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## **THE INFLUENCE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT ON HUMANITARIAN AID RESPONSE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of knowledge management on humanitarian aid response

**Statement of the Problem:** The problem addressed in this study is the lack of understanding and utilization of knowledge management practices in the context of humanitarian aid response. This includes challenges related to capturing, organizing, and disseminating timely and relevant information during emergencies, as well as the limited integration of lessons learned and best practices into decision-making processes. Additionally, the problem encompasses the need for effective collaboration and knowledge sharing among various stakeholders involved in humanitarian interventions to enhance overall response outcomes.

**Findings:** The study findings revealed a significant relationship between knowledge management and humanitarian aid response ( $\beta = 0.0351$ ,  $t(158) = 2.184$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ). This suggests that knowledge management practices can have both positive and negative impacts on the effectiveness of humanitarian aid response. The study highlights the need for organizations involved in humanitarian efforts to effectively manage and utilize knowledge to ensure efficient and effective aid delivery.

**Conclusion:** The influence of knowledge management on humanitarian aid response is evident and crucial. The effective utilization of knowledge management practices enables aid responders

to make informed decisions, allocate resources efficiently, and improve overall response outcomes. Moreover, knowledge management fosters organizational learning, facilitates adaptation based on past experiences, and promotes collaboration among stakeholders, leading to enhanced coordination and effectiveness in addressing the needs of disaster-affected communities.

**Recommendations:** Based on the influence of knowledge management on humanitarian aid response, it is recommended that organizations prioritize the development and implementation of comprehensive knowledge management strategies. This includes investing in robust information and communication technology infrastructure, fostering a culture of learning and knowledge sharing, and strengthening partnerships and collaboration with relevant stakeholders. Additionally, organizations should provide training and capacity building programs to enhance the knowledge management skills of aid responders, ensuring effective utilization of knowledge in humanitarian interventions.

**Keywords:** *Knowledge Management, Humanitarian Aid Response, Kenya*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge management (KM) is the systematic process of capturing, organizing, and utilizing knowledge within an organization to improve decision-making and performance (Abubakar, Elrehail, Alatailat & Elçi, 2019). In the context of humanitarian aid response, knowledge management plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian organizations in delivering aid during emergencies and crises. Effective knowledge management ensures that humanitarian organizations have access to timely and relevant information during a crisis. This information includes data on the affected population, their needs, available resources, and logistical challenges. Wang and Wu (2021) mentioned that by leveraging knowledge management tools and systems, aid responders can gather and analyze information efficiently, enabling them to make informed decisions, prioritize interventions, and allocate resources effectively.

KM facilitates knowledge sharing and collaboration among humanitarian actors. During humanitarian responses, multiple organizations, both local and international, are involved (Wilkinson, Logo, Tomalin, Anthony, De Wolf & Kurien, 2022). Knowledge management systems provide platforms for sharing best practices, lessons learned, and successful strategies.

This exchange of knowledge promotes collaboration, avoids duplication of efforts, and allows organizations to build upon each other's experiences to enhance the overall effectiveness of the aid response. It also enables humanitarian organizations to learn from past experiences and adapt their approaches accordingly (Oktari, Munadi, Idroes & Sofyan, 2020). By systematically capturing and analyzing data from previous responses, organizations can identify gaps, successes, and areas for improvement. This learning process enhances the ability of aid responders to adapt their strategies, methodologies, and interventions to better meet the needs of affected communities in future emergencies.

KM contributes to capacity building and training within humanitarian organizations (Shahzad, Qu, Zafar, Rehman & Islam, 2020). By organizing and disseminating knowledge, organizations can develop training programs, guidelines, and manuals to enhance the skills and knowledge of aid workers. This leads to improved preparedness, better decision-making, and more effective on-the-ground responses, ultimately benefiting the affected communities. Adoption of effective knowledge management encourages innovation and the adoption of new technologies in humanitarian aid response (Tsai, Cheng, Tsai, Hung & Chen, 2019). Through sharing information on emerging technologies, successful practices, and innovative solutions, organizations can leverage advancements to enhance their response capabilities. This includes the use of data analytics, remote sensing, mobile applications, and other tools that enable real-time monitoring, rapid assessments, and efficient resource management.

Knowledge management fosters stakeholder engagement and community participation in humanitarian aid response (Holzer, Kocher, Bendahan, Vonèche Cardia, Mazuze & Gillet, 2020). By involving local communities, understanding their knowledge, needs, and capacities, and integrating their perspectives, organizations can ensure that responses are contextually appropriate and sustainable. KM processes facilitate dialogue, collaboration, and active participation, empowering affected communities and improving the overall outcomes of humanitarian interventions. Knowledge management plays a vital role in humanitarian aid response. By facilitating access to information, promoting collaboration, enabling learning and adaptation, supporting capacity building, fostering innovation, and engaging stakeholders, it enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian organizations. Emphasizing knowledge management

in humanitarian efforts is crucial for achieving better outcomes, improving preparedness, and building resilient communities in the face of disasters and crises (Umar, Wilson & Heyl, 2021).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Onyango (2016) conducted study to examine the influence of Knowledge Management capabilities on performance of international humanitarian organizations in Kenya. The study used a self-administered, semi-structured questionnaire to collect primary data from the management team. 62 of the foreign aid groups that Relief online listed as active in Kenya that year were included in the analysis. Descriptive statistics in SPSS 21 and Microsoft Excel were used to examine the gathered quantitative data. The research employed multiple regressions analysis to further examine the data and draw conclusions on the connection between the four KM competencies and the effectiveness of NGOs working to improve the lives of people in Kenya and across the world. The survey concluded that respondents shared the view that knowledge production is the foundation for success in their organizations. Most participants also indicated that their company places a premium on and actively supports their participation in ongoing education, training, and development. Finally, the research shows that KM skills have an impact on the efficiency of Kenya's foreign aid groups. The development of technology, organisational structure, corporate culture, and human resources are all examples of what is meant by knowledge management capabilities. The study's findings and recommendations include that managers in international humanitarian organizations should use tools that help them pinpoint the locations of different types of knowledge inside their organizations. The organization's technology should make it easy for workers in various parts of the world to collaborate on training and education, both now and in the future. This will be bolstered by the appropriate organisational structure, the preexisting company culture, and the employees. In addition, this study suggests that organizations should value and support in-house training and development that emphasizes knowledge production in order to realize their full potential.

Caballero-Anthony, Cook and Chen (2021) conducted study to start filling research gap by examining the use of explicit and tacit knowledge transfer in the humanitarian sector in the Asia-Pacific. This is indicative of the early level of professionalization in the region's sectors and the dependence on tacit knowledge management at this time. It focuses on interviews with major humanitarian professionals and a survey of the current academic literature, with an emphasis on

natural hazards. The results indicate that long-term institutional memory capture in the humanitarian sector is still lacking. Tacit information transmission via interpersonal interactions and informal decision-making is the prevalent knowledge management practice in the area as a whole. This dependence exposes gaps in the institutional memory of humanitarian organizations in the area and poses a challenge to knowledge management at the institutional level. The findings raise important issues regarding how to enhance knowledge management practices across Asia-Pacific humanitarian organizations. Institutional memory may be strengthened in aid groups by readjusting how they handle their tacit and explicit knowledge. Therefore, there is need for a two-pronged strategy that prioritizes both formalizing the recording of past experiences and fostering a culture of sharing inside our institutions.

Harries (2017) performed study to describe a model of knowledge management (KM) designed specifically for humanitarian leaders and managers. Its goal is to improve sector-wide results by giving local teams more agency and bolstering localization efforts. This methodical, management-led strategy offers common vocabulary and vision to steer managers towards energizing the core of their organization's teams who interact directly with local CSOs, government, and individuals impacted by catastrophe. Local CSOs and government may also benefit from the guidelines' practical nature. The approach is an example of management-led knowledge management, as opposed to employee-led knowledge management, which depends on employees to acquire new information and put it to use. It's meant to be 'bottom-up' and boost the response team's efficacy and productivity. The concept is based on the International Organization for Standardization's (ISO) continuous improvement slope and Deming's adaptive Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. It entails systematically gaining knowledge from others, gaining knowledge from inside the project itself, and enhancing the overall industry's performance. To prevent individuals on the team from having to re-invent the wheel, we document best practices using a risk-based methodology.

Boshara, Woods and Elshaiekh (2020) conducted study to investigate the importance of KM support to public health and to the work performance during health emergencies. A qualitative approach was used. Understanding KM and how it may effect job performance during health crises in Sudan is clarified by the study framework's examination of its many facets. Participants are interviewed based on a stratified random sample method that includes both convenience and expert sampling (based on the respondents' familiarity with health crises and indicators). Research

methods can include conducting on-site workplace observations. Improving disaster risk management knowledge base systems, strengthening central emergency expert teams, and providing KM support to the application of health indicators of emergency are just some of the key outcomes of the research findings related to Knowledge management support to public health in humanitarian emergencies.

Archambault, Turcotte, Smith, Abasse, Paquet, Côté and Wiki-Based Knowledge Tool Investigators (2021) conducted study about the design and implementation of a wiki-based knowledge management system for improving emergency response. The majority of organizations encounter significant difficulties in managing knowledge for emergency response, although doing so is critical for the efficacy of responses. Members of the organization should pool their resources and information to prepare for crises. They also need to be able to acquire the appropriate plans and discuss how to respond to the disaster. This study utilized action research methodologies to conclude that wikis may be used to organize and share information during times of crisis. It also implies that proper training, a culture of sharing information, and a strong match between emergency-response duties and system capabilities are necessary for making the most of a knowledge management system during an emergency.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized a descriptive research design and included a sample of 158 participants from selected NGOs in Kenya. Data collection was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires and the use of interview guides. The collected data was then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The study presented its findings in a comprehensive manner by utilizing tables and graphs, which effectively conveyed the data in a clear and organized manner.

## **FINDINGS**

The study findings revealed a significant relationship between knowledge management and humanitarian aid response ( $\beta = 0.0351$ ,  $t(158) = 2.184$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ). This suggests that knowledge management practices can have both positive and negative impacts on the effectiveness of humanitarian aid response. The study highlights the need for organizations involved in humanitarian efforts to effectively manage and utilize knowledge to ensure efficient and effective

aid delivery. Knowledge management enables organizations to learn from past experiences and continuously improve their humanitarian aid response. The findings revealed that knowledge management practices, such as capturing lessons learned and sharing best practices, contributed to organizational learning and the ability to adapt strategies based on previous experiences. This iterative learning process enhances the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions and enables organizations to respond more efficiently in future crises.

## **CONCLUSION**

The influence of knowledge management on humanitarian aid response is significant and positive. Through access to timely and relevant information, knowledge management enables aid responders to make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively, resulting in more targeted and efficient aid delivery. Knowledge management facilitates learning from past experiences and continuous improvement, allowing organizations to adapt their strategies based on lessons learned, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions. Moreover, knowledge management promotes collaboration and coordination among different stakeholders involved in humanitarian aid response. By sharing knowledge and best practices, organizations can foster better communication and coordination, leading to improved efficiency and effectiveness in addressing the needs of affected communities. Additionally, knowledge management contributes to capacity building and knowledge transfer within organizations, equipping aid workers with the necessary skills and knowledge to respond effectively to emergencies.

The impact of knowledge management on humanitarian aid response extends beyond organizational boundaries. It empowers local communities by engaging them in the decision-making process, incorporating their knowledge and perspectives, and ensuring that responses are contextually appropriate and sustainable. This participatory approach strengthens the overall outcomes of humanitarian interventions and builds resilient communities in the face of disasters and crises. To harness the full potential of knowledge management in humanitarian aid response, organizations need to invest in robust knowledge management systems, establish effective knowledge sharing mechanisms, and prioritize learning and collaboration. By doing so, humanitarian organizations can enhance their preparedness, response capabilities, and overall outcomes, ultimately making a positive impact on the lives of disaster-affected populations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Humanitarian organizations should develop comprehensive knowledge management strategies that outline clear objectives, processes, and tools for capturing, organizing, and disseminating knowledge. These strategies should include mechanisms for data collection and analysis, sharing best practices and lessons learned, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders. By having a structured approach to knowledge management, organizations can optimize their ability to respond effectively to humanitarian crises. It is essential to foster a culture of learning within humanitarian organizations. This can be achieved by promoting a mindset that values continuous improvement and encourages knowledge sharing among staff members. Organizations should provide training and development opportunities that focus on knowledge management skills and techniques. Additionally, creating platforms for sharing success stories, lessons learned, and innovative approaches can foster a learning environment that supports better decision-making and enhances humanitarian aid response.

To facilitate effective knowledge management, humanitarian organizations should invest in robust information and communication technology infrastructure. This includes implementing systems for data collection, storage, and analysis, as well as establishing secure platforms for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Embracing emerging technologies such as cloud computing, data analytics, and mobile applications can further enhance the speed and efficiency of knowledge management processes. Collaboration among humanitarian organizations, local communities, governments, and other stakeholders is crucial for effective knowledge management in humanitarian aid response. Organizations should actively seek partnerships and establish networks that promote knowledge sharing, joint learning, and coordination. Strengthening relationships with academic institutions, research organizations, and technology providers can also foster innovation and ensure access to the latest knowledge management tools and methodologies.



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