by departments - Speed of assembly line should not be high - Discrimination between workers should not exist - Feedback by the suggestion system should be faster - Relationship between managers and workers should be better - Workers and managers should share knowledge - Managers should encourage knowledge sharing - Individuals should not abuse knowledge shared by others - Appraisal system must not be based on relation</p>	<p>qualification, and behaviour) - Workers should help their company - Everyone must share knowledge - Appraisal system must not be based on relation - Managers should care about workers - Managers should be friendlier - Nepotism and injustice should be removed - Managers must encourage knowledge sharing - Managers should not block knowledge sharing - Managers and departments should not have conflict and must share knowledge</p>	<p>Workers' norms in the public company indicated workers' criticism of high-speed line, discrimination in the employment system, formal relationship, low speed feedback from the suggestion system, and low level of knowledge sharing between individuals. Workers' norms in the private company indicated workers' inclination for knowledge sharing, low trust in managers by workers, workers' criticism of formal relationship, nepotism, conflict between managers, and middle managers as barrier to knowledge sharing</p>
<p>Norms; managers' norms</p>	<p>- Relationship with workers must be formal - Feedback by suggestion system should satisfy workers - Appraisal and reward system should be fair - We should have job rotation in all departments - Important knowledge should not be shared with other departments</p>	<p>- Managers should be formal - Managers must help the company - Managers should not question workers for their viewpoints</p>	<p>Indicated that in both companies managers respect formal relationship, as a result of autocratic national culture; but different norms based on the existing practices in each company</p>
<p>Practices; Appraisal and reward system</p>	<p>- Formal system exists; contract workers are excluded from rewards; appraisal is affected by relations</p>	<p>- Formal system exists for all workers, Workers viewed it as unfair</p>	<p>Indicated the existence of unfair system in both companies, but discriminative regarding three groups of workers in the public company (e.g. contract workers do the same job as permanently employed workers; but they get lower salary and are excluded from reward)</p>

Practices; Knowledge sharing system	- Suggestion system pays reward for workers' knowledge sharing; and is successful, because monetary reward encourages workers to share their knowledge with the company	- Suggestion box is used as the only formal way for workers' knowledge sharing; but because of middle managers' action as barrier, workers are not encouraged to share their knowledge with the company	Monetary incentive resulted in a high level of knowledge sharing with the public company Low trust in the suggestion box, and middle managers' action, and lack of monetary rewards resulted in a low level of knowledge sharing with the private company
Practices; Training	- Formal and active training system; workers are trained before and during the work (e.g. job rotation)	- Informal and weak training; newly-recruited workers are trained during the work	Workers have a higher level of skills, thus, higher potential for knowledge sharing in the public company, than the private company
Practices; Employment system	- Formal employment system and affected by politicians. Three types of the workers are; permanently employed, annual contract with the company, annual contract with external company; and this caused resentment	- Informal and affected by personal relation; all workers are contract workers	Political connection resulted in appointment of managers based on political connection in the public company Employment of three types of workers has caused a feeling of discrimination among workers in the public company Personal relation resulted in the appointment of unqualified friends as managers in the private company
Practices; Production line	- High speed and tiresome assembly line	- Low speed assembly line	High speed and tiresome line in the public company resulted in lack of time and fatigue as barriers to knowledge sharing between workers Low speed line in the private company resulted in more informal sharing between workers
Practices; Openness and secrecy	- Secretive culture in the company managers communicate formally and are secretive with outsiders	- Almost open culture managers communicate open and less formally with outsiders	High sensitivity regarding knowledge sharing with outsiders Less sensitivity regarding knowledge sharing with outsiders
Practices; Conflict between managers	- Departmental rivalry in the company	- Personal conflict between managers	Departmental rivalry resulted in low level of knowledge sharing between departments in the public company Personal conflict between managers in the private company; resulted in higher intention to use knowledge for managers' personal self-interest; thus, managers act as barrier to knowledge sharing.
Practices; Labour union	- No labour union exists in the company	- Formal and active labour union exists in the company	Lack of labour union in the public company mean workers can not get their right (e.g. shift differentials, no reward for contract

<p>Practices; Production technology, IT infrastructure and its usage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mix of old and new production technology - Good infrastructure and prevalent culture of IT usage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New production technology - Poor infrastructure and culture of IT usage is weak 	<p>workers) and feeling of discrimination for workers Labour union discusses workers' demands with the managers Easy access to resources resulted in high capacity utilisation in the public company; but limitations for access to resources and unit import caused low level of capacity usage in the production line. Good IT infrastructure and its supportive culture are facilitators of knowledge sharing in the public company Poor IT and inhibitive culture of IT usage, decrease the level of knowledge sharing in the private company</p>
<p>Practices; Nepotism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less visible in the company, mostly affects the appointment of managers in the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visible, and affects the employment of workers and appointment of managers in the company 	<p>Appointment of managers with political connection in the public company Appointment of friends as managers and selection of friends as workers in the private company</p>
<p>Practices; Location of departments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All departments are located in one site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Departments are located in 3 different sites with maximum distance of about 400 kilometres 	<p>Access for work related knowledge sharing between managers and departments (e.g. meetings) is easier in the public company; but hard and time-consuming in the private company</p>
<p>Practices; Physical layout of departments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each department is located in a separate building - Managers' offices are individual and separated from production buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All departments in each site are located in one building. Managers' offices in the factory site are shared and a part of the production building 	<p>Face-to-face interaction between individuals from different departments is low in the public company, but is high in the private company; thus, higher possibility for the creation of personal conflict in the private company; that affects the level of knowledge sharing in the company</p>

7.2.1 Trust

As concluded in Chapter Six, because of a formal relationship and a low value placed on workers' ideas by middle managers, there was a low level of trust in middle managers by workers in the public company. But at the same time, because of the monetary rewards provided by the suggestion system, workers placed their trust in the suggestion system. This resulted in a high level of knowledge sharing by workers with the public company.

As concluded in Chapter Five, there was also low trust in middle managers and low trust in the suggestion box by workers in the private company. This resulted in a low level of knowledge sharing by workers with the private company.

The existence of low trust in both companies can be regarded as the effect of autocratic and low collective trust that are features of Iranian national culture; but because of workers' low incomes compared to their necessary expenditures, monetary reward was regarded as important by workers in the public company and this encouraged them to share a large amount of knowledge with the company through its suggestion system.

7.2.2 Level of Bureaucracy

As was concluded in Chapter Three (Table 3-5), the level of bureaucracy was high in the public company, and low in the private company. Some aspects of the bureaucratic culture of the public company such as clear job description for departments and individuals, resulted in less ambiguity and less use of personal discretion for the accomplishment of work. Therefore, there was less potential for personal conflict in the public company. Against this, there was no formal job description for departments and individuals in the private company and this affected working behaviour. For example, because of a lack of any job description in the private company, jobs are sometimes based on personal taste, which leads to low quality work and also leads to conflict because of criticism of this poor work by other members. Also because there are no job descriptions in the private company, individuals and departments are not clear what their duties are, and it sometimes causes overlap in the accomplishment of jobs by individuals and departments, resulting in conflict over justification and responsibilities. This has, in turn, caused higher personal conflict in the private company.

7.2.3 Identification

According to the analysis presented in Chapters Five and Six, workers identified with the public company at a medium level, and dis-identified with the CEO of the public company. On

the other hand there was a high level of identification with the private company and with the CEO by workers.

Therefore, it would be expected that workers in the private company would be more inclined to help their company and their CEO, and hence, would be expected to have a higher inclination to share knowledge with the private company. Also workers in the public company would be expected to have less inclination to help the company and the CEO, and so there would be less predisposition to share knowledge with the public company.

7.2.4 The Language Used by Workers and Managers When Telling Stories

Stories are important indicators of cultural values and beliefs, formal and informal rules and procedures, the consequences of deviance from, and compliance with the rules, social categories and status, and the power structure of an organisation (Brown, 1998, p. 18).

According to the data analysis, there were many stories told by respondents including managers and workers in both companies.

As revealed in these stories, workers in the public company were found to be critical of the CEO employment policy, middle managers' formal behaviour, the high speed of the assembly line, and the unfair appraisal system. Workers were also appreciative of comprehensive rules and systems (e.g. clear job description, good IT infrastructure, and suggestion system). In the private company, workers were appreciative of the CEO's personality and his behaviour, and were also critical of the middle managers' formal behaviour and nepotism. They were aware of the lack of comprehensive rules and systems (e.g. suggestion system, and job description), and also the unfairness of the appraisal system.

In the public company, because workers were not satisfied with the CEO's employment policy that had created job insecurity for them, they dis-identified with the CEO. In Chapter Two it was indicated that in Iranian culture the role of father figure is very important in the family, and that the CEO is in the position of being the father of the organisation, and is thus an important company symbol. Because the CEO was a symbol of the company, and because workers dis-identified with the CEO of the public company, it can be expected that workers would not want to help the company. But the existence of the system which paid a monetary reward for knowledge sharing, and the existence of poverty and high unemployment,

encouraged workers to share knowledge at a high level with the company, and the good IT infrastructure facilitated this.

In the private company workers identified with the CEO, and thus, it would be expected that they would have helped their company (e.g. share knowledge with it); but the lack of a system for sharing, and the middle managers' action as a barrier to knowledge sharing discouraged workers and caused a low level of knowledge sharing by workers with the company.

The language used by managers in the public company was appreciative of the company's rules and systems (e.g. good IT infrastructure, suggestion system, job description, training system, and job rotation), and teamworking in projects. There were many examples of this kind of story in managers' interviews. But managers in the public company were critical of island planning by departments.

Managers' language in the private company was mostly appreciative of the positive values of the company's owners, but critical of the other middle managers (e.g. their management style, qualifications, and behaviour). For example, sometimes managers even named the department whose manager, they believed, was not qualified for his job, or who did not share knowledge with other managers.

As a result, managers' language in the two companies showed that there was inter-departmental rivalry in the public company, and interpersonal conflict between managers in the private company.

7.2.5 Norms in the Two Companies

Frequently repeated themes referred to by workers and managers, were used as an indicator of workers' and managers' norms, and thus as part of the organisational culture of the two companies. The negative viewpoint of individuals was considered to represent their objections to the current situation, and their positive views as their approval. For example, in the public company, workers frequently criticised the speed of the assembly line, which they thought "*should not be high*", and that discrimination between workers "*should not exist*". Such views were indicators of the existence of a high-speed line, and of discrimination between workers, which were also supported by workers' quotes in Chapter Six. Workers' norms also indicated the annoying delays in feedback by the suggestion system, the formal relationship between managers and workers, the lack of knowledge sharing by managers, the lack of encouragement

for knowledge sharing by managers, and colleagues' abuse of knowledge shared by individuals in the public company.

In addition to the data analysis, which was supported by previously analysed quotes, workers' norms in the private company were mostly positive in terms of wanting to help their company (e.g. workers should help their company, everyone must share knowledge), and also were critical of middle managers' benevolence (e.g. managers should care about workers), the formal relationship (e.g. managers should be friendlier), and nepotism (e.g. nepotism and injustice should be removed). Workers' norms in the private company also strongly protested about the existing role of managers as a barrier to knowledge sharing.

As a result, workers' norms were critical of the formal relationship with managers in both companies, and managers' norms were in favour of formal relationships with workers in both companies. This difference between managers' and workers' norms can be viewed as the effect of the autocratic national culture in both organisations. Workers' also criticised the appraisal system based on the relationships in both companies, which can be considered as the effect of another feature of Iranian national culture (e.g. trust in the family members and close friends but distrust of others). Managers in both companies respected relationships because they trusted their own friends more than other co-workers.

At the organisational level, there are two different types of norms. For example, in the public company, workers criticised the high-speed line, the discrimination in the employment system, the low speed of feedback from the suggestion system, and the low level of knowledge sharing between individuals. However, in the private company, workers' norms favoured an inclination for knowledge sharing, low trust in managers by workers, nepotism, conflict between managers, and a judgement on middle managers as a barrier to knowledge sharing.

Workers in the public company thought that the suggestion system feedback was too slow. For reasons probably not related to sympathy for workers, and more likely to be related to the company politics and inter-departmental rivalry, managers agreed with the worker-based perception.

Managers' norms in the private company were supportive of their company (e.g. that managers must help the company), but critical of the role of other managers as a barrier to knowledge sharing. This critical attitude of managers was, therefore, due to their feeling of wanting to

help the company, and was voiced because they saw such criticism as an excuse to weaken other managers, whom they saw as political opponents in the company.

Therefore, in terms of norms, because of the effect of national culture, the two companies were similar in some aspects (workers and managers' norms about relationship) and different in some practices (as will be described below), and these differences were related to the specific culture of each company.

7.2.6 Practices in the Two Companies

The two companies had different features in terms of organisational practices that they used for the accomplishment of tasks (e.g. appraisal and reward system, knowledge sharing system, employment system, training system, production line, openness and secrecy, conflict, labour union, production technology, IT infrastructure and its usage, nepotism, location of departments, and physical layout of departments). The existing differences between practices have affected the knowledge-sharing behaviour of workers differently in the two companies.

The employment system in the public company is formal, and is affected by politicians at the level of managers. For example, members of parliament and high-ranking authorities in the government introduce individuals who are usually from their political parties, for managerial positions in the company. As previously mentioned, three types of workers (e.g. permanently employed, on an annual contract with the company, and on an annual contract with an external company) are working in the public company and this situation has caused resentment for contract workers who experience a high level of job insecurity. In the private company all workers are contract workers, employment is mostly informal and workers' peer relationships are warm and personal.

Managers in the public company are appointed on the basis of political connections, and because of personal relationships unqualified friends are appointed as managers in the private company.

According to the data analysis, a formal appraisal and reward system exists in both companies, and personal relationships between superiors and subordinates in both companies affect the assessment of workers by their superiors. But the two companies have different rules for workers' appraisal; for example, in the public company, contract workers are excluded from rewards; but in the private company all workers are contract workers and included in the

reward system. Although workers in both companies viewed the appraisal and reward system as unfair, contract workers in the public company who do the same job as permanently employed workers and who get a lower salary, and who are excluded from getting rewards, view it as a discriminative system. Therefore, there is a higher possibility of dissatisfaction being experienced by contract workers in the public company than by their counterparts in the private company.

There is a computerised comprehensive suggestion system that pays a reward for workers' knowledge sharing in the public company, but the only formal method for knowledge sharing in the private company is a suggestion box, which is opened by the CEO. According to their data analysis, members of the public company (managers and workers) viewed the suggestion system as a successful facilitator, which encourages workers by means of monetary rewards to share their knowledge with the company. But in the private company, few members considered the suggestion box to be successful as a means of knowledge sharing. The reason was middle managers' action as a barrier to knowledge sharing. They questioned workers for their viewpoints, which were shared with the CEO via the suggestion box, thereby demonstrating that the suggestion box in the private company was not a private communication between the workers and the CEO. Thus, workers were not encouraged to share their knowledge through the suggestion box with the private company.

The training system represents another difference between the two companies. In the public company, there is a formal and active training system that trains workers before and during their work (e.g. via job rotation, and training classes); but training in the private company is informal and weak; and newly-recruited workers are trained during their work by foremen and other workers. As a result, workers in the public company have a higher level of skills, and thus, a higher potential for knowledge sharing, than workers in the private company.

The production line is high speed and tiresome in the public company, and low speed in the private company. This situation has resulted in lack of time and fatigue operating as barriers to knowledge sharing between workers in the public company, and in more informal knowledge sharing between workers in the private company.

In terms of openness and secrecy, the public company has a secretive culture, and because of the dominance of the political environment at the managerial level, managers communicate formally and secretly with outsiders. In the previous chapters, examples have been

mentioned of this culture in the public company (e.g. no permission for carrying equipment that can be used for information storage, such as computer accessories, camera, camcorder;; and the refusal of a manager to be interviewed after twice having arranged an appointment). In the private company there is an almost open culture, and managers communicate openly and less formally with outsiders. This characteristic would be expected to affect managers' decisions about knowledge sharing with outsiders, and higher sensitivity in the public company regarding knowledge sharing with outsiders than the private company.

Regarding the types of conflict, as discussed in the previous chapters, because of island planning by departments, there was a departmental rivalry in the public company, but personal conflict between managers in the private company. Departmental rivalry resulted in a low level of knowledge sharing between departments in the public company; and personal conflict between managers in the private company. It also resulted in a higher intention to use knowledge for managers' personal self-interest; thus, instead of facilitating knowledge sharing, managers acted as a barrier to it in the private company.

The labour union is an important institution in modern organisations, which mediates between workers' demands and organisational plans. Interestingly, there is no labour union in the public company, but a formal and active labour union does exist in the private company that discusses workers' demands with the managers. The absence of a labour union in the public company meant that workers were deprived of their rights (e.g. no shift differentials, no reward for contract workers, three types of workers in the company), and this intensifies the feeling of discrimination against workers in the public company.

The production technology in the public company is a mix of old and new technology, but in the private company it is almost new production technology. According to the data analysis, there is a good IT infrastructure and prevalent culture of IT usage in the public company, but a poor infrastructure and weak culture of IT usage in the private company. The political connection has resulted in easy access to resources (e.g. bank loan) and has made the public company able to acquire and use technology and also to obtain the units it needs and to employ the workers it needs, and this has resulted in easy expansion of capacity. On the other hand, the limitations of the private company's access to resources and restrictions imposed by the government regarding its car unit imports from Malaysia, have caused the under-utilisation of production line capacity and have also prevented investment in the necessary systems such as IT infrastructure by the private company.

As a result of this situation, good IT infrastructure and its supportive culture are facilitators of knowledge sharing in the public company, but poor IT infrastructure and an inhibiting culture of IT usage even at the managerial level of the private company, decrease the amount of knowledge sharing in the private company.

Trust in family members and close friends, as a feature of Iranian national culture is the basis for practising nepotism in Iranian companies. This is intensified by the high rate of national unemployment, and by the lack of job security in organisations. According to the data analysis, nepotism was less visible in the public company in regard to the employment of workers, but was very apparent in the appointment of managers through political connections with government authorities and parliament. In the private company nepotism was clearly visible, and affected the employment system of the company through personal relations. It happened in the form of the appointment of friends as managers and the selection of managers' friends as workers.

Location and physical layout of departments is another aspect of organisational culture that is different in the two companies. In the public company, all departments are located on one site, each department is located in a separate building, and managers' have their own offices in buildings that are separate from the production buildings. In the private company, departments are located on three different sites with a maximum distance of about 400 kilometres. All departments on each site of the private company are located in one building. Managers' offices in the factory site are shared and are a part of the production building.

As a result of the physical layout of the departments, in the public company, face-to-face interaction between individuals from the different departments, and also between managers and workers of each department is low; but is high in the private company. Thus, there is a higher possibility for the creation of conflict in the private company than in the public company. Because of the location of departments on one site in the public company, access for individuals and departments for work-related knowledge sharing (e.g. meetings by managers and workers of departments) is easy; but because of the distance between the three sites of the private company, it is hard and time-consuming in that enterprise.

As a result of the discussion in this section, it is concluded that the organisational cultures of the two companies have some similarities (e.g. hierarchical relationship, low level of trust in

managers by workers), which can be interpreted as the effect of Iranian national culture (e.g. autocratic features, and lack of trust outside the family). There are mostly differences in the two companies regarding their cultural factors that are indicators of the existence of the different organisational culture within them. For example, the two companies were different in terms of their levels of bureaucracy, organisational identification, speed of production line, technology, training, employment system, openness and secrecy, type of conflict, labour union, nepotism, location, physical layout of departments, and workers' trust in the knowledge sharing system. Differences between the organisational cultures of the two companies have affected the knowledge-sharing behaviour of employees.

7.3 Finding Number One

This first finding has relevance to assumptions in the literature about a link between organisational identification (the member's identification with his/her organisation) and his/her performance. For present purposes, performance is defined as the level of knowledge sharing. The implication of the current literature and theory is that high organisational identification leads to high performance (by means of various intermediate factors such as commitment and internalisation of task-oriented norms). However, some evidence from this study reveals that under some special circumstances this expectation is contradicted.

Organisational identification is defined as "a perceived oneness with an organisation, and the experience of the organisation's successes and failures as one's own" (Mael and Ashforth, 1992, p. 103). Each person has a large number of identities that can be increased by joining new social groups, and correspond to what are called identification targets, which "may be compatible or competing with one another" (Scott 1997, p. 497). Although the organisation is the most recognised object as an identification target, employees in organisations might identify with different targets such as career, team, CEO, and organisation (Van Dick et al. 2004). In an organisational context, the CEO is a symbol who represents the organisation; therefore for the purpose of the study, workers' identification with the CEO in the two companies, has been chosen as the variable. The Iranian cultural dimension of paternalism can be viewed as the basic reason for workers' identification with the CEO in Iranian companies, because as the 'father at the top of the family', the CEO is judged by employees, and on the basis of his behaviour, workers are likely to identify (or dis-identify) with their organisational father figure.

In terms of performance, this is considered as an important topic of organisational studies, and human resources are a significant factor that affects performance (Cuthrie, et al. 2004). There is no consensus about a single definition for performance because it is “a multi-level and multi-discipline concept”. For example, performance can be measured at different levels, including individual, team, department, company, and also financial level (Vanhala and Tuomi, 2006). Moreover, it can be measured for the short-term or the long-term. A general definition has introduced performance as “a measure of attainment achieved by an individual, team, organisation or process” (EFQM, 1999). Additionally, performance has been defined as “the outcomes of behaviour” (Nickols 1977, p. 14). Some researchers have introduced three elements for the definition of performance, which include identifying “the capabilities that create success” with the person’s position, “working practices and processes that contribute to success”, and performance expectations and the appropriate evaluation of the success of the individual’s work effort (Hill and Tande, 2006). Variables that are usually used in performance studies for individual-level outcomes include, “improved employee abilities, knowledge and skills, increased motivation and commitment” (Vanhala, and Tuomi, 2006, p. 243). For organisational level outcomes, measures comprise sustained competitive advantage and productivity. Profits and market value are performance indicators for financial outcomes (Gerhart, 2005). Most of the performance studies are quantitative, and are interested in economic indicators, but this research is qualitative and has focused on the qualitative aspect and the individual level of performance (e.g. knowledge sharing). Performance is conceptualised as having two separate domains, including job-relevant behaviours, and work outcomes, which are products or services that are expected to result from employee job-relevant behaviour (Binning and Barrett, 1989; Smith, 1976). Individual factors affect the job-relevant behaviour of employees in organisations (Campbell, 1990; Hunter, 1986). For the purposes of the research one of the important individual factors is the amount of personal motivation for knowledge sharing in the organisation. Furthermore, environmental factors can significantly influence job-relevant behaviours of individuals. For example, the existence of a system for knowledge sharing can affect individual performance through the facilitation of knowledge sharing by employees in organisations, which in turn affects the organisational performance by reducing costs, and influences other factors that lead to a better performance.

The definition of performance in this study is the level of knowledge sharing, and knowledge-sharing behaviour is chosen as an individual level indicator of performance, because it is considered as the first domain of performance (job-relevant behaviour) of individuals in an organisation.

The common notion in performance studies is that improving the method of management through better human resource practices enhances organisational performance (Ulrich, 1997). The important role of human resource practices is to reinforce the types of behaviours required by the organisation (e.g. knowledge-sharing behaviour in knowledge-intensive companies). The effectiveness of human resource practices depends on their inter-relationship. Participative management is a key factor in the package of human resource practices (Wright et al. 1999); and knowledge-sharing practices (e.g. suggestion system) form a type of participative management system.

Recent theoretical developments towards a knowledge-based theory suggest the crucial importance of knowledge sharing as a key dimension of performance. In order for organisations to obtain and sustain competitive advantage, the ability to effectively implement knowledge-based activities such as creation, integration, accumulation, and utilisation, learning and sharing knowledge, has become increasingly important (Fang, et al. 2005; Grant, 1996). Among the activities already mentioned, knowledge sharing/flow is “the cornerstone of knowledge management” in organisations (Fang et al, 2005). Knowledge sharing has benefits such as making more accurate knowledge available to decision-makers in organisations (Song, 2002), which leads to competitive advantages for organisations through enabling managers to make the most beneficial use of available knowledge (Keans and Lederer, 2003). Those competitive advantages assist the organisation to achieve its goals.

Similarly, recent theoretical developments towards social capital theory again suggest the crucial importance of knowledge sharing as a key dimension of performance. The knowledge sharing process also helps organisations to attain advantages of social capital that lead to the reduction of transaction costs by economising on knowledge, and co-ordination costs (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital is defined as “a broad set of elements in multiple dimensions, which benefit social actors in their social actions through internal and external mechanisms”. These mechanisms comprise shared values, interpersonal relationships, and structural features that are rooted in social networks (Putnam, 1993; Adler and Kwon, 2002). Organisations with a higher ability to create and use social capital are likely to be more successful and have a better performance (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).

Existing empirical research findings suggest that a link exists between identification and performance. These are imperative findings related to the helpful impacts of identification at

the individual, group, and organisational levels (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p. 2), which result in the promotion of “a sense of meaning, belonging, and control at work” (Ashforth, 2001). Different aspects of organisational identification are differentially linked with work-related attitudes and behaviours (Bamber and Iyer, 2002). A positive relationship has been found to exist between organisational identification and performance, and organisational citizenship behaviours, and a negative relationship has been found to exist with turnover intentions and actual turnover of employees (Abrams et al, 1998; Bartel, 2001; Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Haslam, 2001; Mael and Ashforth, 1995; Pratt, 1998; Tyler, 1999; van Knippenberg, 2000; Wan Huggins et al, 1998; Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). For example, organisational identification contributes to the willingness of local managers to apply extra effort toward organisational goals (Reade, 2001). Identification increases co-operation in the lack of any anticipation of existing rewards or punishments, or any expectation for reciprocity in future, or even reputational consequences (Daws et al, 1990) and leads to more effective processes and outcomes (Kramer et al, 1996). Organisational identification has been found to be a significant determinant of employees’ willingness to exercise effort on behalf of the organisation (Haslam, 2001; Haslam et al, 2000; Ouwerkerk et al, 1999; van Knippenberg, 2000). It has a strong and positive influence on the continuous improvement efforts of employees (Lee, 2004) and is positively related to the level of citizenship behaviours for permanently employed employees; but not significantly correlated for contract employees (Feather and Rauter, 2004). Van Der Vegt and Bunderson (2005) measured team performance using five performance criteria including productivity, mission fulfilment, efficiency, quality, and overall achievement, using a 7-point scale. They concluded that identification with the group plays an important role in facilitating co-operation and team performance.

Identification encourages knowledge sharing and increases workers’ commitment to the organisation. For example, Alles and Datar (2002) have proposed an analytic model of the implications of high commitment on organisational control of human resources, where workers identify with the success of their organisation. They conclude that workers’ identification with the organisation’s success reduces the control problem via “encouraging information sharing, even when that is at the expense of worker slack” (Alles and Datar, 2002, P. 173).

Identification has other beneficial organisational effects on general performance. Identification with the group reduces the level of intra-group competition (Dawes and Thaler, 1988, p.195). Identification increases individuals’ commitment to their organisation (Sass and Canary, 1991), and highly identified individuals are more likely to behave in ways that are associated

with the organisation's identity, interests and beliefs (Cheney, 1983; Button et al, 1994; Simon, 1976; Tajfel, 1981, 1982; Tompkins and Cheney, 1985). The strength of organisational identification is positively related to individuals' co-operative and organisational citizenship behaviour (Duckerich et al, 2002).

To summarise, the extant literature assumes that only positive performance effects come from identification. The common notion in the identification literature is that identification always leads to helpful results, which benefit the identifying individual and which also benefit the object of identification (e.g. the team, department, or organisation). For example, when a particular person identifies with an organisation, this leads to an increase in his/her individual performance, which benefits the organisation (e.g. through commitment, citizenship behaviour, extra effort on behalf of the organisation, and increased knowledge sharing).

This study's data contradicts this literature, since according to the analysis in the two previous chapters, a comparison of workers' identification in the two companies showed that workers' identification with the CEO, and by implication with the company, was high in the private company, and workers dis-identified with the CEO and by implication with the company, in the public company. Therefore, based on the existing literature, it would be expected that workers in the private company would display a higher level of positive performance (e.g. higher knowledge sharing with the company) than workers in the public company. But as concluded in the previous chapters, workers in the public company shared knowledge at a high level with the company, whereas workers in the private company shared knowledge with the company at a low level. Thus, contrary to the existing literature, this study concludes:

Finding number one: Identification was not associated with performance (as measured by knowledge sharing).

The data were collected under very specific circumstances, and so it will be possible to consider these circumstances in order to understand why the data contradicts the previously observed empirical studies and theory in the literature. The researcher, therefore scrutinised the in search of a reason why it showed no link between identification and performance.

The conclusion was that the identification target was not able to facilitate performance (knowledge sharing). The general tone of the existing literature is that identification is always 'good' for organisations, but according to this study's finding, this statement is only true if the

identification target is able to facilitate performance. In other words, for the increase in performance, identification alone is not enough, and there is another necessary condition, which relates to the fact that the object of identification was the CEO in the two companies. This finding challenges the existing literature, because in the literature, the level of identification is related to performance. But in this research it was different. For example, in the public company workers dis-identified with the CEO, but they shared knowledge with the company at a high level. In the private company there was a high level of identification with the CEO, but workers shared knowledge with the company at a low level. The explanation for this finding is that if the identification target is not in a position to be able to facilitate performance by the identifying person, high identification will not lead to high performance. The identification target in this study case was the CEO in the private company and workers highly identified with him; but because of structural and financial limitations the CEO was unable to establish a suggestion system in that organisation. Consequently, despite workers' high inclination to share knowledge with the company, the lack of a system made it difficult in the private company, and workers were not facilitated to share knowledge to a high level. For the case of the public company the explanation is that if the dis-identification target is in a position to be able to facilitate and reward performance by the dis-identifying person, dis-identification will not lead to low performance. The dis-identification target in the public company was the CEO who was able to establish a suggestion system that pays a financial reward for suggestions. In the public company, workers dis-identified with the CEO, thus it would be expected, based on current theory and the literature, that workers would display a low positive performance (e.g. low level of knowledge sharing with the company), but because of the financial rewards and workers' safety needs, which can be satisfied by that reward, workers shared knowledge at a high level via the suggestion system with the company. The existing literature always assumes an identification target (usually the company) that is able to respond positively to the identification. For example, knowledge-based companies use the workers' high identification as a method of control (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), but this case is different. The identification target in the private company (the CEO) was too far removed from the knowledge sharing and too poor to facilitate the knowledge sharing in a positive way. The dis-identified target (the CEO) in the public company was also too far removed from the knowledge sharing, but also the potentially negative effect of dis-identification with him was cancelled out by the effective reward system, which encouraged knowledge sharing by workers.

The existence of poverty in Iran has increased the impact of the effective reward system for knowledge sharing in the public company and its ability to cancel out dis-identification with its CEO. The effects of monetary rewards in Iranian companies are related to the situation of the national economy, and the role of men in Iranian culture as the breadwinner of the family. The Iranian economy has high inflation, and therefore, workers' salary is low compared to their families' costs. Men are the breadwinners of the family in Iran, and high unemployment has increased family costs by imposing the cost of unemployed young members onto family expenditures. There is no comprehensive credit system (e.g. getting loans for different types of needs), thus individuals try to increase their income as much as possible (e.g. using available monetary rewards in the workplace). This leads to the importance of monetary rewards in Iranian organisations, and their magnified effect on individuals' behaviour (e.g. knowledge sharing behaviour).

7.3.1 Implication of the Research Finding

The current literature shows that the issue of managing identification is critical (Barker 1998, p. 265). From an organisational and managerial perspective, identification is viewed as being at the forefront of organisational control theory; and as a social process with two key players including the individual and organisation that work together to answer the question 'who are we?' (Barker 1998, pp. 257-528). To reach its goals, values and objectives, the organisation naturally needs its members to identify with those goals, values, and objectives and with symbols of them (e.g. CEO) that will result in behaviours that are functional for the organisation (Barker 1998, p. 258). Today's managers try to control employees' behaviour by getting members to participate more in matters that affect the organisation, via articulating values that employees can identify with, to shape employees' behaviour (Barker 1998, p. 258). When there are other entities as identification targets, the organisation needs to compete well, because the organisation needs its members' identification, in order to unite individuals' efforts toward its goals (Barker 1998, p. 259), which are more important in participative (e.g. team-based) organisations (p.261). The organisation can influence (manage) the identification process and can control members' behaviour by enhancing the degree of members' identification toward organisational values and towards symbols of them (e.g. CEO) (Barker 1998, pp. 261-262). Because members believe that the success of their organisation demands a high level of their identification, they will support the organisation even if they are self-consciously aware that their identification controls their behaviour (Barker and Tompkins, 1994, p. 265). Therefore organisations need to make their identity attractive to their members, although the way that organisations should do that is an open question (Barker 1998, p. 266).

Traditional controlling practices are characterised by bureaucratic and impersonal mechanisms (e.g. coercion, rules and surveillance) where identity issues are less adequately addressed; and these practices have not been sufficiently responsive (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p. 619). Identity as an important dimension of organisational control is insufficiently explored, but Alvesson and Willmott (2002) regard the way to accomplish organisational control to be through the self-positioning of employees and identification with work and the organisation that is inspired by managerial discourses (p. 620). In other words, they focus more on managing the insides of employees (e.g. 'hopes, fears, and aspirations') rather than their behaviours (Deetz, 1995; Knights and Willmott, 1989; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) and they view organisational identification as a potentially more effective means of organisational control than the use of external stimuli (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p. 620). In modern organisations in the absence of coercion, managers often seek to control workers by means of identification-based control. Employee goodwill is manipulated by increasing identification with managerially-determined objectives so that the organisation and workers' self-image are wholly aligned (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). The process of organisational identification can be shaped by the mobilisation of diverse organisational cultural media (Kunda, 1992). Therefore, in response to the need for greater attention to the process of identification in organisational control, in order to direct the process in ways that empower employees towards organisational goals, values and objectives, managers get the workers to identify with the company, the worker-group, the reward system, or the product. An important implication of this study's research finding is that when managers design such identification-based controls, they should choose identification objects which are powerful, or which are able to facilitate performance to the identifier.

7.4 Finding Number Two

This finding is important in terms of the dominant literature on bureaucracy, which portrays bureaucracy as a necessary evil that cannot be avoided, and as an inevitable phenomenon for governmental administration (Narayana, 1992).

In the current literature, bureaucracy has mostly been regarded as a negative topic, an inefficient phenomenon, and a historical object. For example, bureaucracy has been called an "iron cage" (Martin, et al. 1998, p. 430), and bureaucrats are described as "bean counters", and "pen pushers" (Prendergast, 2003, p. 930). Bureaucracy has been described in terms of tortuous procedures, narrow outlook, inefficiency, red-tape and the autocratic manners of government by officials (Friedrich, 1963, p.464). It has been criticised as an unethical form of

organisation for controlling the private citizen by its regulations, and for having idle bureaucrats that spend their days at the expense of taxpayers (du Gay, 2000, p. 2). Critics have targeted the specialisation of function as a feature of bureaucratic organisation that divides individual subjective and social being by encouraging only rational and instrumental activity (du Gay, 2000, p. 3). Those who are against bureaucracy believe that bureaucracy is incapable of solving new problems, and that it results in a reduction of innovation, efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of employees (Robbins, 2001; Myers, 1985). They also believe that bureaucracy in organisations pays for the job and not for the person, that it causes a huge distance between the top and the bottom of the organisation; and also that it loses the focus on customers and citizens as providers of the organisations' revenues (McDonald, 1995; Gifford, 1992).

For example, Myers (1985) argues that bureaucracy reduces efficiency, effectiveness, and the productivity of employees. Bureaucracy is described as preventing individuals from functioning as effectively as they could, at times when they feel that there might be better options but where they are forced by rules and processes to do things in a specific way. Melloan (1996) argues that a major limitation of bureaucracy is its inability to adapt. Also Robbins (2001) points out that because of compulsive rule following, bureaucracy is incapable of dealing with employees facing problems that have not previously been encountered so that the relevant rules are not yet available. This situation prevents employees from being innovative and thus, employees are not capable of implementing more appropriate solutions to deal with emerging problems.

McDonald (1995) believes that the practice of paying individuals based on the position held (paying for the job and not the person) is a disadvantage of bureaucracy, which persuades people to become extremely defensive about their jobs and to resist flexible deployment. He also thinks that a bureaucratic business organisation will lose its focus on the customers who provide its revenue; and in government, a bureaucracy normally loses its focus of serving the taxpayer citizens who provide its revenues (McDonald, 1995).

The literature also criticises bureaucracy for creating a large distance from the top to the bottom of the organisation. This situation results in promotions to a higher level in the chain of command as the essential reward for performance. This will encourage employees to focus too much on power issues and will result in a decline of organisational intelligence (Gifford, 1992).

Bureaucracy has been identified as having low standards of consumer service, “being unresponsive to customer complaints”, and demonstrating a lack of capability to reverse decisions, and an inclination towards “turning down consumer requests” (Prendergast, 2003, p. 930). Critics claim that in a bureaucratic system bureaucrats are mostly governed by rules “rather than using their own discretion” in an appropriate way (Prendergast, 2003, p. 930), which implies a decrease of innovation in organisations. Some scholars even regard bureaucracy as a problem that must be cured by debureaucratisation (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), and by the replacement of bureaucracy using a new form of public government called entrepreneurial governance that empowers citizens by pushing control into the community and away from the bureaucracy, and that focuses on performance (outcomes). These kinds of organisations are described as being focused on their goals (not their rules), “earning money rather than spending it”, treating clients as customers, who have choice; and preventing problems before they emerge. They practise decentralised authority via participatory management, and prefer market mechanisms rather than bureaucratic mechanisms, and serve public, private and voluntary sectors to solve the problem of their society (Osborne and Gaebler 1992; pp. 19-20). Entrepreneurial management is believed to be the dominant paradigm in contemporary organisations (Moe, 1994, p.116).

Some others regard a mistranslation of Weber’s text into English as a reason for a misunderstanding about Weber’s bureaucracy (Gajdushek, 2003). Gajdushek (2003) argues that Weber’s term rationality is not equivalent to efficiency, but it includes uncertainty reduction regarding organisational procedures and outputs, which might in several cases possess many advantages, when efficiency is not the prime goal. Another reason for the existence of a negative view of bureaucracy is that in some texts bureaucracy has been frequently used as a synonym of government, and deficiencies of the democratic process usually have been regarded as bureaucratic inefficiency (Gajdushek, 2003, p. 705).

But the above mentioned critical view on bureaucracy is contradicted by another literature that emphasises the benefits of bureaucracy, and that argues that critics of bureaucracy are mistaken (du Gay, 2000). According to the original model of bureaucracy, in the strictly bureaucratic administration, “precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs are raised to the optimum point” (Gajdushek, 2003; Weber, 1946, p. 214). In the positive view towards bureaucracy, it is regarded as a carrier of formal rationalisation that is associated

with the defects of large organisations applying rules to cases (du Gay, 2000). In this view bureaucracy has valuable achievements such as ensuring fairness, justice, and equality in the treatment of citizens (du Gay, 2000, p. 2). This idea argues that there is no universal managerial approach, and even if approaches like that exist, “they are always applied in a specific context, including a value context” which is related to organisational objectives (du Gay, 2000, p. 2). Such a view points out that significant differences between the value context of public organisations, which are affected by the political environment and by other organisations, prevent the types of conduct in public organisations associated with those found in commercial (private) organisations. In the government bureaucracy managers deal with broader activities including framing legislation, dealing with other governments, and other aspects of broader term administration. Also we should not neglect the importance of continuous provision of public services, which are not offered by private organisations (du Gay, 2000, p.138). In democratic countries, the legitimacy of the public bureaucracy as an institution of government comes from its institutional role via elections (du Gay, 2000, p.139). du Gay (2000, p.140) claims that political acts are not necessarily efficient towards the public interest; and views the role of the public bureaucracy as a constitutional and ethico-political role and not as a simple managerial role. This legitimacy continues by means of the permanent public service system, which is independent from political desires and opinions. In this view, public bureaucrats are “servants of the public interest” who work to supply a service whose full value equals what it costs (du Gay, 2000. p. 140). Thus, public bureaucrats have ethical responsibilities of the public interest that is more complex than meeting only the bottom line of commercial management. Philosophical critics regard “the lack of distinction between personal and collective morality” as a failure of bureaucracy; and managerial critics see bureaucracy as being incapable of conducting the essential action required for the survival and growth of organisations in currently dislocated environments, because according to these critics bureaucracy is unable to adequately perform its ethico-political role. But du Gay (2000) claims that criticisms of bureaucracy by philosophical and managerial/political reformists, that believe that bureaucracy has failed to take account of morality, are mistaken. du Gay (2000, p.146) points out that bureaucracy may be seen as inefficient in terms of new public management, but representative democracy still needs some of the key features of bureaucracy, such as the possession of enough skill, status and independence, being impartially responsible, and being energetic to achieve public purposes, as necessary conditions of a good government. Additionally, many organisations are operating as bureaucratic organisations (Myers, 1985). While solving problems related to bureaucracy might be difficult, a constructive level of bureaucracy is required to sustain cohesion and stay

focused on the long-term goals of the organisation (Myers, 1985). Some believe that bureaucracy is appropriate and effective for some purposes and for the carrying out of some functions, but not for some others (Waldo, 1980). This view is supported by the literature that shows the positive effect of bureaucracy in schools. For example, Smith and Meier (1994) concluded that a reduction of bureaucracy in schools might result in diminishing performance, because in this situation the number of available experts to address administrative matters is fewer. On the other hand, Bohte (2001) found bureaucracy to be negatively related to student performance across different grade levels in school.

Given both these above-mentioned perspectives of bureaucracy, it is clear that one should not consider the concept as good or bad in absolute terms. Every social phenomenon has some advantages and some disadvantages, and based on the other environmental factors in a specific period of time, one of those aspects (positive or negatives) might be more visible. Therefore, we must not judge bureaucracy in completely positive or entirely negative terms. A proper judgement about bureaucracy can only be made on the basis of empirical research, and findings may vary depending on the research context. For example, in this study, two different organisational cultures (e.g. public and private sector) in an Iranian context, have been explored, and this particular context might produce different results regarding the effects of bureaucracy from what has previously been found in other contexts (e.g. Western societies).

In fact, the data analysis in this study shows that bureaucracy is beneficial, because it moderates the effect of conflict. This finding is interesting because there is no literature on the effect of bureaucracy on conflict. According to the data analysis in Chapters Five and Six, personal conflict was found between managers in the private company, the existence of which resulted in the reduction of knowledge sharing in the private company. In the public company, because of a high level of bureaucracy, conflict between managers was transformed into departmental rivalry. Although departmental rivalry resulted in less knowledge sharing between departments, it could not affect knowledge sharing by individuals with the company. As a feature of bureaucracy in the public company, its suggestion system was regarded as a parallel decision-making system that enabled workers to declare their ideas and get their rewards, regardless of the existing rivalry between their departments. Therefore, the study produces the following finding:

Finding number two: Bureaucracy moderated the effect of conflict on knowledge sharing by transforming what was present as personal conflict in the absence of bureaucracy into inter-departmental conflict.

7.4.1 Implications of the Research Finding

In order to discuss the implications of the research findings, I refer to Table 7-2 that is based on the literature, which summarises the weaknesses and benefits of bureaucracy at three possible levels, in terms of not enough bureaucracy, enough bureaucracy, and too much bureaucracy in organisations. These three possible levels of bureaucracy affect different outcomes related to the features of bureaucracy, and thus differently affect conflict in the organisation. For example, at one extreme in the absence of an impersonal bureaucracy, decisions are made based on friendships, which results in personal conflicts, whereas at the other extreme in a highly bureaucratized organisation there is a little sense of community. But in a proper level of bureaucracy, there is a balance between a focus on personal relationships and the requirements of the task, and thus there is less possibility for conflict.

Regarding rationality, in the low level of bureaucracy, decisions are not based on rules, but are based on personal taste, leading to personal conflicts. In a highly bureaucratic organisation, rules are inflexible, which results in less innovation. In a proper level of bureaucracy, besides respecting rules, there is some freedom for intelligent variation of these.

In a situation of not enough bureaucracy, the appointment of individuals to positions is based on relationships that result in the appointment of non-expert people based on friendships. This would be regarded as unfair by some organisational members, and would lead to personal conflict. Although a highly bureaucratic appointment process intends to be fair it is a time-consuming process. A proper level of bureaucracy provides a sufficiently rigorous selection system to enable a fair choice of expert candidates in a manner that is not too time-consuming. Regarding the lack of attention to workers in organisations, this is a disadvantage of bureaucracy, but it is different for the three levels of bureaucracy. For example, the lack of a system for getting ideas in the absence of bureaucracy (e.g. lack of a suggestion system in the private company) results in workers' dissatisfaction. A slow process of feedback in a highly bureaucratic system (e.g. feedback to suggestion makers by the suggestion system in the public company) also results in workers' dissatisfaction. But besides the effect of slow feedback from that suggestion system, it was still regarded as an important facilitator of knowledge sharing in the public company. A proper level of bureaucracy (e.g. successful bureaucracy) can be described as the existence of a system that is neither too slow nor too rigid.

With reference to Table 7-2, one should not look at the social phenomenon of bureaucracy in an absolutely positive or negative manner, but instead consider both the weaknesses and the benefits of bureaucracy. This study's finding is evidence that bureaucracy has some strengths and weaknesses, according to its implications for organisations (e.g. in terms of whether it is not enough, enough, or too much). For example, in the public company bureaucracy emerged in the form of the suggestion system and at the same time departmental rivalry affected knowledge sharing between departments. But despite this, a suggestion system resulted in a high level of knowledge sharing by workers with the public company. Therefore, bearing in mind that bureaucracy has some disadvantages, in some circumstances (e.g. some cultural and environmental contexts) there are opportunities for using the advantages of bureaucracy in organisations. In the case of this research, the advantage of bureaucracy was its facilitating role regarding workers' knowledge sharing with the company that benefited both workers and the company.

7.5 Finding Number Three

This finding is related to the effect of national culture on organisational culture and also to the positive effect of bureaucracy in the Iranian context. The autocratic nature of Iranian culture is a common feature in both companies, and this is the reason for the same formal relationship between managers and workers in these two companies despite their having two different organisational cultures. Because of the autocratic Iranian national culture, middle managers are likely not to respect workers, but to respect hierarchy in organisations. The knowledge-based view suggests that hierarchy diminishes the value of higher-level decisions, because "higher-level decisions are dependent upon immobile lower-level knowledge" (Grant, 1996, p. 377). Therefore, formal relationships reduce knowledge sharing. According to the data analysis in Chapters Five and Six, the relationships between managers and workers were found to be formal in both the private and the public company, and this may lead to a reduction in workers' knowledge sharing in both companies.

Although the dominant notion in the literature is that the middle managers' role is a facilitating role regarding beneficial activities in organisations, in an Iranian autocratic culture with high power distance, middle managers are likely to play a different role regarding facilitation of knowledge sharing in organisation. The autocratic culture leads middle managers to abuse their power and to the risk that workers might suffer from this abuse.

Table 7-2: Characteristics of three types of possible bureaucracy in organisations

Benefits / Weaknesses	Not enough bureaucracy Option 1	Enough bureaucracy Option 2	Too much bureaucracy Option 3
Impersonality	Decisions based on friendship result in personal conflict	Balance between focus on relationship and task	Little sense of community
Rationality	Decisions not based on rules result in personal conflict	Some freedom for intelligent variation of rules	Rules inflexibly applied
Meritocracy /Fairness	Appointment of non-expert people leads to personal conflict	Sufficient rigour in selection system to enable choice of expert candidates	Appointment of people to positions has a time consuming process
Feedback	No feedback system	Balance between caution and speed	Decisions take too long (slow feedback)
Departmental conflict	Lack of proper distinction between departments and their duties results in more conflict	Sufficient distinction between departments, but not too compartmentalised system	Many rules preventing departments communicating with each other, lead to workers' dissatisfaction
Lack of attention to customer / worker	Lack of a system for getting ideas results in workers' dissatisfaction	Existence of system that is neither too slow nor rigid (e.g. successful bureaucracy)	Slow process of suggestions results in workers' dissatisfaction
Lack of innovation	Working based on experimentation, with not enough rules and documentation	Balance between rules and experimentation	Too many rules, not enough experimentation

One important aspect of middle managers' abuse of their power that was identified in this study's data was middle managers' acting as a barrier to knowledge sharing in the private company. As found in Chapter Five, in the private company middle managers did not facilitate workers' knowledge sharing with the company, but instead they acted as an obstacle to the practice. Because of the lack of a parallel system to facilitate their knowledge sharing in the private company, workers' knowledge sharing with the company was reduced to a very low level.

It was also concluded in Chapter Six that both workers and managers in the public company regarded the suggestion system as the main facilitator of workers' knowledge sharing with the company. Although bureaucracy has disadvantages, it can be used in an enabling way through the establishment of reliable systems (e.g. system for knowledge sharing) that can have a protective role in terms of inhibiting managers' abuse of their power. Two competing views about bureaucracy have previously been discussed in this chapter, and hence, the argument is not repeated again.

Although the existence of formal relationships was a barrier to knowledge sharing in the public company, this study showed that a bureaucratic knowledge-sharing reward system overcomes the drawback represented by the formal manager-worker relationship, and the data indicated that this raises knowledge sharing to a high level.

The reasons for formal hierarchical relationships and their negative effects on workers' knowledge sharing in the two companies come from Iranian national culture, which includes the dimension of autocracy and distrust of rulers by the ruled.

The dimension of Iranian culture that relates to trust can be characterised as distrust of people outside of the family such as at work (as a result of strong family ties, and being protective of children) and as distrust of central authorities (as a result of individualism). The experience of autocratic monarchies in Persian history has led to a reduction of Iranian people's trust in their rulers and in any collective systems in their society (Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003). Family structure is another factor in Iranian culture that reduces trust in collective entities, because individuals have learned to distrust people outside the family, and when they enter the organisation they do not trust others, especially when workers view middle managers as distrustful and distant.

In view of what has been said in the above statement, it can be seen that the two companies have the same manager-worker relationships as a result of their place within a common national culture. However, they have two different organisational cultures and different levels of bureaucracy, and this resulted in different levels of knowledge sharing in the two organisations, hence pointing to the following finding:

Finding number two: The existence of a bureaucratic system reduces the effect of formal hierarchical relationships, and the lack of a bureaucratic system increases the effect of formal hierarchical relationships, leading to middle managers becoming a barrier to knowledge sharing.

7.5.1 Implications of the Research Findings

This research finding has implications for theories of bureaucracy. Although as previously mentioned in this chapter, the literature is predominantly negative towards bureaucracy; my finding is evidence that bureaucracy has positive effects under the conditions represented by Iranian culture. The bureaucratic structure of the public company has reduced the negative effect of distant, distrustful and formal relationships between workers and managers, but the lack of bureaucracy in the private company resulted in more face-to-face interaction in the private company, and intensified the negative effects of distant, distrustful and formal relationships between workers and managers.

It has been suggested that incentives are necessary for intra-organisational knowledge sharing (Gupta and Guindarajan, 2000). The two companies are different in terms of the incentives they offer for knowledge sharing. In the public company, extrinsic rewards (e.g. money) have caused high levels of knowledge sharing by workers with the company. But, in the private company, despite workers' high inclination to share knowledge, the lack of a system or incentives (e.g. monetary reward) for knowledge sharing, and also existing obstacles (e.g. middle managers' action as barrier) resulted in a low level of knowledge sharing.

In the public company bureaucracy positively affected both workers and organisation. For example, the existence of bureaucracy (e.g. suggestion system as a parallel decision-making system) protected workers from the over-use of power by autocratic middle

managers, and let them benefit from financial rewards paid by the suggestion system for their knowledge sharing. The public company also benefited from knowledge shared with the suggestion system through decreasing costs in the production processes with a consequent improvement in competitive advantage.

7.6 Limitations

In this section the limitations that might constrain the generalisability of the study's findings, which are the result of research in two companies that are very different in terms of age, size, and ownership, are considered. The researcher has tried to diminish the effect of different factors such as miscommunication and directive questions during data collection. For example, the data is uninfluenced data, because, the semi-structured interview was employed and that did not limit participants in terms of their answers. They were not given a set of options from which to choose, and hence, the instrument allowed for undirected responses from informants. Moreover, more detailed questions were presented during the interview in order to gain as much clarification as possible. The primary data analysis revealed that answers were mostly critical of managers, a fact that indicated that interviewees did not feel any pressure to provide politically correct answers. To prevent any subjective bias in the analysis, categories already identified in the literature (e.g. feeling of belongingness for identification, and categories of needs satisfied by identification), were adopted. However despite the efforts mentioned, some limitations remain, which might affect the generalisability of the findings.

1. This study has been carried out in one particular culture (Iranian culture), therefore the question is whether the findings are generalisable to cultures outside Iran. The answer is yes, because with reference to the GLOBE Project (House et al, 2004) scores related to dimensions of culture for the Iranian sample are mostly around the average scores of the GLOBE, and also close to the average of clusters such as in South Asia and Anglo countries (see Table 2-3 in Chapter Two). As a result, despite its unique features, Iranian culture is in the middle and therefore, Iran can be a good laboratory for countries of those clusters (e.g. the US in the Anglo cluster, and Malaysia in the South Asia cluster).

2. Another associated question might be 'is the identification process similar across cultures?' At the society level, the answer is yes, because for example, in the world cup

football tournament, all of the football fans from different countries identify with their national football teams in the same way (e.g. using national flag, wearing their favourite team cloth, and drawing the flag on their face, or colouring their hair like their flag).

The remaining question is whether the identification process is the same in organisations as in the associated society. In reference to the findings in this study, the identification process in the two Iranian companies was the same in some ways. Firstly, it was affected by the paternalistic Iranian national culture and also by the national economy. The reason for this claim is that in both companies, workers targeted the CEO as the person who is at the top, as the effect of paternalistic feature of national culture ('the father at the top of the family'). Workers' identification in both companies also satisfied their safety needs, because their identification (or dis-identification) was based on the CEO's decision regarding their safety needs (predictable income for their families). For example, in the private company workers identified with the CEO because of his decision to establish the factory in their local area and thereby provide jobs for them. On the other hand, workers in the public company dis-identified with the CEO because of his decision about cancelling their permanent contract that made their jobs insecure. Therefore, although the identification process within organisations can be affected by national culture, the result of this process depends on the internal environment of each organisation. This is illustrated by the study's findings, which showed that in the same national culture and the same industry, the result was different in the two companies (identification with the CEO in the private company, and dis-identification with the CEO in the public company).

3. The three findings explained earlier in this chapter are the result of research in only one industry (the car industry). Are those findings generalisable outside the car industry? The answer is that because the car industry is a knowledge-intensive industry with high complexity, those findings can be generalised to other complex, knowledge-intensive industries. The generalisability of these findings in industries with different levels of knowledge intensity is a question that must be answered in future empirical research.

4. Socio-political environment: Does identification work in different ways in different socio-political environments? The answer is yes, because the environment generates different levels of needs in different societies and in turn it affects the level of identification with those objects that facilitate satisfaction of the needs for identifiers. For

example, in the private company, workers identified with the CEO because he had established the factory in their local area and because he had provided a job for them. Also middle managers in the private company acted as a barrier to knowledge flow, because they viewed it as a threat to their position. In the public company some of the workers who dis-identified with the CEO, mentioned the reason as the CEO's decision to cancel their previously permanent employment contract and that reduced their job security as temporary contract workers.

5. This research has investigated knowledge sharing as behaviour, not the actual knowledge being shared, or the types of knowledge being shared. Because of the time limitation for the PhD research as a very focused and narrow study, only the study of behaviour has been explored, and the specific type of knowledge or content and the value of the knowledge being shared remains to be investigated. Knowledge sharing behaviour itself is a complex and time-consuming topic to study; and there was not enough time or space to deal with another difficult topic such as the types of knowledge in this research.

7.7 Future Research Agenda

The following are the suggested future directions for research that will further explain and clarify this particular research topic.

1. Future research is needed to investigate the generalisability of the first finding 'Identification is not associated with performance (as measured by knowledge sharing)' for the other representatives of performance in the organisations, such as citizenship behaviour, and extra effort for reaching organisational goals.
2. The research should be replicated in other cultural/socio-political environments or other industries to see whether the result will be the same.
3. The research should be replicated with the focus on other types of performance (i.e. not knowledge sharing) in the same cultural environment.
4. The research should be replicated in non-manufacturing organisations such as service organisations.
5. There are several possibilities for future research on the associations that may exist between different levels of identification and the two types of reward system studied here. Three possible levels of identification include low, medium, and high levels, and two types of reward system include formal and informal. Two instances out of six possible combinations of those two elements, have been studied in this research project, including

high identification with the CEO and an informal reward system, and low identification with the CEO and a formal reward system. Four other possible areas for future research include: high identification with formal reward system, low identification with informal reward system; and medium identification with both formal and informal reward systems.

6. This study has explored the association between individual performance and individual identification with the organisation, using the CEO as a symbol who represented the organisation. There is an opportunity for future research to investigate group performance and group identification in the same cultural environment.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter some concluding remarks are offered regarding the answers provided by the study, to the research questions contained in Chapter Two. It will be made clear how the findings answer the research questions.

8.1 The Main Question

The research aim was to investigate the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing in private and public sectors of the Iranian car manufacturing industry, in order to address the main question: 'what is the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing in the two companies?'

The importance of this question is seen in the fact that it relies upon a study of Iranian culture, which has not received much scholarly attention, and which has emerged in that work that has been undertaken, as a unique culture. The other reason is the lack of empirical research on the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing in the Iranian environment. The complexity of the auto industry increases the importance of research in knowledge management in this industry. Because of the lack of research in knowledge management in Iran, this research was a new study in that area, and the Iranian auto industry was chosen, so that the results can be applicable to plans related to knowledge sharing behaviour as a key factor in increasing the competitive advantage of the auto industry and other knowledge-intensive industries. The transition of the Iranian auto industry from being a government monopoly to becoming a part of the private sector has created an environment for private investment in the Iranian auto industry, and has increased the importance of comparative research in these two sectors (private and public sector) within it.

8.2 How Was the Question Answered?

In order to answer the research question, two car manufacturers in Iran (one private, one public) were selected as research sites. An interview structure was designed to include two main parts: organisational culture and knowledge sharing. Six lecturers inside and outside Aston University commented on this. I used a translated version of the interview structure in the Farsi language for data collection. Two Iranian colleagues in English literature at Birmingham University commented and confirmed this version. Semi-structured questions covered aspects of organisational culture that includes 'values, norms, and practices' (De

Long, 1997). In terms of values ('what an organisation's member believes is worth doing or having') individuals were asked for their viewpoints regarding different factors such as their feeling about the existing situation and their opinion on how it should be. For the norms ('shared beliefs about how people in the organisation should behave') participants were asked about the desired state of individuals' behaviour in the company (e.g. co-workers and managers). Questions were asked about existing practices ('the formal or informal routines used in the organisation to accomplish work') in detail. For example, practices included the appraisal and reward system, employment, training, idea generation, and conflict resolution. Questions about knowledge sharing were asked in general and also in detail. Those questions related to ways of encouraging knowledge sharing in the company, the existence or lack of a system for knowledge sharing, the different aspects of knowledge sharing behaviour (e.g. withholding knowledge, sharing knowledge for self-interest, showing-off), facilitators of and barriers to knowledge sharing in the company, and the reasons why knowledge sharing was or was not effective. Data was gathered using semi-structured interviews that lasted about minimum 30 minutes for workers, and a maximum of 95 minutes for managers (in average 49 minutes per person). About 70 hours of audio-taped data was transcribed into 1,700 pages in Farsi handwriting. After consulting two business professors with previous experience of foreign fieldwork, six of these transcripts were translated into English in full in order for my supervisor to check them. I used grounded theory, which is a qualitative inductive method, for data analysis, by iterating between data and theory and by identifying and linking themes emerging from the data and relating these to the literature in order to spot the few items that were novel and theoretically significant.

8.3 How Did the Research Findings Answer the Questions?

Data were analysed in Chapters Five and Six and resulted in three main findings:

Finding number one: Identification is not associated with performance (as measured by knowledge sharing).

Finding number two: Bureaucracy moderates the effect of conflict on knowledge sharing by transforming personal conflict into inter-departmental conflict.

Finding number three: The existence of a bureaucratic system reduces the effect of formal hierarchical relationships, and the lack of a bureaucratic system increases the effect of formal hierarchical relationships, leading to middle managers becoming a barrier to knowledge sharing.

Finding number one indirectly answered the main research question ('what is the relationship between organisational culture and knowledge sharing in the two companies?'). According to finding number one, it can be concluded that organisational culture plays a mediating role between identification and knowledge sharing, so that organisational culture influences identification and its effects. For example, the existence of a suggestion system in the public company is a part of organisational culture (defined as practices) that has facilitated performance and that has resulted in a high level of performance (defined as knowledge sharing) by individuals who displayed a medium level of identification with the organisation and dis-identified with the CEO. This finding can be explained by the facilitating role of the identification target. If the identification target is not in a position to be able to facilitate performance by the identifying person, high identification will not lead to high performance. The identification target, with whom workers identified, was the CEO in the private company. However, because of structural and financial limitations the private company was unable to establish a suggestion system. Consequently, despite workers' high inclination to share knowledge with the private company, the lack of a system made knowledge sharing difficult, so that workers did not share knowledge at a high level. On the other hand, if the identification target is in a position to be able to facilitate performance by the identifying person, even dis-identification will still not prevent high performance. The identification target in the public company was the CEO, with whom workers dis-identified. But because of easy access to financial resources (e.g. bank loan) the public company was able to establish a suggestion system that pays a financial reward for workers' suggestions. Workers disidentified with the CEO, thus it would be expected that workers would display low positive performance (e.g. low knowledge sharing with the company), but because of financial rewards and workers' safety needs, which can be satisfied by that reward, they share knowledge at a high level via the suggestion system with the company. As a result, organisational culture affects knowledge sharing by mediating between identification and performance. In the case of dis-identification with the CEO of the public company, if organisational culture practices (e.g. suggestion system) are supportive of knowledge-sharing behaviour, they will lead to high knowledge sharing even by those workers who have a lower level of identification with the company. In the case of high identification with the CEO and the private company, if organisational culture practices are not supportive of knowledge sharing, they will lead to low knowledge sharing even by those workers who have high identification with the company, and who have high positive values (e.g. inclination to share knowledge) regarding knowledge sharing with the company.

Finding number one directly answered the research question 'What is the association between identification and knowledge sharing in the two companies?' The answer was that there was no association between identification and knowledge sharing in Iranian companies, because in the private company workers identified at a high level with the CEO, but their knowledge sharing with the company was at a low level. On the other hand, workers in the public company dis-identified with the CEO, but shared knowledge with the company at a high level.

Finding number one also answered another research question ('Do workers behave differently with regard to knowledge sharing in private versus public companies?'). The answer found by my research was yes, because of the existence of different organisational culture in the two companies, workers behaved differently with regard to knowledge sharing in the two companies. In the public company a bureaucratic culture facilitated knowledge sharing for workers via a suggestion system that paid a financial reward for sharing and encouraged workers to share their knowledge at a high level with the public company. However, in the private company because of the lack of a system as a facilitator, and also because of existing barriers (e.g. middle managers as barrier) despite a high inclination to share knowledge with the company, workers could not share knowledge at a high level.

Finding number two answered the research question 'Does bureaucracy moderate work conflict inside the two organisations?' The answer was yes 'Bureaucracy moderates the effect of conflict on knowledge sharing by transforming what is present as personal conflict into inter-departmental conflict'. An important factor that increases the potential for the creation of conflict was the low level of bureaucracy (e.g. lack of job description for individuals and departments) in the private company. Knowledge is viewed as a focus of conflict, but it leads to personal conflict between managers in the absence of bureaucracy, and to inter-departmental rivalry in the bureaucratic public company.

Finding number three answered the research question 'Does the existence of a suggestion/reward system influence the degree of knowledge sharing in the two organisations?' The answer to this question was yes, because despite the formal and distant relationship between workers and managers in the public company; the existence of a suggestion system was found to be the main facilitator of knowledge sharing by workers with the public company.

The lack of a system for knowledge sharing in the private company not only reduced the level of workers' knowledge sharing with the company, but also because of negative managerial values regarding knowledge sharing, led middle managers to be a barrier to the process. Managers' action as an obstacle to knowledge sharing in the private company was also explained by the next finding.

Another research question that was answered by the third finding was 'As far as the two companies are concerned, are middle managers a barrier to knowledge sharing and can bureaucracy be a means of protecting workers from middle managers' abuse of power?' The answer found by my research is yes, in my case, in the private company in the absence of a bureaucratic system, the effect of a formal relationship between managers and workers was intensified so that this led to middle managers becoming a barrier to knowledge sharing in the private company. But in the public company with a bureaucratic culture, although the autocratic national culture meant that there was the same formal worker-manager relationship, because of the existence of a bureaucratic system (e.g. a suggestion system) in the company for knowledge sharing, regardless of the existing formal relationships, workers shared their knowledge with the company at a high level and benefited from its financial rewards. In other words, a high level of bureaucracy can protect workers from over-use of power by middle managers.

The middle managers' action in the private company can be interpreted as being the result of the company's practices regarding employment. Managers in the private company were employed based on personal relationships, and qualification was not the first priority in selecting them for employment. Because of the smaller size of the private company and also the layout of the departments there was more face-to-face interaction between individuals. As a result, managers' lack of knowledge is likely to become more obvious in small companies (compared to large companies) because small companies have more face-to-face interactions. Therefore, managers try to hide their ignorance via protecting the knowledge flow in the company, and consequently are more resistant to subordinates' new ideas if they fear that such ideas will expose their own ignorance.

The last question that was answered by my research is 'What are the main facilitators of and barriers to knowledge sharing in the two companies?'

This question was answered by identifying different facilitators and barriers in the two companies. As discussed in detail in Chapter Five, in the private company the facilitators of knowledge sharing included employees' inclination towards the practice, the CEO as a facilitator and encourager of knowledge sharing, morning market, perceived usefulness of knowledge sharing by individuals, and friendly relationships between workers. According to the data analysis in Chapter Five, barriers to knowledge sharing in the private company comprised the lack of a system for knowledge sharing, top-down idea generation, conflict between managers and departments, middle managers' action as barrier to knowledge sharing, high unemployment and lack of job security, hiding knowledge for self-interest, sharing knowledge to please superiors. Other barriers identified by the data consisted of nepotism, lack of job description, distance between factory and Head-office, lack of trust in managers by workers, lack of trust in managers by their counterparts, unfair system, formal relationship between managers and workers, perceived harmfulness of knowledge sharing by employees, and licensing as a barrier to knowledge sharing.

As discussed in detail in Chapter Six, facilitators of knowledge sharing in the public company, were identified as: having a system for knowledge sharing, IT infrastructure, training system, job rotation, periodical, friendly relationship between workers, workers' inclination towards knowledge sharing, meetings at managerial levels, and a teamwork culture.

The data showed that barriers to knowledge sharing in the public company consisted of: culture, lack of value for workers' ideas, lack of encouragement for knowledge sharing between individuals, lack of job security, work pressure, lack of time for sharing knowledge, and discrimination between workers. Other barriers in the public company consisted of hiding knowledge for self-interest, stealing ideas, sharing knowledge to please superiors, showing off by knowledge sharing, and segregated planning by departments.

As the last statement, my study on these two Iranian companies revealed that the organisational culture of both enterprises was affected by the Iranian national culture, and that this resulted in some similarities between the two organisations (e.g. formal relationship between managers and workers); but the study also identified two different organisational cultures that affected the knowledge-sharing behaviour of workers in the two companies differently.

For example, the level of bureaucracy (e.g. existence or lack of a suggestion system) was identified by the data as an important aspect of organisational culture that affected the knowledge-sharing behaviour of workers in the two companies. The existence of a bureaucratic suggestion system resulted in a high level of knowledge sharing by workers with the public company, and the lack of such a system resulted in a low level of knowledge sharing by workers with the private company. The existence of bureaucracy also reduced the effect of formal relationships in the public company, and the lack of bureaucracy intensified the effect of formal relationships in the private company, and resulted in middle managers' actions operating as a barrier to workers' knowledge sharing with the private company.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Coding system used for respondents of the private company

Workers Codes:

- 2301 = Office secretary, private company
- 2302 = Sale employee, private company
- 2303 = Security worker 1, private company
- 2304 = Repairman 1, private company
- 2305 = Repairman 2, private company
- 2306 = Reception employee, private company
- 2307 = Employee 1, Finance Department, private company
- 2308 = Employee 2, Finance Department, private company
- 2309 = Worker 1, Painting line, private company
- 2310 = Worker 1, Assembly line, private company
- 2311 = Worker 2, Assembly line, private company
- 2312 = Worker 3, Assembly line, private company
- 2313 = Employee, Production Control Department, private company cases
- 2314 = Security worker 2, private company
- 2315 = Worker, Repair and Maintenance Department, private company
- 2316 = Worker 2, Painting line, private company
- 2317 = Worker 4, Assembly line, private company
- 2318 = Worker 5, Assembly line, private company
- 2319 = Worker 6, Assembly line, private company
- 2320 = Worker 7, Assembly line, private company
- 2321 = Worker, Quality Control Department, private company
- 2322 = Worker, Engineering Department, private company
- 2323 = Worker 3, Painting line, private company
- 2324 = typist, Administrative Department, Private company

Manager's Codes:

- 2101 = the CEO, private company
- 2102 = Manager, Sale and After Sale Department, private company
- 2103 = Manager, Project Department, private company
- 2104 = Manager, Painting Project Department, private company
- 2105 = Manager, Construction Project Department, private company

2106 = Manager, R&D Department, private company
2107 = Boss, Administrative Department, private company
2108 = Boss, Finance Department, private company
2109 = Manager, Trade Department, private company
2110 = Manager, Sale Department, private company
2111 = Manager, After Sale Department, private company
2112 = Consultant of the CEO and directorates, private company
2113 = supervisor, Sale Department, private company
2114 = Manager, Painting Department, private company
2115 = Manager, Production Planning Department, private company
2116 = Factory Manager, private company
2117 = Manager, Administrative Department, private company
2118 = Manager, Finance Department, private company
2201 = Supervisor, Electric and Body Unit Department, private company
2202 = Supervisor, IT Department, private company
2203 = Supervisor, Purchase Order Department, private company
2204 = Supervisor, Trim Department, private company
2205 = Supervisor, Body Fitting Department, private company
2206 = Supervisor, Painting Department, private company
2207 = Foreman, Assembly Line, private company
2208 = Supervisor, Unit Making Department, private company

Appendix B: Coding system used for respondents of the public company

Workers' codes:

- 1301 = Technical expert, Production Department, public company
- 1302 = Shift expert, Assembly line 4, public company
- 1303 = Technician 1, Production Department, public company
- 1304 = Technician 2, Production Department, public company
- 1305 = Office secretary, Production Department, public company
- 1306 = Worker, Final assembly Unit, public company
- 1307 = Worker, car door assembler, public company
- 1308 = Worker, engine assembler, public company
- 1309 = Worker 1, Assembly line, public company
- 1310 = Worker 2, Assembly line, public company
- 1311 = Worker, car glass assembler, public company
- 1312 = Worker, car seatbelt assembler, public company
- 1313 = Worker 3, Assembly line, public company
- 1314 = Worker 4, Assembly line, public company
- 1315 = Worker 5, Assembly line, public company
- 1316 = Worker 6, Assembly line, public company
- 1317 = Worker 7, Assembly line, public company
- 1318 = Worker 8, Assembly line, public company
- 1319 = Technician, Production Engineering Department, public company
- 1320 = Expert, Production Engineering Department, public company

Managers' codes:

- 1101 = Manager, Accident Prevention & Remedy Department, public company
- 1102 = Manager, Painting line 2, public company
- 1103 = Manager, Quality Engineering Department, public company
- 1104 = Manager, Body Making Department 1, public company
- 1105 = Manager, Human Resource Planning Department, public company
- 1106 = Manager, Assembly Lines 4, public company
- 1107 = Boss, Production Department, public company
- 1108 = Manager, Press Engineering Department, public company
- 1109 = the CEO Executive Consultant, public company
- 1110 = Boss, Production Engineering Department, public company

1201 = Supervisor 1, Assembly Line 4, public company

1202 = Supervisor 2, Assembly Line 4, public company

1203 = Foreman 1, Assembly Line 4, public company

1204 = Foreman 2, Assembly Line 4, public company

1205 = Foreman 3, Assembly Line 4, public company

1206 = Foreman 4, Assembly Line 4, public company

1207 = Foreman 5, Assembly Line 4, public company

Appendix C: Open coding sample from private company

Quote	Code	Category	Theme
<p>“What I have seen during this period is a growing trend that we observe that every day we are developing more; we have a growing trend. I think, I mean I feel that I am satisfied that I am working in ZK and I am sure that in the not so far future <u>we will reach our goals</u> and wishes” (2301).</p>	We as description	Feeling of common goal with the company	Identification
<p>“I use my information for the progress of <u>my company</u> ...I dare to say that <u>we</u> have nothing less than similar organisation with 40 years age; but also <u>we</u> have got ahead” (2111).</p>	<p>Ownership</p> <p>We as description</p>	Feeling of belongingness	Identification
<p>“I have a high <u>feeling of responsibility</u> and I think that <u>I have a debt</u> that certainly must be paid, and <u>I will do my endeavour</u> as much as I can, for the progress of the company, and reaching its goals as soon as possible” (2114).</p>	Feeling of commitment	Emotional effect of identification	Identification
<p>“There are some individuals who have some special ideas and <u>they like their ideas to be examined</u> [inclination], but based on their words I conclude that there has not been someone to hear them and use their idea” (2301).</p>	Inclination to share information	Facilitator of information sharing	Information sharing

Quote	Code	Category	Theme
<p>“Certainly, <u>all of the ideas come from managers</u>. I mean managers who are working in the company. May be they ask personnel to get a background of an idea; and finally that idea is proposed by that manager” (2306).</p>	<p>Top-down idea generation</p>	<p>Barrier to information sharing</p>	<p>Information sharing</p>
<p>“I personally like to share my <u>information</u> to everyone who is working with me, but <u>there is no formal manner to say or ask for that</u>. Some of the colleagues may do not do that...lack of rules and regulations in the company regarding information sharing <u>makes it difficult</u>” (2304).</p>	<p>Inclination to share information</p> <p>Lack of system for sharing</p> <p>Creates problem for sharing</p>	<p>Facilitator of information sharing</p> <p>Barrier to information sharing</p>	<p>Information sharing</p> <p>Information sharing</p>
<p>“When information is shared to higher rank, certainly the person who is positioned at that higher rank is benefited, <u>because he has introduced information in his own name</u>.” (2306).</p>	<p>Stealing ideas by managers</p>	<p>Middle managers as barrier to information sharing</p>	<p>Information sharing</p>

Appendix D: Open coding sample from public company

Quote	Code	Category	Theme
<p>“Honestly I have a <u>good feeling of working in IK</u>; because as you know, <u>unemployment is a big problem</u> for young people. I have tried too much to enter IK” (1313).</p>	Feeling of safety	Satisfaction of needs by identification	Identification
<p>“I say that things that make information sharing difficult in IK, are some arguments about for example, environment of <u>bossy behaviour like ‘I am foreman, supervisor’</u>” (1304).</p>	Formal relationship	Barrier to information sharing	Information sharing
<p>“We <u>have suggestion system</u>; you register your idea in this system and then ideas are evaluated in a committee, Approximately all of the <u>employees from different levels propose suggestions</u>” (1301).</p>	Existence of system for sharing information	Suggestion system as facilitator	Information sharing
<p>“In my department friendly relationship exist between workers and <u>they like to share information</u> with each other; this <u>being occupied too much by work</u>; does <u>not let free time</u> for it (information sharing)” (1311).</p>	Work pressure	Barrier to information sharing	Information sharing

Appendix E: Sample of quotations taken from transcripts

Reference	Patterns	Processes	Reasons for hiding	How does hiding happen
307	Low trust among individuals for information sharing in public company	Suggestion system	<p>Reason #1: Individual reward for suggestions</p> <p>Quote #1: “Rewards for suggestions are more individual rewards rather than group reward” (1307-10).</p>	<p>Considering hiding ideas as a natural thing</p> <p>Reason #1: Getting reward for idea</p> <p>Quote #1: “Rewards for suggestions are more individual rewards, then I think it is natural to get reward for my idea, rather than sharing it with others” (1307-10).</p>
308	Low trust among individuals for information sharing in public company	Suggestion system	<p>Reason #1: Stealing ideas by colleagues</p> <p>Quote #1: “My ideas have been stolen by my colleagues and proposed to suggestion system under their own names” (1308 – 11).</p>	<p>Keeping idea to himself until it is being formally registered</p> <p>Reason #1: to prevent idea stealing by colleagues</p> <p>Quote #1: “I do not share my idea with my colleagues before I register it in suggestion system, to prevent it from stealing” (1308-11).</p>