

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

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**EXTENT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL
WORK CENTERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Obseg in učinkovitost managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Republiki Sloveniji

Povzetek

Doktorska disertacija obravnava področje managementa znanja v socialnem delu. V gospodarstvu 21. stoletja, ki temelji na znanju, nenehno rasteta število raziskav in pomen managementa znanja. Med drugim je danes znanje že pripoznano kot kritičen vir za uspešno delovanje organizacij. Tako je tudi management znanja opredeljen kot eden od najpomembnejših dejavnikov, ki so koristni in pomembni za vse organizacije, ne glede na to, ali delujejo v javnem ali zasebnem sektorju. Čeprav obstaja vrsta raziskav, ki proučuje področje managementa znanja, je le malo znanstvenih del, ki obravnavajo omenjeno tematiko v kontekstu javnega sektorja, in še manj raziskav v okolju socialnega dela.

Nekatere zadnje raziskave so sicer prispevale h globini našega razumevanja managementa znanja v javnem sektorju in socialnem delu, vendar je področje še vedno premalo raziskano in v praksi premalo izkoriščeno. Z dozorevanjem področja managementa znanja raziskovalci razvijajo bolj kompleksno razumevanje pojavov z obravnavanjem različnih organizacijskih kontekstov in uporabo različnih raziskovalnih pristopov. Kljub temu pa je v literaturi še vedno prisoten primanjkljaj ustrezne vsebinske razprave o managementu znanja v socialnem delu. Zato obstajajo klici raziskovalcev, ki težijo k temu, da se doseže tudi teoretični napredek na področju managementa znanja v javnem sektorju in okolju socialnega dela.

Temeljni cilj doktorske disertacije je raziskati povezavo med managementom znanja in socialnim delom na individualni ravni posameznikov, ki so zaposleni v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji.

Da dosežem cilj, odgovorim na zastavljena raziskovalna vprašanja:

RV1: V kolikšni meri se v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji uporablja management znanja?

RV2: Kako učinkovit je obstoječi management znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji?

RV3: Kateri organizacijski dejavniki vplivajo na management znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji?

RV4: Kako lahko management znanja vpliva na razpoložljivost ustrezno usposobljenih socialnih delavcev?

RV5: Ali je opolnomočenje zaposlenih moderator pozitivne povezave med podporo managementa, nagradami in implementacijo znanja, in sicer na način, da je pozitivna povezava močnejša z visokim deležem opolnomočenja zaposlenih?

Doktorska disertacija uporablja pristop mešanih metod k raziskovanju, kjer gre za kombinacijo kvantitativnih in kvalitativnih metod, pri čemer raziskovalec integrira kvantitativne in kvalitativne podatke. Empirično raziskavo izvedem na vzorcu 98 zaposlenih

in devetih intervjuvancev v centrih za socialno delo v Republiki Sloveniji s približno 1.250 zaposlenimi.

Rezultati razkrivajo, da je prisotnost managementa znanja v praksi nizka ali v najboljšem primeru zmerna. Poleg tega nadalje kažejo, da je trenutno management znanja v praksi le zmerno učinkovit. Vpliv organizacijske kulture, organizacijske infrastrukture in organizacijskega vodenja na management znanja je nizek do zmeren. Vpliv organizacijske strukture na management znanja je zmeren. Moj model mnogoterih pojemanj kaže, kako lahko rešitve managementa znanja pozitivno vplivajo na razpoložljivost primerno usposobljenih socialnih delavcev, ki skrbijo za zagotavljanje blagostanja uporabnikov storitev. Rezultati študije podpirajo obstoj statistično značilnega in pozitivnega razmerja med podporo managementa in nagradami pri implementaciji znanja. Opolnomočenje zaposlenih deluje kot moderator v razmerju med nagradami in implementacijo znanja, vendar je interakcijski učinek negativen. Najvišje stopnje managementa znanja se pojavijo takrat, ko je opolnomočenje zaposlenih visoko.

Na podlagi tako kvantitativnih kot kvalitativnih rezultatov razkrivam še vidike delovanja centrov za socialno delo v Sloveniji, ki so se v praksi izkazali kot posebej problematični. Kažejo se predvsem kot prevelik poudarek na hierarhiji, primanjkljaj ustrezno usposobljenih socialnih delavcev, primanjkljaj pri kakovosti storitev, ki so jih deležni uporabniki, premalo uporabljen management znanja v praksi, pomanjkanje časa, grožnja, da so zaposleni preobremenjeni in/ali izgorelost zaposlenih, nezadovoljstvo z obstoječimi informacijsko-komunikacijskimi rešitvami, posebej z novo vpeljanim informacijskim sistemom »Krpan«, zmerno učinkovit management znanja v praksi, primanjkljaj na področju usposabljanj, ki so poleg tega ozko usmerjena na področje socialnega dela, pomanjkanje financ, neprimerna struktura nagrajevanja v organizaciji ter ne nazadnje dejstvo, da reorganizacija centrov za socialno delo ni prinesla želenih rezultatov.

Doktorska disertacija prispeva k znanosti na teoretičnem, praktičnem, metodološkem in empiričnem področju. Gre za prvo raziskavo v slovenskem akademskem prostoru, ki preučuje management znanja v socialnem delu.

Ključne besede: management znanja, socialno delo, management znanja v socialnem delu, znanje, centri za socialno delo.

Extent and Effectiveness of Knowledge Management in Social Work Centers in the Republic of Slovenia

Summary

This doctoral dissertation deals with the relationship between knowledge management and social work. In the 21st-century knowledge-based economy, the importance of knowledge management has grown steadily as has research into this important topic. Knowledge has become an increasingly critical resource for the successful functioning of organizations. Knowledge management has been identified as one of the most essential and beneficial factors for all organizations, both private and public. Although there have been many studies on knowledge management, little research has addressed knowledge management in the context of the public sector and particularly in the social work sector.

There has been some recent research that has added depth to our understanding of knowledge management in the public sector and in social work. However, the area tends to be underexplored and underutilized in general practice. As the field of knowledge management matures, researchers are developing a more complex understanding of the phenomenon in a range of organizational contexts using different research approaches. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of substantive discussion about knowledge management in social work literature. Moreover, scholars have pointed to the need to theoretically advance the field of knowledge management in the public sector and in social work particularly.

The main goal of the dissertation is to explore the relationship between knowledge management and social work in the case of social work centers in Slovenia at the individual level of employees.

To achieve my goal, the doctoral dissertation will attempt to address and answer the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent is knowledge management used in social work centers in Slovenia?

RQ2: How effective is knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia?

RQ3: Which organizational factors influence knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia?

RQ4: How can knowledge management practices increase the number of available skilled social workers?

RQ5: How does employee empowerment moderate the positive relationship between management support and incentives, and knowledge implementation?

In the doctoral dissertation, I utilize a mixed methods approach, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods that integrates statistical and qualitative data. The empirical research was conducted on a sample of employees from Slovenian social work centers (a total of

approximately 1,250 employees), with the final sample including 98 questionnaires and nine in-depth interviews.

The results suggest that the presence of knowledge management in practice is low or at best moderate in social work centers in Slovenia. Moreover, the results also suggest that knowledge management is only moderately effective in practice. The influence of organizational culture, organizational infrastructure, and organizational leadership on knowledge management is low to moderate. The influence of organizational structure on knowledge management is moderate. The multiple decrement model shows how knowledge management solutions can positively influence the availability of skilled social workers and enhance the wellbeing of social work users. Study results indicate the existence of a significant and positive relationship between knowledge management implementation and management support and incentives. Employee empowerment also acts as a moderator in the relationship between incentives and knowledge management implementation, but the interaction term is negative. The highest levels of knowledge management implementation occur when employee empowerment is also high.

The combined results of the quantitative and qualitative data reveal many problems in the operations of social work centers in Slovenia today. In general, there is too much emphasis placed on hierarchy. What's more, there is a shortage of skilled social workers, a deficit in the quality of services provided to users, underutilized knowledge management practices, lack of time, the accompanying threat of employee overload or burnout, dissatisfaction with existing information-communication technology solutions (and particularly with the newly introduced information system known as Krpan), only moderately effective knowledge management in practice, a low level of training, and training that is narrowly focused on the field of social work, a shortage of financial resources, and an inappropriate incentive structure. The last problem is that the recent reorganization of social work centers in Slovenia did not achieve its stated goals.

This doctoral dissertation offers a theoretical, practical, methodological, and empirical contribution to the field. To my knowledge, it is the first research project in the Slovenian academic area that examines knowledge management in the social work sector.

Key words: knowledge management, social work, knowledge management in social work, knowledge, social work centers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Description of the Narrow Scientific Field	1
Research Topic and Research Questions	3
Definition of the Subject of Study.....	3
Definition of Purpose and Goals	4
Definition of Scientific Research Methods	5
Contribution to the Field of Knowledge	8
Limitations	10
Structure of the Dissertation.....	10
1 LITERATURE REVIEW	12
1.1 Knowledge	12
1.1.1 Explicit Knowledge	15
1.1.2 Tacit Knowledge.....	16
1.1.3 Knowledge in Social Work.....	16
1.2 Knowledge Management.....	17
1.2.1 Knowledge Management Process	19
1.2.2 Knowledge Management Strategy	20
1.2.3 Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning	21
1.2.4 Knowledge Management and Organizational Unlearning.....	24
1.2.5 Knowledge Management and the Learning Organization	24
1.2.6 Knowledge Management and Information Communication Technologies	26
1.2.7 Knowledge Management and Human Resource Management.....	27
1.2.8 Knowledge Management and Organizational Culture and Climate	28
1.2.9 Knowledge Management and Change Management	30
1.2.10 Knowledge Management Benefits	31
1.2.11 Practical Examples of Knowledge Management from the Private Sector.....	32
1.2.12 Practical Examples of Knowledge Management in the Public Sector.....	33
1.2.13 Lessons of Knowledge Management Learned	35
1.2.14 Knowledge Management Challenges	38
1.3 Social Work.....	41
1.3.1 Social Work Definition	41
1.3.2 The Social System in Slovenia	42

1.3.3	Types of Social Organizations in Slovenia	44
1.3.4	Social Work Centers in Slovenia	45
1.3.5	Challenges of Social Work in Slovenia	47
1.4	Knowledge Management in Social Work	49
1.4.1	The Current State of Knowledge Management in the Social Work Sector	49
1.4.2	Examples of Knowledge Management Good Practice in Social Work	51
1.4.3	Benefits of Knowledge Management in Social Work	52
1.4.4	Limitations of Knowledge Management in Social Work	53
1.5	Extent of Knowledge Management	55
1.5.1	Management Responsibility for Knowledge Management	55
1.5.2	Knowledge Creation	57
1.5.3	Knowledge Storage and Retrieval	58
1.5.4	Knowledge Transfer and Knowledge Sharing	59
1.5.5	Knowledge Implementation	61
1.6	Effectiveness of Knowledge Management	63
1.6.1	Public Sector Effectiveness	63
1.6.2	Collaboration in Organizations	64
1.6.3	Communication in Organizations	66
1.6.4	Organizational Learning	67
1.6.5	Organizational Performance	67
1.7	Influences of Organizational Factors on Knowledge Management	69
1.7.1	Influence of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Management	69
1.7.1.1	Commitment to the Organization's Mission	69
1.7.1.2	Impact of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Sharing and Learning ...	70
1.7.1.3	Trust and Collaboration	71
1.7.1.4	Creativity and Innovation	72
1.7.2	Influence of Organizational Infrastructure on Knowledge Management	73
1.7.2.1	Adequacy of Resources for Knowledge Sharing	73
1.7.2.2	Organizational Practices that Enable Knowledge Management	74
1.7.2.3	Adequacy of Information Communication Technology	76
1.7.2.4	Employee Knowledge Related to Information Communication Technologies and Technical Support	76
1.7.2.5	Proactive Knowledge Sharing, Social Networks, and External Education and Training	77

1.7.3	Influence of Organizational Structure on Knowledge Management	79
1.7.3.1	Encouraging Knowledge Sharing	79
1.7.3.2	Empowerment, Hierarchy, Status, Power and Communication Patterns ...	79
1.7.4	Influence of Organizational Leadership on Knowledge Management	82
1.7.4.1	Formal Strategy for Knowledge Management and Alignment with Strategic Vision	82
1.7.4.2	Management Support and Communication for Knowledge Sharing, Learning Opportunities and Efforts to Develop an Efficient Knowledge Sharing System	82
1.7.4.3	Involving Employees in the Decision Making Process	85
1.7.4.4	Employee Empowerment	86
1.7.4.5	Role of Titles, Status and Formality in the Organization	86
1.7.4.6	Workload of Managers	87
1.8	Knowledge Management and the Sustainable Development of Social Work	88
1.8.1	Sustainability of Skilled Social Workers	88
1.8.2	Social Sustainability	88
1.8.3	Social Work Challenges and the Supply of Skilled Social Workers	89
1.9	Moderating Effect of Employee Empowerment on the Relationship of Management Support and Incentives and Knowledge Implementation	91
1.9.1	Management Support and Knowledge Implementation	91
1.9.2	Incentives and Knowledge Implementation	92
1.9.3	Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment	93
2	EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	96
2.1	Mixed Methods Research – Explanatory Sequential Research Design	96
2.2	Used Methodology	97
2.3	Research Design	97
2.4	Quantitative Data - Sample and Data Collection Procedure	98
2.4.1	Respondents and Procedure	98
2.4.2	Respondents and Procedure	100
2.5	Qualitative Data - Sample and Data Collection Procedure	101
2.5.1	Respondents and Procedure	101
2.5.2	Description of the Sample	105
2.6	Measurement Instruments	106
2.7	Control Variables	110

3	RESULTS.....	110
3.1	Ensuring Reliability.....	110
3.2	Ensuring Validity	110
3.3	Normal Distribution of Measures.....	111
3.3.1	Normal Distribution of Measures – Extent of Knowledge Management	111
3.3.2	Normal Distribution of Measures - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management 112	
3.3.3	Normal Distribution of Measures – Influence of Organizational Culture	112
3.3.4	Normal Distribution of Measures – Influence of Organizational Infrastructure 113	
3.3.5	Normal Distribution of Measures – Influence of Organizational Structure	113
3.3.6	Normal Distribution of Measures – Influence of Organizational Leadership .	113
3.3.7	Normal Distribution of Measures – Moderating Effect of Employee Empowerment.....	114
3.4	Descriptive Statistics	114
3.4.1	Descriptive Statistics – Extent of Knowledge Management.....	114
3.4.2	Descriptive Statistics – Effectiveness of Knowledge Management	115
3.4.3	Descriptive Statistics – Influence of Organizational Culture	115
3.4.4	Descriptive Statistics – Influence of Organizational Infrastructure.....	116
3.4.5	Descriptive Statistics – Influence of Organizational Structure.....	116
3.4.6	Descriptive Statistics – Influence of Organizational Leadership.....	117
3.4.7	Descriptive Statistics – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment	117
3.5	Correlation Coefficients	118
3.5.1	Correlation Coefficients – Extent of Knowledge Management.....	118
3.5.2	Correlation Coefficients – Effectiveness of Knowledge Management.....	119
3.5.3	Correlation Matrix of Influencing Factors and Extent of Knowledge Management	119
3.5.4	Correlation Matrix of Influencing Factors and Effectiveness of Knowledge Management	120
3.5.5	Correlation Coefficients – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment	121
3.6	Multiple Linear Regression.....	122
3.6.1	Multiple Linear Regression - Extent of Knowledge Management	122
3.6.2	Multiple Linear Regression - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management	123
3.7	Confirmatory Factor Analysis.....	125

3.7.1	Confirmatory Factor Analysis – Extent of Knowledge Management	125
3.7.2	Confirmatory Factor Analysis – Effectiveness of Knowledge Management ..	126
3.7.3	Confirmatory Factor Analysis – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment	127
3.8	Multiple Decrement Models – Case Study of Female Social Workers in Slovenia	128
3.9	Hierarchical Linear Regression – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment..	133
4	QUANTITATIVE DATA AND QUALITATIVE DATA FINDINGS	135
4.1	Quantitative Data and Quantitative Data Findings	135
4.1.1	Quantitative Data Findings - Extent of Knowledge Management in Social Work Centers	136
4.1.2	Quantitative Data Findings - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management in Social Work Centers	139
4.1.3	Quantitative Data Findings - Influences on Knowledge Management.....	142
4.2	Qualitative Data and Qualitative Data Findings	150
4.2.1	Influence of Organizational Structure on Knowledge Management	150
4.2.1.1	Hierarchy and Knowledge Management	150
4.2.1.2	Decentralization, Flexibility and Knowledge Management	151
4.2.1.3	Employee Involvement in the Decision Making Process and Knowledge Management.....	152
4.2.1.4	Communication Patterns and Top-down Communication and Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management	154
4.2.1.5	Personnel Issues	155
4.2.1.6	Quality of Services for Social Work Users.....	156
4.2.1.7	Additional Employees and Knowledge Management.....	157
4.2.2	Influence of Information-communication Technology on Knowledge Management	159
4.2.2.1	Satisfaction with ICT Systems.....	159
4.2.2.2	Employee Familiarity with Information Communication Technology Systems and Avoidance of Usage	160
4.2.2.3	Attitudes towards the Krpan information system	162
4.2.3	Extent of Knowledge Management	163
4.2.3.1	Definition of Knowledge Management	164
4.2.3.2	Formal vs. Informal Knowledge Management Activities.....	165
4.2.3.4	Perception of the Duration of Time Social Work Organizations Have Been Engaged in Knowledge Management	167

4.2.3.5 Previous Experience and Education of Managers Engaged in Knowledge Management.....	168
4.2.3.6 Management Responsibility for Knowledge Management.....	169
4.2.3.7 Communication of Expectations and Benefits Related to Knowledge Management.....	171
4.2.4 Effectiveness of Knowledge Management	172
4.2.4.1 Overall Effectiveness of Knowledge Management	172
4.2.4.2 Influence of Knowledge Management on Enhanced Collaboration, Enhanced Communication, Enhanced Learning and Enhanced Performance.....	174
4.2.4.3 Financial Results of Knowledge Management	175
4.2.5 Influence of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Management.....	176
4.2.5.1 Social Network of Employees	176
4.2.5.2 Typical Training of Employees	177
4.2.5.3 Training Opportunities Outside the Frame of Social Work.....	179
4.2.5.4 Financial Resources Available for the Operations of Social Work Centers...	181
4.2.5.5 Funding Intended for Knowledge Management in Social Work Centers.....	182
4.2.5.6 Incentives, Rewards and Recognition for Employees	183
4.2.5.7 Importance of Both Financial and Non-financial Incentives.....	185
4.2.5.8 Changes After the Reorganization Process.....	186
4.2.6 Knowledge Management Terminology in Social Work.....	189
4.2.6.1 Terminology and Understanding of (Knowledge) Management	189
4.2.6.1 Could Previous Training Change the Perception of Social Workers Towards Knowledge Management and Management.....	191
4.2.7 Concluding Thought.....	192
5 OVERALL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	193
5.1 Challenges Revealed in Quantitative and Qualitative Phases	193
5.2 Needs Revealed in Quantitative and Qualitative Phases.....	194
5.3 Positive Aspects Revealed in Quantitative and Qualitative Phases	194
5.4 Discussion	194
5.5 Theoretical Contribution	210
5.6 Practical Contribution	212
5.7 Methodological Contribution	215
5.8 Limitations	215
5.9 Future Research.....	216

CONCLUSION.....	218
REFERENCES	222
APPENDICES	2

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1: Explanatory Sequential Design of the Mixed Methods Study of Knowledge Management in Social Work Centers in Slovenia.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Figure 2: Data, Information and Knowledge</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Figure 3: Integrated Knowledge Management Process Model.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Figure 4: Lewin's Change Management Model.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Figure 5: Reorganization of Social Work Centers in Slovenia in 2019</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Figure 6: Conceptual Model of the Relationships Between Management Support, Incentives, Knowledge Implementation and Employee Empowerment.....</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>Figure 7: Transitions To and From Employment for Social Workers.....</i>	<i>128</i>
<i>Figure 8: Interaction Between Process Incentives and Employee Empowerment in Influencing Knowledge Implementation</i>	<i>135</i>

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1: Structure of Interviews in Social Work Centers in Slovenia.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Table 2: Doctoral Dissertation Research Design.....</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>Table 3: Background Information/Profiles of Interviewees</i>	<i>106</i>
<i>Table 4: Measurement Instruments Used in this Doctoral Dissertation</i>	<i>109</i>
<i>Table 5: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Extent of Knowledge Management</i>	<i>111</i>
<i>Table 6: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Table 7: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Influence of Organizational Culture</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Table 8: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Influence of Organizational Infrastructure</i>	<i>113</i>
<i>Table 9: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Influence of Organizational Structure</i>	<i>113</i>
<i>Table 10: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Influence of Organizational Leadership</i>	<i>114</i>
<i>Table 11: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Moderating Effect of Employee Empowerment</i>	<i>114</i>
<i>Table 12: Mean and Standard Deviations – Extent of Knowledge Management.....</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Table 13: Mean and Standard Deviations – Effectiveness of Knowledge Management</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Table 14: Mean and Standard Deviations – Influence of Organizational Culture</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Table 15: Mean and Standard Deviations – Influence of Organizational Infrastructure</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Table 16: Mean and Standard Deviations – Influence of Organizational Structure.....</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Table 17: Mean and Standard Deviations – Influence of Organizational Leadership.....</i>	<i>117</i>
<i>Table 18: Mean and Standard Deviations – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment.....</i>	<i>117</i>
<i>Table 19: Correlation Coefficients Between Variables Measuring Extent of Knowledge Management.....</i>	<i>118</i>

<i>Table 20: Correlation Coefficients Between Variables Measuring Effectiveness of Knowledge Management.....</i>	<i>119</i>
<i>Table 21: Correlation Matrix of Influencing Factors and Extent of Knowledge Management</i>	<i>119</i>
<i>Table 22: Correlation Matrix of Influencing Factors and Effectiveness of Knowledge Management.....</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>Table 23: Correlation Coefficients Between Variables Measuring the Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment.....</i>	<i>121</i>
<i>Table 24: Multiple Linear Regression - Extent of Knowledge Management</i>	<i>122</i>
<i>Table 25: Variation Explained and Unique Contributions - Extent of Knowledge Management.....</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Table 26: Multiple Linear Regression - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management.....</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>Table 27: Variation Explained - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>Table 28: Employees in Social Work 2017</i>	<i>131</i>
<i>Table 29: Female Social Workers Aged 45 in 2017 to Aged 60 in 2032.....</i>	<i>131</i>
<i>Table 30: Difference in Female Social Workers Aged 45 in 2017 to Aged 60 in 2032</i>	<i>132</i>
<i>Table 31: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Knowledge Implementation – Models 1-4</i>	<i>133</i>
<i>Table 32: Challenges in Social Work Centers in Slovenia as Revealed by Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results</i>	<i>193</i>
<i>Table 33: Needs in Social Work Centers in Slovenia as Revealed by Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results</i>	<i>194</i>
<i>Table 34: Well Functioning Aspects in Social Work Centers in Slovenia as Revealed by Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results</i>	<i>194</i>

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Summary in Slovenian language / Daljši povzetek disertacije v slovenskem jeziku.....	1
Appendix 2: Cover Letter for Participation in Research	12
Appendix 3: Questionnaire	13
Appendix 4: Interview Questions	23
Appendix 5: Transcripts from Interviews	26

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICT – Information Communication Technologies

MLFSAEO – Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

MPA – Ministry of Public Administration

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Narrow Scientific Field

Research on knowledge management, defined as the coordination and exploitation of organizational knowledge resources in order to create benefit and competitive advantage (Drucker, 1999), has been growing steadily over the past decade. The field of knowledge management has captured the attention of researchers (Kim & Ko, 2014) in the knowledge-based economy. Interest in this academic and practice-oriented discipline has witnessed a significant rise in recent years (Centobelli, Cerchione & Esposito, 2018; Centobelli, Cerchione & Esposito, 2019; Mariano & Awazu, 2016). Nevertheless, in comparison to the private sector, few studies focus on knowledge management initiatives in the public sector (Oluikpe, 2012; Ringel-Bickelmaier & Ringel, 2010). The scattered and limited understanding of knowledge management in public sector (Cong & Pandya, 2003; Oluikpe, 2012) represents a major challenge for organizations. Findings from existing research indicate that public sector employees typically have a less developed understanding of knowledge management (Zhou, 2004).

Today, knowledge is becoming a more and more critical resource for the functioning of organizations (Willem & Buelens, 2007), their performance being inextricably tied to the efficient use of knowledge (Richards & Duxbury, 2015). While the public sector is undoubtedly different from the private sector (Euske, 2003; Halvorsen, Hauknes, Miles & Roste, 2005; Redek, Godnov & Perše, 2015) and has unique features of its own, the adaptation of knowledge management practices in any type of organization, whether private or public (Arora, 2011; Silvi & Cuganesan, 2006), can be extremely beneficial (Špaček, 2016) and play an important role in organizational success (Wiig, 2002). The managerial perspective, which endorses knowledge as a key factor in explaining organizational performance, is particularly important (Grant, 1996). Indeed, it could be argued that the greatest challenge facing organizations today is to learn to engage in efficient knowledge management practices and processes (Lubit, 2001).

In addition, it is also important to acknowledge that dominant discussions related to knowledge management in general are not adapted to fit the context of the public sector and especially social work (Leung, 2007). Therefore, we must consider that public sector organizations function in a unique context that differs significantly from the private sector. Simply implementing private sector knowledge management tools and models that worked well in that environment might prove to be counterproductive in the context of the public sector (Massaro, Dumay & Garlatti, 2015), and more so in social work. Public sector organizations and their employees must also acknowledge these challenges when discussing knowledge management initiatives as the need and significance of knowledge management for the public sector are now overwhelming (Al Ahbabi, Singh, Balasubramanian & Singh Gaur, 2019). Moreover, Al Ahbabi et al. (2019) believe that the only question that remains

for public organizations is not if but how can they benefit the most from knowledge management initiatives.

Experts also have a high regard for the capacity of knowledge management practices to improve the decision-making processes of organizations and make organizations more creative and innovative. Knowledge management will inevitably become more important in public organizations as citizens have increasing demands and expectations for services provided by the state (including social services) (Al-Khouri, 2014). Knowledge management has already been widely used to increase the potential for savings and improvements in business processes, with over 70% of 1,200 large European companies from across all business sectors reporting noticeable business gains as a result of knowledge management initiatives (Arevuo, 2002). As far back as 2002, 50 German enterprises from different industries introduced knowledge management, and, within only a year, demonstrated improved performance and competitiveness (North & Hornung, 2002). In 2016, a survey of 203 Istanbul Stock Market companies demonstrated the significant and direct impact of knowledge management on creativity and innovation (Akgul & Tunca, 2016).

Today increased attention is being paid to human services such as social work, and knowledge management is now becoming a new focus of management in this area (Leung, 2014). In the opinion of Rubenstein-Montano, Buchwalter, and Liebowitz (2001), social services organizations have increasingly looked to the field of knowledge management during the last decade. Given advancements in the understanding of knowledge management and its potential benefits for enhanced performance, enhanced quality of services, and process improvements, it is clear that its application should be extended to the public sector as well. In the social work sector, the goal of knowledge management would be less to create profit and competitive advantages and more to add value to services, and to increase social wellbeing, societal effectiveness, and general welfare (Myers, 2014; Ortenblad, 2011, 2013; Ortenblad & Koris, 2014). Social work in particular, as a practice-based profession that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014), relies on providing services to users, and yet is typically overlooked in studies examining the optimization of knowledge management (Chen & Hsieh, 2015). (For exceptions regarding the public sector, see Al-Khouri, 2014; Asian Productivity Organization, 2013; Batista & Quandt, 2015).

Prevailing discussions related to knowledge management are generally not well adapted to social work (Leung, 2007). Moreover, there is a persistent lack of substantive discussion about knowledge management in the social work literature (Edge, 2005). The social work sector is one of the main components in the development of social inclusion, social cohesion, and solidarity (Williams & Graham, 2010). Social work centers play a particularly important role in the social work system as they are the facilitators of the entire system. In Slovenia, the role of social work centers in the community is actually increasing in importance because of the ongoing growth of social problems and their increasing complexity that resulted from the

2008 economic crisis (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2017). Knowledge management can and should contribute to achieving the objective of improving the quality of services provided and the wellbeing of users of these services.

Research Topic and Research Questions

The research topic of my dissertation is knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia. The research questions therefore address the specific issues of knowledge management and its influence in social work centers in Slovenia:

RQ1: To what extent is knowledge management used in social work centers in Slovenia?

RQ2: How effective is knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia?

RQ3: Which organizational factors influence knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia?

RQ4: How can knowledge management practices increase the number of available skilled social workers?

RQ5: How does employee empowerment moderate the positive relationship between management support and incentives, and knowledge implementation?

Definition of the Subject of Study

In order to achieve an adequate understanding of knowledge management principles and initiatives in social work centers, social workers and social work managers first need to understand the core principles of knowledge management and the wide range of its benefits. Thus, in order to address the first research question, the **extent** of knowledge management, I focused on whether management takes responsibility for knowledge management and the four established stages of the knowledge management process: knowledge creation, knowledge storage and retrieval, knowledge transfer, and knowledge implementation.

After establishing whether social work centers have a formal knowledge management policy or only informally engage in knowledge management practices, I focus on the **effectiveness** of existing knowledge management practices by evaluating changes in soft measures that may be the consequence of knowledge management practices. Such changes include enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced performance. The third research question asks what **organizational factors influence knowledge management** in social work centers in Slovenia. Here I provide concrete suggestions regarding the most influential organizational factors effecting knowledge management practices based on the results of the empirical investigation and insights gained from the literature.

The fourth research question explores the problem of the **growing shortage of skilled social workers** in an era of aging populations in Slovenia and other European countries. As the sustainable provision of social services is not well developed in Slovenia, I believe that it is

important for various stakeholders to understand the patterns of workforce entrance and exits of social workers, and the dynamics of such transitions. I show how knowledge management activities can positively influence the present (and future) number of skilled social workers in the work force.

My fifth research question examines the **moderating effect of employee empowerment** on the positive relationship between management support and incentives and knowledge implementation. I develop and empirically test several hypotheses in order to measure the relationship using moderation regression. The proposed hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Management support is positively related to knowledge implementation in social work.

Hypothesis 2: Incentives are positively related to knowledge implementation in social work.

Hypothesis 3: Employee empowerment moderates the positive relationship between management support and knowledge implementation: specifically, the positive relationship becomes stronger when levels of employee empowerment are high.

Hypothesis 4: Employee empowerment moderates the positive relationship between incentives and knowledge implementation in such a way that the positive relationship is stronger with high levels of employee empowerment.

In the doctoral dissertation, I will examine the general link between knowledge management practices and social work by incorporating the following:

1. Theories related to the constructs of knowledge management, social work, knowledge management in the public sector, and knowledge management in social work.
2. The individual level of employees within the organization.
3. The moderating mechanism of employee empowerment.
4. Discussion of different research methods and specifically the use of the mixed methods approach, which involves qualitative and quantitative tools.

Definition of Purpose and Goals

The **purpose** of the doctoral dissertation is to contribute to an in-depth analysis of the connection between knowledge management and social work, and to shed light on the importance of the topic for the advancement of society in general.

The **goal** of the doctoral dissertation is to analyse the relationship between knowledge management and social work in the case of social work centers in Slovenia. I also define several subsidiary goals as part of the theoretical and empirical sections of the dissertation.

In the **theoretical section**, I conduct a comprehensive review of the existing literature in the area of knowledge management, social work, knowledge management in the public sector, and knowledge management in social work, and also propose a conceptual model. The following are the subsidiary goals for this part of the dissertation:

1. Define the constructs of knowledge, explicit and tacit knowledge, and knowledge in social work.
2. Examine the constructs of knowledge management, knowledge management processes, and knowledge management strategies.
3. Explore the relationship between knowledge management and organizational learning, knowledge management and organizational unlearning, knowledge management and the learning organization, knowledge management and information-communication technology (ICT), knowledge management and human resource management, knowledge management and organizational culture, and knowledge management and change management.
4. Enumerate the benefits and limitations of knowledge management, examples of good practice from the private and public sector, and the lessons learned and challenges remaining in the field of knowledge management.
5. Define social work, the social system in Slovenia, different types of social organizations in Slovenia with a particular emphasis on social work centers and the challenges faced in the social work sector in Slovenia.
6. Describe the relationship between knowledge management and social work, examples of good practice, and the benefits and limitations of knowledge management in social work.
7. Present the constructs that were used to define the extent and effectiveness of current knowledge management practices in social work centers in Slovenia, and the organizational factors that influence knowledge management practices.
8. Discuss multiple decrement models that can be used as a tool to forecast the number of skilled social workers in the field.
9. Examine the moderating effect of employee empowerment on the relation between management support, incentives, and implementation of knowledge management practices.

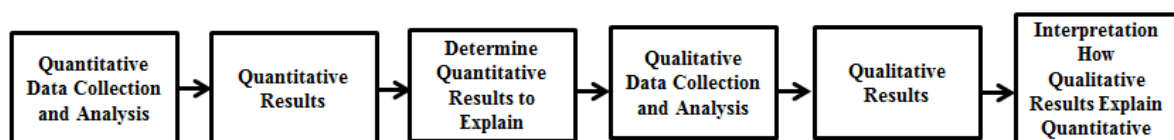
In the **empirical section**, I test my proposed relationships and the resulting conceptual model. The following are the subsidiary goals for this part of the dissertation:

1. Examine and present mixed methods research, and the other research designs and methodologies used in the dissertation.
2. Describe data collection techniques.
3. Explore and select valid and reliable measurement instruments.
4. Empirically test individual hypotheses that are based on the conceptual model presented.
5. Present the limitations of the research.
6. Present practical recommendations to social work centers.
7. Explain the contribution to science of the research presented in the dissertation.

Definition of Scientific Research Methods

In order to answer the research questions, an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied as well as an abundance of data is required. Therefore existing literature is used for the literature review. Quantitative and qualitative data are used in the empirical section. The empirical part of the doctoral dissertation makes use of the mixed methods research approach. Mixed methods is an approach to research in social sciences in which the researcher gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws final interpretations based on the combined strengths of the two data sets in order to arrive at an integrated understanding of the defined research problem (Creswell, 2015). I used an explanatory sequential design, first using quantitative methods and then qualitative methods in order to provide more in-depth explanations of the quantitative results. The proposed explanatory sequential design is explained in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Explanatory Sequential Design of the Mixed Methods Study of Knowledge Management in Social Work Centers in Slovenia



Source: Creswell (2015)

With the use of mixed methods research, the researcher adds to the instrument data, enriching quantitative data with details about the setting, place, and context of personal experience (Creswell, 2015). The mixed methods employed in this dissertation consisted of an online survey questionnaire administered to social work managers and employees in social work centers in Slovenia, followed up by in-depth interviews with selected social work managers and employees in social work centers in Slovenia. The survey questionnaires were sent via e-mail link with the assistance of the Slovenian Social Chamber.

The research concept includes two dependent variables: 1) the extent and 2) the effectiveness of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia, and four independent variables: 1) organizational culture, 2) organizational structure, 3) organizational infrastructure, and 4) organizational leadership. The ultimate units of analysis are social work centers in Slovenia; however, the individuals connected with those organizations, namely social work managers and social work employees, comprise the actual units of analysis.

I used an already established and adapted quantitative online survey from Downes (2014) for the questionnaire, including statements gathered and adapted from the existing literature in the adapted survey. The questionnaire had nine parts, each addressing a particular research topic. Its nine parts include the following subjects: extent of knowledge management in social work centers, effectiveness of knowledge management in social work centers, organizational culture, organizational structure, organizational infrastructure, organizational leadership, organization size, and demographic and other data. In total, the questionnaire contained 86

close-ended questions and five open-ended questions. Nominal scales were used for questions such as gender, ordinal scales for educational levels and years of experience, and five-point Likert scales to measure the opinions of respondents about the statements. E-mail addresses were collected from the available database of the Slovenian Social Chamber, and e-mails invitations to participate in the research were sent to all social workers employed in social work centers in Slovenia in their database. In addition, personal relationships were established with many social work managers and social work employees in order to incorporate a sufficient number of participants for the research. The collected data is in a format suitable for uploading into SPSS (version 24.0) for further analysis. 98 respondents filled out the questionnaire, with respondents taking approximately 13 minutes to complete it.

The questionnaires were analysed to identify topics that needed further exploration and generate which questions to ask selected interviewees in person. Then individual face-to-face semi-structured open-ended in-depth interviews (hereinafter: interviews) were conducted. These kind of interviews are among the most common approaches to interviewing in qualitative research projects (Bryman & Burgess, 1999). Interviews were conducted with selected social work managers and employees in order to obtain a range of perspectives from within organizations. In addition, I divided the interviewees into groups according to differences in the size of their organization (measured by the number of employees in selected social work centers), differences in their educational background, and differences in their location (as different Slovenian regions were included in the study). Details about the structure of conducted interviews are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Structure of Interviews in Social Work Centers in Slovenia

	Interviewee A	Interviewee B	Interviewee C	Interviewee D	Interviewee E	Interviewee F	Interviewee G	Interviewee H	Interviewee I
Organization size	50+	26-50	50+	26-50	11-25	6-10	6-10	50+	11-25
Education ¹	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1
Manager or employee ²	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
Region ³	1	2	1	3	2	4	4	2	4

Source: Own work

The interview questions define the scope of the interview, the primary goal being to investigate how organizations implement knowledge management activities, initiatives, and projects. In explanatory sequential design, the questions for the interview are only finalized after completing the quantitative analysis. This is the case in practice and also in my research project. I followed the example of Liophanich in terms of how I covered the main topics and

¹ Education: 1 – strictly related to social work; 2- other fields

² 1 – manager, 2 - employee

³ Different regions are numbered with 1 – 4

concepts (2014). The topics included general questions about the social work center and the individual respondent/interviewee, organizational structure, ICT systems, extent of knowledge management practices, effectiveness of knowledge management practices, organizational culture, and terminology.

I uploaded the quantitative results into SPSS (version 24.0), a statistical package for social science research. I used descriptive statistics to explore the relationship between variables: specifically, mean values, standard deviations, correlations, and Cronbach's α . I also carried out tests to ensure the normal distribution of measures. I used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the most commonly used form of factor analysis in social research (Kline, 2010), to verify the factor structure of a set of observed variables (Suhr, 2006). I used regression analysis to identify the factors that significantly contribute to the prediction of dependent variables and the size of the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable, and also to assess the unique contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable.

I applied an objective measuring tool, multiple decrement model, based on an already developed actuarial–mathematical method, to predict the availability of social workers. I used a series of hierarchical regression analysis with centred variables to test my hypotheses. I could not develop a full structural model because my data sample was too small. I used content analysis and thematic coding for qualitative data analysis. This allows for recording and identifying passages of texts that are linked by a common theme or idea, and for the text to be indexed into categories in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas (Gibbs, 2007).

Contribution to the Field of Knowledge

The contribution of the proposed doctoral dissertation to the existing field of knowledge is fourfold. First, on the theoretical level, the analysis of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia will contribute to a wider acceptance and understanding of the application of knowledge management in social work. The doctoral dissertation provides a thorough review of existing literature on knowledge management and advances the understanding of how these practices function in the public sector in general and in the particular context of social work. More specifically, the theoretical contribution partially fills the already identified research gap related to knowledge management in the public sector in general (Špaček, 2016), and to knowledge management in the particular context of social work (Austin, Ciaassen, Vu & Mizrahi, 2008; Ciaassen, Vu & Mizrahi, 2008; Chen & Hsieh, 2015; Leung, 2014). The explication in the dissertation of the knowledge-based view of the organization also provides a theoretical contribution. This theoretical contribution to the knowledge-based view of the organization (Grant, 1996; Hislop, Bosua & Helms, 2018; Kogut & Zander, 2003) responds to the recommendations of researchers to theoretically advance the field of knowledge management in the public sector.

Second, on the empirical level, the doctoral dissertation enables a deeper understanding of the relationship between knowledge management and social work. It also presents a deeper understanding of the link between management support, incentives, and knowledge implementation with the moderating mechanism of employee empowerment. To my knowledge, this is the first research carried out in Slovenian academia that focuses on the field of knowledge management and social work. The dissertation can therefore be instrumental for social work centers in Slovenia implementing knowledge management initiatives. Specifically, it can help them carry out assessments of their knowledge management programs and identify factors that would enhance their operations, and this in turn could lead to improvements in their overall performance. Finally, this could result in the increased efficiency of social work centers, the higher quality of services for users of social services, and finally the improved wellbeing of service users.

Third, on the methodological level, most previous research into knowledge management in social work has relied heavily on qualitative research methods and/or case studies. My research uniquely adapts already developed instruments to the activities of social work centers. The doctoral dissertation thus develops a new approach to studying knowledge management in the social work sector, relying on the online survey instrument, the questionnaire data (obtained from social work managers and employees), and in-depth interviews with social work managers and employees employed in social work centers in Slovenia. My focus on mixed methods research builds on Soydan's suggestion (2008) that the scope of social work research is broad and multidisciplinary, and therefore should draw on methodological diversity. Similarly, Guo (2015) is of the opinion that researchers should use quantitative methods to address the most pressing and challenging issues of social work research and practice. The central premise of the mixed methods approach is that the combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods provides a better understanding of research problems and complex phenomena than the use of a single method (Molina-Azorin & Cameron, 2010).

Fourth, in the dissertation, I suggest several practical implications for managers and employees in social work centers. Although their organizations are not for-profit entities, they could nevertheless benefit from understanding and implementing the positive effects of knowledge management in order to improve the quality of services for their users and thus the wellbeing the users of their services. According to both the quantitative and qualitative results of the research, the following topics appear to be especially problematic: excessively hierarchical structure, a shortage of skilled social workers, a deficit in the quality of services provided to users, underutilized knowledge management practices, lack of time, threat of employee overload and/or burnout, dissatisfaction with existing ICT solutions (and especially with the newly introduced Krpan system), only moderately effective knowledge management practices, training that is lacking and focused narrowly on social work, lack of financial resources, an inappropriate incentive structure, and the fact that the recent reorganization of

social work centers in Slovenia did not achieve desired goals. Another practical contribution of the dissertation is the dissemination of research findings and the transfer of knowledge to stakeholders on the government level and other interested stakeholders.

Limitations

The following is a brief summary of the key limitations of my dissertation research (explained in greater detail in section 5.8):

1. *Sampling frame:* Due to the implementation of the GDPR Act in May 2018, the number of my potential respondents was limited.
2. *Common method bias:* As revealed by Harman's (1976) single factor test and the common latent factor (Liang, Saraf, Hu & Xue, 2007) and marker variable approach (Lindell & Whitney, 2001), the common method bias might potentially influence some of the hypothesized relationships in my research.
3. *General conclusion:* I was unable to make a broad conclusion about knowledge management in social work in general as I included only a proportion of social work centers in Slovenia in my research.
4. *Geographic location:* As indicated by several respondents, there are significant differences among Slovenian municipalities that could have an influence on social work centers and practices. In my research, I was only able to partially control for the geographic location of respondents.
5. *Hypothesized transition matrix:* I included only moderate estimates about how knowledge management could potentially influence the patterns of entrances and exits of employees from the social work labour force.

The above limitations do not significantly detract from the strength of the research results. The research provides valuable information about knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia and provides a wealth of data about the sampled organizations.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into theoretical and empirical sections. After the introduction, the first chapter focuses on knowledge, tacit and explicit knowledge, and knowledge in the social work sector. Then I present the field of knowledge management, divided into subsidiary sections that address the knowledge management process, knowledge management strategy, knowledge management and organizational learning, knowledge management and organizational unlearning, knowledge management and the learning organization, knowledge management and ICT systems, knowledge management and human resource management, knowledge management and organizational climate and culture, knowledge management and change management, the benefits of knowledge management, examples of knowledge management from the private and public sector, the lessons learned from knowledge management, and challenges that prevent knowledge management initiatives.

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This chapter is followed by a study of the extent of knowledge management practices in Slovenian social work centers. The discussion consists of management responsibility for knowledge management, knowledge creation, knowledge storage and retrieval, knowledge transfer and sharing, and knowledge implementation. In addition, I explore the current effectiveness of knowledge management in Slovenian social work centers. In this section, I focus on collaboration in organizations, communication in organizations, organizational learning, and organizational performance. In the next section, I examine the influence of organizational factors on knowledge management: specifically, the influence of organizational culture, organizational infrastructure, organizational structure, and organizational leadership on knowledge management practices.

In the final section of the theoretical section, I provide insight into the availability of skilled social workers on the labour market, and discuss the aspect of social sustainability, expand the discussion to existing challenges in the social work sector, and present a case study about Slovenian female social workers and the expectation that the size of the skilled workforce will decrease in the future. In the conclusion, I explore the moderating effect of employee empowerment. In particular, I examine the influence of management support, incentives, and knowledge implementation, and incorporate the moderating effect of employee empowerment in the discussion.

In the empirical section, I first present the methodology used in the dissertation. I discuss quantitative and qualitative data, questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and the mixed methods research approach. I continue with a description of the research sample, the data collection procedure, and explanation of selected measurement instruments, research design, and the reliability and validity of data. This is followed by a presentation of the research results obtained through the various research techniques. Then I enumerate and justify the theoretical, practical, and methodological contributions that the dissertation has in the academic field. I also discuss the limitations of my existing research and suggest potential

themes for future research. The dissertation ends with conclusion, references, and appendixes.

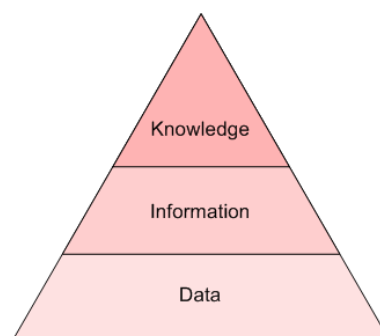
1 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Knowledge

“Knowledge and the way it is managed, has been with humankind since the beginning of time (Jashapara, 2011, p.9).” In today’s knowledge economy, an organization’s ability to manage knowledge appropriately has become increasingly important (Dalkir, 2005). Moreover, the context in which public sector organizations function is becoming increasingly complex (Virtanen & Vakkuri, 2015). As a result, knowledge assets have become invaluable to organizations (Gelard, Emamisaleh, Hassanabadi & Shakouri Rad, 2013). Despite this importance, data, information, and knowledge are not yet clearly distinguished in the literature. Information has been defined as *“a flow of messages”* and knowledge as an *“organized flow of information”* (Nonaka, 1994, p.15). Alternatively, information has been defined as data interpreted into a meaningful framework, and knowledge as information that has been authenticated and is thought to be true (Vance, 1997).

In a similar vein, Maglitta (1996) suggests that data are raw numbers and facts, information is processed data, and knowledge is information made actionable. Knowledge can also be defined as *“a justified personal belief that increases an individual’s capacity to take effective action”* (Huber, 1991; Nonaka, 1994). Horvath (2001) suggests that knowledge is actually information with significant human value added to it. Knowledge is generally viewed as dynamic in nature. It can be accessed through collaboration and communication with experts who possess knowledge (Cormican & O’Sullivan, 2003). Several other definitions also distinguish between data, information, and knowledge. In Figure 2, I provide a graphic representation of data, information, and knowledge.

Figure 2: Data, Information and Knowledge



Source: Jashapara, 2011

Two fundamental approaches to knowledge management currently prevail: personalization and codification (Hicks, Dattero & Galup, 2006). These approaches were further articulated in research conducted by Hansen, Nohria, and Tierney (1999). Personalization means that organizational knowledge exists mainly in the minds of individual employees, and that the main purpose of knowledge management is to encourage employees to discover their own knowledge and provide incentives for them to share this knowledge with their co-workers. Codification assumes that it is important for organizations to codify and store the most relevant knowledge in a computer format in order for it to be shared with appropriate employees in the organization. Typically, motives for more effective knowledge management include learning lessons, avoiding repeating mistakes, and capturing expertise before it leaves the organization (Davenport, De Long & Beers, 1998).

Knowledge that an organization or an individual possesses can be explicit or tacit, and therefore more or less difficult to articulate (Kogut & Zander, 1992). Knowledge manifests itself in a number of ways, including changes in cognition, routines, and behaviours. Knowledge allows individuals and organizations to act more effectively than information or data, and makes it more possible to predict future outcomes (Jashapara, 2011). Knowledge exists along a continuum from tacit knowledge, referred to as know-how, to explicit knowledge, referred to as know-what (Polanyi, 1967; Ryle, 1949). Regarding tacit knowledge, Nonaka (1994) posits that one of the biggest challenges in knowledge management is finding ways to convert the tacit knowledge base into explicit knowledge. The distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge is also of paramount importance in the work of Chilton and Bloodgood (2007). If, for example, an organization devotes considerable effort and resources towards creating and capturing more explicit knowledge, the results may be ineffective if employees are involved in activities that require the use of tacit knowledge (either their own or their organization's).

Austin (2008) points out the role of tacit knowledge in the context of social services, and notes the importance of connections between tacit (practice-based) knowledge, published research, and other readily available secondary data dealing with the topic of user feedback. Making these connections would ultimately improve service outcomes for social work users. There is also the distinction between intelligence (knowing-how) and knowledge (knowing-what) as elaborated by Ryle (1949) who states that intelligence only has meaning as an activity (an individual actually performing a task). Therefore, it is in the action that intelligence is exhibited. In contrast, knowing-what is merely holding items of knowledge in the mind (for example, knowledge of the names of the seven wonders of the world).

Today, we live in a knowledge-based economy in which Quigley, Tesluk and Bartol (2007) suggest that activities related to knowledge management, such as knowledge sharing, are increasingly viewed as crucial for organizational effectiveness. Jashapara (2011) suggests that the knowledge economy is propelled by knowledge intangibles in contrast to physical

capital, natural resources, or low skilled labour. Consequently, current trends – including globalization, continuously changing legislation, increasing demands from consumers in the private sector and service users in the public sector, and the shift from a production-based to a knowledge-based economy – are sparking a revolution that forces organizations to utilize and leverage knowledge in order to successfully compete (Chong & Choi, 2005; Civi, 2000). Badaracco (1991) posits that knowledge is created, stored, transferred, and implemented at all organizational levels, and its purpose is to support the achievement of organizational goals. Therefore, the performance of an organization is strongly correlated with the level of appropriate knowledge available and how such knowledge is used by employees when they need it. Chang and Lin (2015) also argue that knowledge is a primary resource in organizations. They believe that effective management of knowledge resources gives an organization a wide array of benefits, including improved efficiency, effectiveness, innovation, and customer service.

Knowledge is therefore an important strategic resource (Ajmal, Helo & Kekale, 2010; Arora, 2011) in any type of organization or institution, whether private or public, service-oriented or production-oriented. As early as the 1990s, it was suggested that the workplace is encountering significant change, and that a distinction exists between the manual worker and the knowledge worker. The knowledge worker is someone who uses his mind to generate ideas, information, and knowledge that adds value to the organization (Drucker 1992; 1993). Organizations have the potential to benefit from knowledge that is embedded within their employees and systems, and this may result in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Afiouni, 2007; Alavi & Leidner, 1999). For knowledge to be a sustainable competitive advantage, it must be rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Typically, knowledge is embedded in three basic elements of each organization: its members, tools, and tasks. All sub-networks are formed by combining these three basic elements. Members are represented by individual employees, tools include hardware and software, which represent the technological component, and tasks are a reflection of organizational goals, intentions, and purposes (McGrath & Argote, 2001).

In the past, public sector organizations typically neglected the importance of knowledge and knowledge management. Such organizations have been less likely to grasp the full potential of knowledge, especially in comparison to private sector companies (Arora, 2011). Moreover, despite its potential, there has been a lack of practical application in the public service provision of knowledge management tools (Arora, 2011; Zaharova & Zelmene, 2004). Several authors (i.e. Ajmal et al., 2010; Edge, 2005; Haynes, 2005; McAdam & Reid, 2000; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004) propose that there is an increasing need in public and non-profit organizations to improve service effectiveness and efficiency as well as to reduce costs, both of which can result from the implementation of knowledge management practices. Moreover, relevant literature presents examples of knowledge management systems within the government environment. Such examples are becoming more common, and specialized

solutions for governments have already been developed (e-Governments Resources Centre, 2013).

However, as presented by Brown and Duguid (2001), dealing with knowledge in organizations is extremely complex, and it is far more common for knowledge to flow out of an organization than move productively within one. The authors also emphasize the importance of coordination of knowledge in an organization, which is a demanding strategic challenge. In practice, the ease or difficulty of operating with knowledge is largely dependent on an organization's social context (Brown & Duguid, 2001). Similarly, Haggie and Kingston (2003) posit that every organization exists in an environment that defines the way the organization conducts its business. Access to organizational knowledge enables employees to make better sense of their environment and give it meaning. This in turn allows them to find new and better ways to perform, collaborate, break down barriers, share visions, fill gaps in knowledge, increase productivity, and ultimately compete (Civi, 2000).

1.1.1 Explicit Knowledge

Explicit knowledge is based on universally accepted and objective criteria that is easily coded and later transferred (Cavusgil, Calantone & Zhao, 2003). Explicit knowledge is generally easy to codify in tangible form (Nonaka & Konno, 1998), and to store and retrieve by using traditional technologies (Jashapara, 2011). As such, it is available to a large number of employees with little or almost no cost (Roberts, 2000). In addition, Grant (1996) and Hansen et al. (1999) suggest that there is only a small chance that organizations will encounter explicit knowledge loss when employees leave their respective organizations because such knowledge is already articulated, codified, and available in organizational databases. Moreover, explicit knowledge has high value as it can be accessed and used by every employee in the organization. Explicit knowledge can thus be considered internally safe (Hall & Andriani, 2003). Finally, organizations are also able to take steps to ensure that their intellectual property rights are protected (Antonelli, 1997; Hall & Andriani, 2003; Teece, 1986).

However, explicit knowledge is not without limitations. One of its pitfalls is that if knowledge is explicit enough to be embedded in technology that enables internal transfer, this also influences the potential spillover effects to other organizations that wish to copy another organization's competitive advantage (Argote & Ingram, 2000). Hall and Andriani (2003) similarly argue that explicit knowledge can be externally vulnerable. Polanyi (1967) posits that explicit knowledge is only a small part of the whole body of knowledge because we actually know more than we are able to express. Nevertheless, explicit knowledge, like tacit knowledge, must be considered a crucial organizational resource, and yet too much emphasis on either tacit or explicit knowledge at the expense of the other can lead organizations into the position where they may potentially lose their competitive advantage (Johannessen,

Olaisen & Olsen, 2001). Jashapara (2011) believes that it is extremely important to capture both explicit and tacit knowledge within organizations.

1.1.2 Tacit Knowledge

Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is non-verbalizable, intuitive, and unarticulated (Polanyi, 1962). It is often difficult to define given its inexpressible characteristic (Venkitachalam & Busch, 2012). Tacit knowledge is difficult to articulate, formalize, and communicate because it is learned through collaborative experience (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Polanyi, 1962; 1966). It can be held by individuals or in collective form in an organization, namely in shared collaborative experiences and interpretations of events. In the case of individual tacit knowledge, it can be embedded in the plans, skills, habits, and abstract knowledge of individual employees (Lyles & Schwenk, 1992; Starbuck, 1992).

The sharing and integration of tacit knowledge that is embedded within the minds of employees is challenging to externalize. This is especially important as tacit knowledge is considered the most important element of organizational competitive advantage. One of the main goals of identifying tacit knowledge is to direct its contribution to organizational effectiveness (Austin et al., 2008). This becomes even more essential when key employees are pondering whether to leave an organization. If they do leave, their knowledge typically leaves the organization with them (AGIMO, 2004), thus creating a considerable knowledge gap in organizations.

It is important to appropriately manage tacit knowledge in organizations, because capturing and managing such knowledge enables organizations to transfer best practices. The emphasis must be on defining how work actually gets done, to understand the unique value added by employees who have the capacity to deal successfully with specific situations, experiences, and organizational history, and on the documentation of the processes that represent value for an organization's future functioning (Horvath, 2001). Typically, however, organizations devote their interest and resources on sharing explicit knowledge rather than engaging in activities that identify, value, and disseminate the tacit knowledge that is possessed by individual employees. In order to begin the search for tacit knowledge in organizations, a knowledge mapping exercise is suggested as a first step in setting up an inventory of what tacit knowledge exists among employees, where it is located, and how to access it (Austin et al., 2008).

1.1.3 Knowledge in Social Work

Social workers have a great interest in the relationship between knowledge and practice as both components are necessary to successfully define the characteristics of social work. In a sense, this is no different than any other profession. Not surprisingly, younger social workers tend to show more enthusiasm for the utility of (formal) knowledge (Cha, Kuo, Marsh &

Kvieskiene, 2006). Three models of how research can be used in this context are defined by Nutley, Walter and Davies (2007): the research-based practitioner model, the embedded research model, and the organizational excellence model. The research-based practitioner model hypothesizes that individual practitioners are obliged to keep themselves informed of the latest research findings and find ways to implement them in daily practice. In contrast, the embedded research model focuses on the policy level rather than individual practitioners. To better address managers at the local level, it addresses activities on a higher, national level. In this way, research findings become embedded in systems, processes, and standards. The organizational excellence model focuses on the collaboration between different stakeholders, namely leaders, managers, and social workers as parts of a learning organization. Researchers from universities and other organizations are also encouraged to provide their input into this collaborative process. Research is understood in a wider sense in this context as organizations within the social sector are not viewed as merely recipients and users of research findings. They also assume the role of active participants in the research process as they contribute to producing knowledge, for example by hosting clinical researchers, articulating new research questions, and describing and making use of experience-based knowledge. This third model emphasizes that research breakthroughs are often facilitated by a partnership or network of various research organizations and other institutions within the social sector (Johnson & Austin, 2008; Nutley et al., 2007).

There is still a considerable gap between theory and practice (Gray & Fook, 2004). Herie and Martin (2002) report that there is also a continuing gap between research and practice. Sheppard, Newstead, Di Caccavo, and Ryan (2000) believe that the relationship between knowledge and practice is problematic in social work. Longhofer and Floersch (2012) suggest that, as practical knowledge gradually lose its place, this gap contributes to the ongoing knowledge crisis in social work. This condition represents a long-term problem in social work. Kjorstad (2008) provides additional insight on the development of knowledge in social work. In her opinion there are two important issues that need to be addressed. First, theories that social workers are not necessarily aware of may become useful for practical social work. Second, practical knowledge that has not yet been theoretically explored could open new research questions and hypotheses. Nevertheless, an increasing number of human service organizations are placing considerable effort on creating their own practice-relevant knowledge base and this may prove useful in their particular fields of service (Manela & Moxley, 2002). Gray and Schubert (2013) are of the opinion that the production and modelling of knowledge in social work is gradually becoming a small but diverse field.

1.2 Knowledge Management

Knowledge management deals with any intentional set of practices and processes designed to optimize the use of knowledge and to increase allocative efficiency in the area of knowledge production, distribution, and implementation (Asian Productivity Organization, 2013). As such, it is becoming a core critical (Al-Khoury, 2014) and strategic asset for organizations

(Oviedo-Garcia, Castellanos-Verdugo, Garcia del Junco & Riquelme-Miranda, 2014). Its goal is to ensure the full utilization of an organization's knowledge base and all of the potential of individual employees' skills and competences (Dalkir, 2005). The use of knowledge management enables organizations to achieve important competitive advantages, to make continuous improvements and innovations, and to deliver the best possible organizational performance. Indeed, it is the primary source for creating sustainable competitive advantages (Shih et al., 2009) because of the role it plays in retaining, developing, organizing, and utilizing organizational knowledge (Karamat, Tong, Ahmad, Waheed & Khan, 2018). Knowledge management can also be defined as identifying and leveraging the collective knowledge in an organization to help that organization compete (Von Krogh, 1998). Akgul et al. (2007) suggest that knowledge management is a set of management activities that help the organization to deliver value from its knowledge assets. One of the first definitions of knowledge management was offered by Henry (1974). He defined knowledge management as a public policy for the production, dissemination, accessibility, and use of information. From a more practical point of view, knowledge management is seen as organizational innovation, involving changes in strategy and management practices of organizations (Marques & Simon, 2006). Essentially, knowledge management is about understanding how employees do their work, share concepts and ideas, about identifying groups of people who work on similar things, and developing ideas that lead to employees learning from one another (Arora, 2011). Alavi and Leidner (2001) put forward another view of knowledge management, defining it as the systematic process of acquiring, organizing, and communicating the knowledge of organizational members so that others can make use of it to be more efficient and productive. Alternatively, knowledge management can be defined as a systemized and integrated managerial strategy, combining information technologies with the organizational process. Knowledge management is also a managerial activity with the aim of developing, transferring, storing, and applying knowledge, as well as equipping employees with real time information so they can react, make good decisions, and meet organizational goals (Hicks et al., 2006).

Some confusion remains about where knowledge management as a discipline belongs: with information systems or human resource management. In reality, knowledge management has its roots in a variety of disciplines: philosophy, business management, and computer science among others (Jashapara, 2011). The field of knowledge management adds to earlier approaches of data management and information management. It is more complex and includes networking, collaboration, and business process improvements (AGIMO, 2004). Jashapara (2011, p.11) proposes the following integrated definition of knowledge management: *“effective learning processes associated with exploration, exploitation, and sharing of human knowledge (tacit and explicit) that use appropriate technology and cultural environments to enhance the intellectual capital and performance of organizations.”*

Many private sector organizations have launched knowledge management initiatives in order to improve business processes, make financial savings, generate greater revenues, enhance

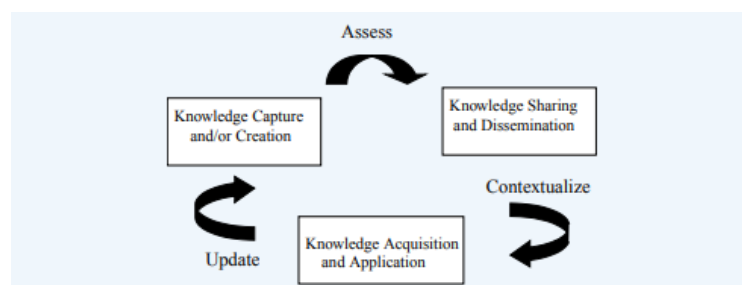
user acceptance, or increase competitiveness (Chua & Lam, 2005). Knowledge management is an emerging discipline that is becoming increasingly important for organizations that seek to improve their efficiency and competitive abilities (Alhamoudi, 2014). For a typical company in the private sector, knowledge management is the strategic application of collective company knowledge and know-how in order to increase profits and market share (Nonaka & von Krogh, 2009). Research has confirmed that corporate spending on knowledge management activities has increased significantly (Ithia, 2003).

In the environment of the public sector, in contrast, collective organizational knowledge and know-how can be used to improve the overall functioning of organizations and the quality of services they provide to users. Specifically, in the public sector, knowledge management is more likely to add value to services and thus increase societal well-being, effectiveness, and general welfare (Myers, 2014; Ortenblad, 2011, 2013; Ortenblad & Koris, 2014). The literature also suggests that many organizations may actually engage in knowledge management activities, although they may not use the term knowledge management to describe these activities. Nevertheless, in practice, many relevant activities and actions informally contribute to the enhancement of organizational learning, the improvement of service outcomes, and the advancement of organizational capabilities (Ithia, 2003). I hypothesize that this is also the existing situation in social work centers in Slovenia. Social work centers are informally engaging in knowledge management activities, but, as established in the research, a common terminological foundation for knowledge management in social work does not exist.

1.2.1 Knowledge Management Process

Prior research has established four basic areas of knowledge management: creating, storing and retrieving, transferring, and implementing knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Badaracco, 1991; Bollinger & Smith, 2001; Gold, Malhotra & Segard, 2001; Hicks et al., 2006; Lee & Choi, 2003). The integrated knowledge management process is presented graphically in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Integrated Knowledge Management Process Model



Source: Dalkir (2005)

In the literature, authors also distinguish between knowledge processes and knowledge management practices or activities. Processes naturally exist in organizations and include knowledge sharing and knowledge acquisition. However, management practices are methods that support efficient and effective management of knowledge to enhance organizational benefit. Knowledge processes are thus not directly controlled by management (Akgun, Byrne, Lynn & Keskin, 2007). It is especially important for managers of organizations to model for their employees how to translate existing information into knowledge for later decision-making processes (Austin et al., 2008). Moreover, when organizational issues are discussed in relation to knowledge processes, organization is predominantly understood as informal (Foss, 2007). Informal organizations consists of the networks, culture, communities of practice rather than formal mechanisms of governance. In order to exploit the full potential of knowledge as a strategic resource, formal organizational structures that are controlled by management should influence and direct intra-organizational knowledge processes (Foss & Minbaeva, 2009). Typically, the formal structures of organizations are human resource management, organizational structure, information systems, operating procedures, and other coordination mechanisms (Andreeva & Kianto, 2012).

The literature suggests that knowledge management starts as a process of understanding the value an organization places on knowledge and formulating a clear picture of where specific knowledge exists in an organization (Austin et al., 2008). In the first phases of knowledge management implementation, organizations should conduct a knowledge audit in order to analyse available assets and resources. A knowledge audit is also beneficial to determine the gap between existing knowledge in an organization and ideal or desired knowledge. Identifying possible gaps in an organization's knowledge is especially important as they can stifle innovation, block opportunities for improvements, and even hinder upgrades in technology. After conducting a knowledge audit, organizations can then develop knowledge management strategies to support their strategic goals. The aim of a knowledge management strategy is to develop the organization's core capabilities through the implementation of knowledge management initiatives and practices (AGIMO, 2004). In the context of social work, Leung (2010) defines and describes an approach to a systematic knowledge audit.

1.2.2 Knowledge Management Strategy

The literature covered in the previous chapters suggests that both explicit and tacit knowledge can and should be managed. Today organizations must operate in dynamic and complex environments and continuously adapt their operations in order to achieve effectiveness and efficiency. In the quest to achieve effectiveness and efficiency, the knowledge management strategy of an organization should be aligned with its overall strategy (Jashapara, 2011). Indeed, an integral part of an organization's strategy is its ability to generate, combine, recombine, and exploit knowledge (McIver, Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick Hall & Ramachandran, 2012). Typically, codification and personalization strategies are the most common knowledge management strategies. Codification strategies usually rely on technology, using large

databases to codify and store knowledge. This approach is based on tried and tested methods that have proven to be successful in the past, and one of its downsides is the lack of attention to creativity and innovation. Personalization strategies place a stronger emphasis on employees with a focus on developing their capabilities through various activities such as brainstorming sessions and face-to-face communication, and motivating them to gain a deeper insight that can be drawn on when solving a specific problem. The most important part of the personalization strategy is encouraging employees to share their knowledge with others (Hansen et al., 1999).

Jashapara (2011) promotes a similar approach with a focus on networking within the organization and developing creative solutions for specific problems through dialogue. To prevent employees from avoiding responsibility, Jashapara (2011) emphasizes that knowledge management strategies should be jointly developed and then monitored by different departments and stakeholders in the organization. In practice, knowledge management is most successful when everyone in the organization feels and actually is involved. Giving employees responsibility for embedding knowledge management into their daily practices and processes enhances the positive effects of knowledge management (Austin et al., 2008).

1.2.3 Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning

Argyris and Schon (1978, p.9) describe the complexity of organizational learning as follows: *“Organizational learning is not merely individual learning, although organizations do learn through the experience and actions of individuals.”* It is generally believed that learning emerges from experience and daily routines, on-the-job training, mentoring co-workers, and coaching (Antonacopoulou, 2006). Individual learning increasing employees’ capacity to take effective action (Kim, 1993). In the literature on organizational learning, learning is also defined as the process that creates knowledge (Vera & Crossan, 2003). Organizational learning means the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding on the organizational level (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Organizational learning is the process through which events that have already occurred shape the present and the future (Argote, 2011). Most of these definitions share the concept that organizational learning is the changes in the organization that occur as the organization acquires experience (Argote & Miron-Spekter, 2011).

Although individual members are the mechanisms through which organizational learning generally occurs, the knowledge that individuals acquire must be embedded in a supra-individual repository for organizational learning to occur (Argote, 2011). That is, the knowledge of individuals would have to be embedded in the organization so that other members could access it, even if these individuals have already left the organization. Absorptive capacity, a term related to organizational learning, is the ability of an organization to utilize externally held knowledge by recognizing and understanding newly available

knowledge from the external environment, and then using it to create new knowledge and influence future organizational outcomes (Lane, Koka & Pathak, 2006). Today, both organizational learning and knowledge are important to public sector organizations, which are exposed to complex external challenges in the same way that private companies are, but which have different drivers and goals for knowledge (Rashman, Withers & Hartley, 2009).

Organizational learning can be further divided into single-loop and double-loop learning. Single-loop learning is defined as behavioural learning where organizations respond in traditional ways and with familiar patterns when problems arise. In contrast, double-loop learning is defined as cognitive learning where organizations question underlying assumptions and values, and search for innovative ways to respond to problems (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Organizational learning can also be divided into three sub-processes: creating, retaining, and transferring knowledge. It is assumed that organizational learning occurs as organizations acquire more experience (Argote, 2011). The literature defines the traditional goals of the learning process as acquisition of knowledge (know-what), development of skills (know-how), and the changing attitudes of the individual learner (Jashapara, 2011). Team learning is defined in the context of organizational learning as the capacity of a group to engage appropriately in dialogue and discussion (Senge, 1990).

In addition to organizational learning, discussing failure is necessary as it represents an important learning opportunity and allows organizations to learn through experimentation and make adjustments that are based on their mistakes. However, a distinction needs to be made between major failures that can cause serious harm for the functioning of an organization and minor failures that are tolerated and can be used for increasing levels of risk-taking and fostering further experimentation. In general, failures provide an opportunity to examine in greater depth what the organization is doing wrong (Jashapara, 2011).

Argote and Miron-Spektor (2011) and Dimovski (1994) argue that, from the practical point of view, the organization's ability to learn and adapt is critical to its performance, competitive advantage, and long-term success. Organizational learning offers organizations an additional potential source of productivity and benefits as organizations are able to gain detailed knowledge of which specific employees excel at certain tasks and assign tasks accordingly (Argote, 1993). Jashapara (2011) agrees with the underlying assumption that learning will improve the organization's performance. An organizational learning culture is described as one of the most important contextual features that enhances organizational commitment and intrinsic motivation, and this also indirectly affects knowledge management initiatives (Baek-Kyoo & Lim, 2009).

There are various types of learning organizations. The learning-at-work variant, which has sparked particular interest, suggests that the individual employee learns while working. Rather than taking classes, employees learn during their daily work, either through trial and error or by tutoring from colleagues and superiors (Abrahamson Löfström, 2013). The

learning-at-work variant emerges naturally as this organizational learning type can be easily implemented within existing organizational structures. Nevertheless, it requires some changes in management style and daily work activities. This type of learning organization could be potentially interesting for social work centers.

The framework for the learning organization consists of seven pillars that are of paramount importance for successful functioning (Watkins & Marsick, 1997). First, organizations should encourage continuous learning opportunities. Second, organizations should encourage inquiry and dialogue. Third, organizations should promote collaboration and emphasize the importance of team learning. Fourth, organizations need to establish systems that are capable of capturing and sharing learning. Fifth, organizations need to empower their employees. Sixth, organizations need to connect to their environment. Seventh, organizations need to engage leaders to model and support learning at the individual, team, and organizational level.

In order for learning activities to be successful, managers must dedicate sufficient time and effort to the process (Abrahamson Löfström, 2013). Typically, however, their own daily management activities remain the priority and learning activities are perceived as an extra activity that distracts both management and employees from primary tasks. This suggests how difficult it is to integrate knowledge and learning activities into daily practice. A serious discussion is generally required to decide whether a specific organization or industry is a good fit for the transition to the learning organization model. This is also the case with the social work organizations in my sample and applies as well to the potential implementation of knowledge management in the social work sector in Slovenia.

Therefore, we must first ask if the learning organization model is a good fit for social work organizations and second if knowledge management practices can be advantageously implemented. In general, the answer to these question should be positive, especially as regards certain characteristics of the learning organization and knowledge management such as learning at work and organizational learning. However, a degree of adaptation and change will be necessary for them to function in practice. Organizational learning has significant potential and benefits but is not without limitations. Similar to what has been seen with new organizational forms that have undeniable strengths (such as virtual organizations), there are significant barriers related to learning and these can create challenges for organizations (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006).

When considering the various characteristics of the learning organization presented in this section, it becomes clear that learning organizations in the context of social work will differ significantly from those in the private sector. The type and suitability of learning organization is dependent on the perspective and context in which organizations function, and it is crucial for organizations to clearly define the type of learning organization that is the best fit for them and the environment in which they are functioning (Abrahamson Löfström, 2013).

Nevertheless, all organizations can and should strive towards becoming learning organizations (Ortenblad, 2011).

1.2.4 Knowledge Management and Organizational Unlearning

Numerous studies have been published on the topic of organizational learning. However, very few of these studies focus on the conceptualization and operationalization of organizational unlearning. Organizations first need to potentially unlearn established beliefs and methods relevant to their functioning in order to create and accept new ways of functioning (Akgun et al., 2007). Moreover, organizations may need to revise old knowledge, sometimes even discarding or archiving old knowledge that is no longer adequate for their present and future success (AGIMO, 2004). In the context of social work, existing social work knowledge was generated during the era of the robust welfare state and is no longer relevant or sufficient. Indeed, the combination of new roles and tasks assigned to the social work sector and the lack of resources clearly indicates that existing social work knowledge is no longer useful or sufficient in the contemporary era (Flaker, 2016).

Unlearning is defined as the process by which individuals discard obsolete or misleading knowledge, and is an essential process for organizations that need to renew their knowledge base. Unlearning is especially crucial in situations where successful behaviours from the past are no longer valid responses to projected future levels of environmental uncertainty. Unlearning requires an organization to rethink the customary way of doing things and potentially gives an organization a fresh start. A gap between the actual performance of an organization and its expectations may suggest the need for the organization to undergo an unlearning process. The existence of problems, however, is not the only possible starting point for unlearning. Positive events, such as the development of new (or niche) markets or the changing needs of services users, may also cause organizations to enter the process of organizational unlearning (Hedberg, 1981).

1.2.5 Knowledge Management and the Learning Organization

In order to avoid confusion between the terms organizational learning and learning organization, Jashapara (2011) proposes that organizational learning designates the processes or activities in an organization while the learning organization is the desired end state. In the case of human service organizations, Gould and Baldwin (2004) argue that their capacity to learn from experience and to be able to continuously adapt to external changes such as downward pressure on resources, constant reconfiguration of the welfare state, and rapidly changing patterns of social needs is a critical characteristic that enables their successful functioning. Although the topic of the learning organization has been well covered within management and business administration research, the concept remains underexplored within social work research (Gould, 2000).

Learning organizations are organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they actually want, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and finally where people continually learn to see the whole together. There are five elements of learning organizations: personal mastery, mental models, building a shared vision, team learning, and system thinking. Personal mastery is defined as the strength of people to be proactive and continuously learn in order to achieve results that are important to them. Mental models are defined as presumptions and generalizations that people have and that impact their actions. Shared vision occurs when all of the employees in an organization share an understanding of where their organization needs to go. Team learning can produce results that individuals on their own would not be able to achieve, a process which is described in the following two statements. First, individuals gain greater knowledge more quickly in a team environment as compared to solitary learning situations. Second, team members should be prepared to shift their own mental model and to learn from the knowledge of their co-workers. System thinking is the basis of identifying patterns in organizations by looking at the organization as a whole rather than in discreet, unrelated, and manageable parts (Senge, 1990).

Adopting a different perspective, Garvin (1993) argues that the learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights. The term knowledge-creating company is also present in the literature, its primary characteristic being the transformation of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge and vice versa in order to create new knowledge. Garvin proposes four processes for creating knowledge: first, socialization, which allows tacit knowledge to be passed from one employee to another; second, combination where explicit pieces of knowledge from different individuals are combined; third, articulation where tacit knowledge converts into explicit knowledge, and; fourth, internalization where explicit knowledge is converted into tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1991). The term competitive learning organization indicates that any kind of learning needs to be focused on the predominant competitive forces in the organization's environment at any given time (Jashapara, 2011).

The concept of knowledge management was introduced in the mid-1990s, and at first glance it shared many similarities with the concept of organizational learning and the learning organization. However, the concept of the learning organization is generally focussed on external factors such as customers and competitors, whereas the concept of knowledge management focusses on managing the internal factors within an organization. Knowledge management is present at the level of work processes (Jashapara, 2011) and can contribute to improved learning. Improved learning positively influences the transformation of individual to organizational knowledge and vice versa, indirectly promoting more informed and better decision-making, processes, and systems that collectively may contribute to better overall organizational performance (Downes, 2014). One of the goals of knowledge management activities in organizations is to directly improve collaborative decision-making, individual and collective learning, and overall performance. The expectation of such improvements is

the primary reason why organizations engage in knowledge management activities and subsequently also the basic measures of their success.

1.2.6 Knowledge Management and Information Communication Technologies

In their work related to the topics of knowledge management and information and communications technologies (ICT), Andreeva and Kianto (2012) suggest that it is crucial to surpass the stage where organizations merely examine the existence of ICT and the amount of funds devoted to them. It is necessary that organizations start to figure out if such technologies are used to facilitate knowledge work processes, if they are a good fit with the overall strategic goals of the organization, and if they are supported by top management. In the early era of knowledge management implementation in organizations, ICT solutions were often seen as the main driving force that justified the funding of knowledge management projects (Cabrera, Collins & Salgado, 2006). At that time, it was five times more likely that knowledge management projects would be funded by the ICT department than by the human resource department (Cabrera et al., 2006; KPMG, 2000). However, over time, the recognition emerged that knowledge management is less related to technology than to people and social structures (Mischen, 2015).

In general, ICT should be understood in relation to other important organizational components. Investing solely in hardware and software solutions rarely leads to a lasting competitive advantage (Jashapara, 2011). Similarly, knowledge sharing systems or information communication systems will not solve all the problems of an organization. The real challenge is to create an organizational culture that has employees as its core focus as it is employees who interact with ICT and help an organization grow. Moreover, employees are responsible for their own career paths. Therefore, knowledge management should be perceived as more of a cultural issue than a technological issue (Call, 2005). Numerous practical applications have shown that technology alone cannot ensure that knowledge will be volunteered and exchanged (Cabrera et al., 2006). Another important observation is that knowledge management primarily based on technology is unlikely to succeed (Call, 2005). Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that, as indicated in the research of Andreeva and Kianto (2012), ICT systems and their support of knowledge work processes increase the competitiveness of organizations and their financial performance.

Organizations often fall into the trap of buying software solutions that address certain business processes and activities in other organizations but fail to tackle existing organizational problems in an effective way. In addition, organizations also tend to neglect the problem of whether their employees have sufficient skills to use new software solutions. As a result of the rise of ICT systems, organizations have been able to disseminate large amounts of information across the organization in a short period of time. In response, employees have sometimes complained about information and knowledge overload (Cheuk, 2008). Therefore, it is important for organizations to not only recognize the potential value of

information and knowledge as a strategic asset but also and simultaneously to find the right balance in terms of access to and quantity of information available to their employees.

Nevertheless, there are several positive aspects to ICT. Technology can accelerate organizational change as it tends to flatten hierarchies. It can contribute to the decentralization of organizations and start the process of creating new organizational norms (Tolbert, Mossberger & McNeal, 2008). Moreover, in the field of knowledge management, ICT has a potentially significant influence on knowledge sharing because it can produce the infrastructure that enables the establishment, maintenance, and intensification of relationships within and among groups (Huysman & Wulf, 2004). When implementing ICT solutions in organizations, it is especially important to focus on the users and their needs, to make sure that platforms are relatively easy to use, and to concentrate on both tacit and explicit knowledge. In order to maintain employees' positive attitude toward knowledge management, it is essential to train employees and to continuously maintain the ICT system (Hasanali, 2002). As a warning, a frequent perception exists among many employees that the internet knows everything and they conduct a simple search for whatever it is they are looking for. If they are not satisfied with the first results, they often refuse to examine the issue further (Bloice & Burnett, 2016).

1.2.7 Knowledge Management and Human Resource Management

Human resource management is a comprehensive and coherent approach to the employment and subsequent development of employees. It could be regarded as the philosophy of how to manage employees, incorporating various theories that aim to explain employee behaviour within organizations. Many studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between effective human resource management and organizational performance (Guest, 1997). The main emphasis of human resource management is twofold: assessing the contribution of employees on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of organizations, and developing a set of moral values about how employees should be treated within an organization. The field of human resource management includes insights and knowledge from a number of different fields, including organizational design and organizational learning (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). At its core, human resource management is about managing employees and their most important resource: knowledge (Svetlik & Stavrou-Costea, 2007). Therefore, human resource management and knowledge management are closely interrelated. Both of the fields share common practices and aims inside and outside the organization. Diagnostic tools that enable organizations to evaluate how well an organization's human resource management system supports knowledge-intensive teamwork already exist (Chuang, Jackson & Jiang, 2013).

The following three aspects of human resource management shape the flow of people and knowledge: employee selection, compensation strategies, and career development systems (Scarborough, 2003). Careful selection of employees is important as new employees build on the organization's existing knowledge and competences. Organizations typically seek

employees that have suitable knowledge and skill sets for the functioning of the organization. Compensation strategies can increase the popularity of knowledge management as both tangible and intangible incentives encourage employees to share and create knowledge. Career systems address the systematic training and education of employees, and emphasize the importance of keeping valuable employees in the organization or retaining their knowledge when they leave the (Scarbrough, 2003; Wong, 2005).

1.2.8 Knowledge Management and Organizational Culture and Climate

Organizational climate is the static or temporary phenomenon comprised of norms and organizational artefacts, and can be determined with survey-based approaches. In contrast, organizational culture is the result of processes that arise from dynamic interactions between individuals or members of a social system (Jashapara, 2011). According to Handy (1985), there are four types of organizational culture. The one that best describes public sector organizations is role culture. Role culture is characterized by bureaucracies and rules, with procedures and job descriptions being its most important features. Brown (1998) and Deal and Kennedy (1982) describe a similar typology, using the term process cultures for organizations that are characterized by procedures, rules, and hierarchies. Organizational climate and organizational culture significantly influence the behaviour of employees, including their perception of knowledge management (Chen & Lin, 2004; Long, 2000; Sveiby & Simons, 2002).

The elements of organizational culture that exert the greatest influence on knowledge management are participation, adaptability, consistency, and mission (Mojibi, Hosseinzadeh & Khojasteh, 2015). Many top managers strive to develop knowledge-sharing cultures where knowledge is easily shared among employees through a range of ICT solutions (Jashapara, 2011). The existing literature indicates that such knowledge-sharing cultures are more likely to generate new knowledge and achieve better organizational outcomes. However, it is important to understand that knowledge management also has an influence on organizational culture (Liebowitz, 2008).

It is also possible that the efforts of individuals will clash with the organizational culture during the knowledge management implementation process (Bedford, 2013). Indeed the failure of many knowledge transfer systems is more likely to be related to cultural factors than to technological or other issues (Ajmal & Koskinen, 2008; Pirkkalainen & Pawloski, 2013). For this reason, organizational culture could be viewed as a major barrier to the successful implementation of knowledge management (Ajmal & Koskinen, 2008; DeTiene & Jackson, 2001; Kayworth & Leidner, 2003). To manage knowledge effectively, an organization must establish a positive relationship between its organizational culture and its knowledge processes (Ajmal & Koskinen, 2008; Janz & Prasarnphanich, 2003; Lee & Choi, 2003; Wei, 2005). Moreover, organizational culture may also influence the motivation of employees to use knowledge management practices in daily activities (Bock, Zmud, Kim &

Lee, 2005). Social interaction, which is positively related to knowledge management initiatives, tends to be more favourable in cases where the organizational structure is less formalized and geared towards decentralization and integration (Chen & Huang, 2007). A fundamental shift in organizational culture and in the overall commitment to knowledge management at all organizational levels is necessary to successfully implement a knowledge management initiative (Ajmal & Koskinen, 2008; Gupta, Iyer & Aronson, 2000; Norman, 2004).

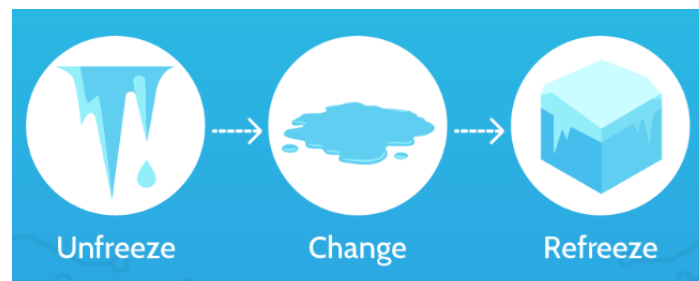
To conclude this section, I highlight the findings of Chen and Huang (2007): namely, that if an organization has a more innovative and collaborative climate, social interactions between employees occur more often and knowledge management is generally more successful. The influence of organizational climate on knowledge management can also be explained by the effect of increased trust among employees. Greater trust significantly improves employee communication and coordination of behaviour. Such findings should encourage managers to recognize the importance and value of social interactions as well as the link between organizational climate, organizational structure, and knowledge management (Chen & Huang, 2007). Joia and Lemos (2010) also suggest that organizational structure is a relevant element for the success of tacit knowledge transfer within organizations. In the most general terms, the results of the study by Mahmoudsalehi, Moradkhannejad, and Safari (2012) empirically support the finding that organizational structure is positively related to knowledge management.

In organizations with more formal organizational culture (such as public sector organizations), Austin et al. (2008) propose that top management should address their employees in a more formal manner, especially when explaining the goals of knowledge management and the way knowledge management practices will bring positive results to the organization as a whole. Providing a clear picture of expected and desired outcomes is necessary. Management, even in the public sector, should try to avoid an overly controlled culture as it hinders the knowledge management intentions of their employees. Rather, managers should promote a democratic culture, providing employees with a relatively flexible work environment, promoting the taking of controlled risks, and also taking responsibility for potential mistakes that can be seen as learning opportunities (Chang & Lin, 2015). As knowledge management practices are blended into an organization's everyday functioning, they also become part of the organizational culture and knowledge sharing becomes a normal part of everyday problem solving (Austin et al., 2008). Nevertheless, Bureš (2003) emphasizes that any change to an organizational culture is complex and requires a significant amount of time, and this also applies to the incorporation of knowledge management practices into the culture. In practice, it is both possible and potentially more successful to integrate and modify knowledge management solutions into an existing organizational culture rather than to try to change it entirely (Bureš, 2003; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

1.2.9 Knowledge Management and Change Management

Change is always uncertain and unpredictable. It can provoke different responses but the most common response is resistance. Nevertheless, changes are always occurring at all levels of organizations (Burnes, 2004). Because of this, successful change management impacts an organization's ability to survive and excel in the current competitive and evolving environment (Todnem By, 2005). Change management is defined as the process of continually renewing an organization's direction, structure, and capabilities to meet the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers and users (Moran & Brightman, 2011). Initiatives related to knowledge management also present serious challenges to an organization and its employees because it means change in the organization (Jashapara, 2011). Typically, the literature describes change management as having three phases. According to Lewin (1951), these three phases are unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, graphically represented below in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Lewin's Change Management Model



Source: Adapted from Lewin (1951)

Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) believe that a variety of interventions can reduce resistance to change. It is not surprising, therefore, that an integral part of change management is appropriate human resource management. In this context, special attention must be paid to the range of employee involvement, the diversity of training, and the role of reward and recognition systems. These factors, when effectively managed, can significantly contribute to the successful implementation of knowledge management initiatives. The general assumption behind reward and recognition systems is that greater employee engagement and effort will result in the overall improved performance of an organization. Essentially, organizations are comprised of people and it is important to understand how change influences employees on both the emotional and cognitive level in order to implement change effectively (Jashapara, 2011). Providing employees with appropriate training and equipping them with the necessary

education, facilitation, and support during any process of changes is crucial for the successful implementation of change.

1.2.10 Knowledge Management Benefits

Over the last 20 years, the public sector has seen numerous changes as it gradually shifts from a bureaucratic organizational model to a more modern one (Sandhu, Jain & Ahmad, 2011). Today public sector organizations are also turning their orientation toward becoming knowledge-based organizations (Willem & Buelens, 2007). Because of this, knowledge and knowledge management has become a subject of paramount importance in the functioning of public sector organizations similar to many firms in the private sector (Siong, Salleh, Syed Noh Syed & Syed-Ikhsan, 2011; Willem & Buelens, 2007). Knowledge management has the potential to improve the quality and efficiency of public services just as many private organizations have improved their performance. The ability to provide effective interventions and services is essential to ensuring an ethical social work practice (Gira, Kessler & Poertner, 2004). Knowledge management has the potential to become one of most important building blocks in the overall improvement of public services (Arora, 2011). Knowledge management will be beneficial in public organizations because it has the potential to improve organizational performance (Lai & Li, 2013; Yadav & Singh, 2013).

New governance has begun to emerge as an integral part of governments' efforts to increase the effectiveness and reach of public services (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2009). Bureaucratic organizations are now encouraged to adopt knowledge management practices, empowering employees to create knowledge networks and organize their work in teams or across organizational boundaries (Abrahamson Löfström, 2010; Berglund, 2014; Leichsenring, 2004; Nishikawa, 2011). People employed in social work typically have both communication competences and teamwork skills, both of which facilitate successful knowledge management initiatives. Knowledge management also has the potential to improve policy-making at a higher level by advancing informed debate and decision-making. In the public sector, this process is less concerned with the generation of profit and competitive advantages and more with adding value to services in the public sector which in turn increases well-being, societal effectiveness, and general welfare (Myers, 2014; Ortenblad, 2011, 2013; Ortenblad & Koris, 2014). As such, it has the potential to appeal to a broad group of stakeholders.

Although extensive literature on the topic of knowledge management exists, there are not many empirical studies that demonstrate a concrete connection between knowledge management activities and organizational outcomes. A few studies prove that human resource management and ICT-related knowledge management are strongly correlated and have a statistically significant influence on both financial performance and organizational competitiveness. Such studies are an important contribution to knowledge management literature as they demonstrate the importance of combining the social and technological tools

of knowledge management, and also present evidence that knowledge management does indeed have a positive impact on the successful functioning of organizations (Andreeva & Kianto, 2012).

A number of authors (i.e. Davenport et al., 1998) go so far as to propose that knowledge management can bring direct financial benefits for organizations through a range of means that save or earn money. Other authors (i.e. Akgun et al., 2007) suggest that the effect of knowledge management on financial performance is indirect, and that it can be difficult to determine the precise influence of intangible knowledge resources on the financial performance of an organization (AGIMO, 2004). The tangible influence of knowledge management on a firm or an organization's performance is its ability to create new knowledge, and to later build on that new knowledge and capture a high proportion of subsequent spin-offs of the newly produced knowledge (Bogner & Bansal, 2007). Bogner and Bansal (2007), on the basis of a regression analysis consisting of 30,022 patent records from 42 firms, establish that a firm's growth rate is positively connected with its ability to create new, rare, and valuable knowledge and to use that knowledge to enhance their future operations. In this context, a framework of seven practical outcomes has been developed to serve as guidelines for knowledge management investment evaluation, approval, and monitoring. The following are the seven outcomes in the framework: learning curve, experience curve, strategic alignment, connectivity, risk management, value management, and psychological contract. With this framework, the intermediate and direct impacts of knowledge management on organizational performance in both financial and non-financial terms can be evaluated (Massingham & Massingham, 2014).

1.2.11 Practical Examples of Knowledge Management from the Private Sector

In 1999, during the early stages of the development of knowledge management, KPMG (2000) conducted a survey of 423 organizations in the United Kingdom, mainland Europe, and the United States that revealed that 81% of the surveyed organizations were considering implementing a knowledge management program and 38% already had. In a sample of international companies from Russia, Finland, and China (Andreeva & Kianto, 2012), knowledge management was demonstrated to be an enabler of improved organizational performance. Ford and Lotus are examples of organizations with good practices where knowledge management was implicitly embedded into everyday activities. In those two specific cases, different degrees of formal, informal, and electronic networks aimed at the common goal of promoting knowledge sharing were successfully implemented (Jashapara, 2011). Another example is the knowledge management initiative carried out by the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, which makes use of a green book to record best practices in every single department in the organization, from top management to lower level staff. The best practices book is updated on an annual basis and functions without a technological support system (Call, 2005).

There are numerous additional examples of private sector companies that have engaged in knowledge management activities and reported noticeable business gains (Arevuo, 2002). Such companies demonstrate improved performance (Rašula, Bosilj Vukšić & Indihar Štemberger, 2012) and competitiveness (North & Hornung, 2002), and report a significant direct impact of knowledge management on their innovativeness (Akgul & Tunca, 2016). The benefits of knowledge management are achieved by sharing knowledge to influence business processes, solve business problems, and make better business decisions (Hegazy & Ghorab, 2014). Successful knowledge management applications related to collective knowledge and know-how (tacit knowledge) could likewise be used in the public sector to improve the overall functioning of organizations (Nonaka & Von Krogh, 2009) and enhance the wellbeing of users of social work services.

1.2.12 Practical Examples of Knowledge Management in the Public Sector

The public sector encounters the same challenges throughout the world: introducing new efficiencies across all public services, improving accountability, making informed decisions, enhancing partnerships with stakeholders, capturing the knowledge of an aging workforce, and meeting the general objective of improving overall performance (Arora, 2011). Today public sector organizations have become accustomed to shortages of financial and human resources that are simultaneously accompanied by the expectations of the general public to continue delivering high-quality services (Gill, 2009; Greenaway & Vuong, 2010; Lettieri, Borga & Savoldelli, 2004). In fact, Franken and Braganza (2006) suggest that both politicians and the public are becoming more demanding in terms of the quality and efficiency of public services.

Gray, Joy, Plath, and Webb (2013) argue that social work organizations that want to improve the quality and efficiency of provided services can potentially find help in the research literature. In such cases, public sector organizations would first need to reconsider some of their key elements and functions in order to embark on the path toward achieving optimal functioning despite shrinking resources. In order to achieve optimal functioning in the current climate, organizations need to maximize the effective and efficient management of existing resources (Dimovski et al., 2017). In this effort, the role of knowledge and knowledge management is gaining in importance (Ruch, 2012). Indeed, more than a decade ago, knowledge management was already recognized as one of the core elements of the social work profession (Webster, McNabb & Daroch, 2015).

Public sector organizations are typically organized to store internal information that can be translated into explicit knowledge. However, they tend to neglect the collecting and disseminating of tacit knowledge (Austin et al., 2008). There are several characteristics that clearly distinguish the public and private sectors (Euske, 2003; Roste & Miles, 2005). The most remarkable differences include organizing principles, organizational structure, performance metrics (for example, public sector organizations do not place significant

emphasis on financial performance), relationship with users, different types of employees, supply chains, sources of knowledge, ownership, performance expectations, and use of employee incentive systems. Furthermore, public sector organizations are primarily engaged with delivering public services, with profit, revenues, and growth being secondary concerns. Another key difference is how public sector organizations interact with their environment and their stakeholders as compared to private companies. Many constraints, including the actions of political parties, affect the way they carry out their operations and procedures. Often taking action can require several levels of approval. In this sense, public organizations are more exposed to external control and influence, and have less autonomy over their decision-making (Chawla & Joshi, 2010).

Examples in the literature about the Indian public sector show that the public sector lags behind the private sector in understanding and implementing knowledge management practices (Cong & Pandya, 2003). Likewise, authors Cong, Li-Hua, and Stonehouse (2007) claim there is no clear strategy within the Chinese public sector for the implementation knowledge management practices, especially when compared to the private sector. In general, there is a lack of awareness about the potential benefits of knowledge management in the public sector. In order to close the gap in knowledge management between public and private sectors, it would be necessary to go through certain initial stages of introducing knowledge management to the public sector: namely, building trust, modifying reward and recognition systems, developing senior management, and other technicalities related to processes and information communication technologies (Cong & Pandya, 2003). The most common obstacles to the implementation of knowledge management in the public sector are rigid organizational structure, excessive hierarchy, and lack of awareness about the potential benefits of knowledge management (Chawla & Joshi, 2010).

In 2004, Australian government departments and agencies introduced various new technologies, which made it possible to manage knowledge within and between organizations in order to improve outcomes (AGIMO, 2004). Similarly, Choi (2015) reports that awareness of the benefits of knowledge sharing is growing within the public sector of the United States. What makes the public sector unique is that public service is often a calling, and civil servants are more willing to share knowledge in order to create advanced organizational knowledge and improve the delivery of social services. In order for knowledge sharing to occur, be promoted, and to succeed in the public sector, its altruistic perspective should be acknowledged and emphasized. It must also be recognized that the field of knowledge management has generally received too little attention in the public sector (Chen & Hsieh, 2015).

When comparing the private and public sector, it should also be noted that the latter has certain advantages. Steijn (2008) observed that public sector organizations, due to the primary activity of providing public services, are more inclined to attract employees that are motivated by the desire to serve. This particular quality of public sector employees has the

potential to positively influence or accelerate knowledge sharing activities (Chen & Hsieh, 2015). Similarly, Houston and Cartwright (2007) refer to public service as a calling that encourages employees to share knowledge with the goal of enhancing overall organizational knowledge which in turn has the effect of improving the delivery of public services. Perry (1996) proposes four dimensions to the motivation of the public sector employee: attraction to policymaking, commitment to the public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice.

Bjorkhenheim (2007) mentions that in Finland, social workers working in the same organization tend to meet on a frequent daily basis, not just formally but also informally. Because of this, they have many opportunities to engage in dialogues on work-related issues and contribute to the knowledge base of their organization. In the same study, social workers expressed the belief that discussing different topics with their colleagues equips them with the knowledge to solve existing problems. Social workers added that they are prepared to share with others what they know. A majority of the respondents in the study further expressed their desire to know more about current research topics in the field as it provides them with ideas that they can apply in their everyday work. Social workers are continuously confronted with new challenges. This can be difficult but it also offers many opportunities to learn and develop. The most striking finding in the Finnish study was that over half of the respondents reported that there is not enough time to apply newly gained knowledge in their practice because they are generally overburdened with their (normal) everyday tasks (Bjorkenheim, 2007).

1.2.13 Lessons of Knowledge Management Learned

The following are the main elements that have an impact on knowledge management implementation: organizational culture, leadership, management support, ICT, incentives, and performance measurement (Lee, Kim & Kim, 2012). Public sector organizations that strive to implement knowledge management initiatives among their employees should also encourage communities of practice (Amayah, 2013). Communities of practice are especially important for organizational efforts to effectively capture the tacit knowledge of individuals (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice are informal in nature. Members are self-selected, are under no pressure to produce deliverable outcomes, and have no constraints such as deadlines. Communities of practice are a promising tool for knowledge and learning because they emphasize social processes and interactions that are central to collective learning (Macpherson & Antonacopoulou, 2013). Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) offer a more precise definition of communities of practice as groups of people who share a concern or a set of problems or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting with each other on a regular basis.

Communities of practice are important because they allow their members to think outside the box and to search for alternatives to everyday organizational routines (Jashapara, 2011). People especially share stories in communities of practice. Stories are integral to sharing tacit

knowledge and become the starting point for understanding how tacit knowledge can be transformed into collective or organizational knowledge. Brown and Duguid (2000) also emphasize the importance of stories. They believe that stories are self-perpetuating and create knowledge that reinforces and renews itself through connections embedded in work practice. Stories are also a powerful way of understanding what happened in a sequence of events and the causes of why something happened. On the basis of a knowledge audit in a Scottish third sector organization, Bloice and Burnett (2016) posit that the majority of valuable knowledge of organizations' employees is indeed in tacit form. The employees on the shop floor were called practitioners. They tailored services to the specifics of individual customers and subsequently represented the intellectual capital of the organization (Bloice & Burnett, 2016).

Another beneficial approach is for managers to organize seminars or workshops to familiarize employees with the basic methods and objectives of knowledge management prior to actual implementation. Conceptual models exist that could have a positive impact on the success of knowledge management initiatives. One is composed of the following six factors: familiarity with knowledge management, coordination among employees and departments, incentives for knowledge management efforts, authority to perform knowledge management activities, a system for handling knowledge, and cultural support (Ajmal et al., 2010). The first factor, familiarity, focuses on ensuring that all employees understand knowledge management and have a clear concept of how they can individually contribute to specific knowledge management initiatives (Pieris, David & William, 2003). Coordination efforts encourage employees to communicate and share their knowledge and best practices with other employees (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Employees with less power have a greater incentive to share information with their superiors, while those who occupy higher ranks within the organization are more likely to only share their knowledge with colleagues of a similar rank (Huber, 1991). Ajmal et al. (2010) distinguish between power as the ability to achieve certain ends and authority derived as the result of exercising that power. If knowledge is possessed by individual employees, it is crucial that employees also possess the authority to share and utilize their knowledge in the organization (Holsapple & Joshi, 2001).

Several studies (i.e. Ajmal et al., 2010; Austin et al., 2008; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001; Newell, Robertson, Scarbrough & Swan, 2002) have demonstrated the integral role of incentives in the success of knowledge management initiatives. Those studies consider as incentives all factors (financial or non-financial) that motivate employees to perform specific actions or prefer one alternative over another. Austin et al. (2008) argue that if employees realize that they will receive benefits if they share knowledge, they will be more inclined to do so. Similarly, in order for knowledge to be understood as a process and to maximize the value of knowledge, organizations need to create appropriate systems to support the flow of knowledge (Ruppel & Harrington, 2001). An effective knowledge management system can

be the most important enabler, although any knowledge management system can also become an obstacle if the organization does not manage it properly (Ajmal et al., 2010).

In terms of organizational culture, it should be noted that every organization's culture is distinctive, and that it is the culture that tends to separate members from one organization or one group from another (Hofstede, 1980). Moreover, organizational culture is one of the key factors or enablers (Chase, 1997; Chong, Kalsom, Syed Noh & Syed-Ikhsan, 2011) that determines the effectiveness of knowledge management initiatives. In the context of the public sector and social work, changing the organizational culture is also important because it is considered to be the main driver for successful knowledge management implementation (Riege & Lindsay, 2006). It is not surprising that the literature suggests that the majority of successful initiatives have been based on an appropriate organizational culture that was positively oriented toward collecting and sharing knowledge among employees (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). In addition, a culture of trust and confidence among employees is perceived as necessary to encourage the application and development of knowledge within an organization (Alhamoudi, 2015). Holste and Fields (2010) empirically demonstrated that trust influences the extent to which individual employees are ready to use and share tacit knowledge. In cases when a high degree of mutual trust is absent, people will be more sceptical about the intentions and behaviours of others, and therefore will be reluctant to share their knowledge (Chong & Choi, 2001). This topic is particularly important as the unwillingness to share knowledge may hurt an organization's ability to survive (Lin, 2007). Furthermore, an environment should be nurtured where making mistakes is permitted because mistakes are viewed as a process of investing in individuals and subsequently a key asset in the creation of a learning organization (Yang & Wan, 2004).

Despite its weaknesses and potential pitfalls, ICT systems are also powerful enablers (Chong et al., 2011) of organizational knowledge processes. Most of the literature about knowledge management suggests a positive connection between successful knowledge management practices and appropriate ICT (Akgun et al., 2007). Knowledge management systems in themselves lead to numerous forms of knowledge management support systems that go beyond the traditional functions of merely storing and retrieving coded knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). In general, ICT systems can offer four major contributions: first, they support knowledge creation by combining new sources of knowledge and promoting just-in-time learning and at the same time decreasing the time needed for knowledge sharing between employees; second, they provide traditional assistance in the storage and retrieval of knowledge; third, they offer more communication channels or tools to employees, and; fourth, they can be used to integrate knowledge into daily routines (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

Ultimately, however, the success of knowledge management initiatives is more dependent on interpersonal interactions and social relationships than on technological solutions (Chong & Choi, 2005). Indeed human behaviours, not ICT, provide the main sources of new knowledge that is later applied to practices and embedded in improved processes, and enhances the

organization's ability to derive value from knowledge (Mohrman, Finegold & Klein, 2002). Beesley and Cooper (2008) suggest that organizations should not over-emphasize the importance of technology and should be extremely cautious when discussing the human component of knowledge. In order to increase the chances for knowledge management initiatives to be successful, organizations must maintain a balance between several factors. Those factors include individual, organizational, social, and technological factors that influence the creation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge (Beesley, 2004; Call, 2005; Cooper, 2006). Organizations that successfully engaged in knowledge management initiatives recognize that knowledge does not exist just for the sake of existing, and this carries the implication that knowledge management is simply a helpful tool that helps employees in organizations do what they do better (Chatzkel, 2002).

The essential goal of knowledge management is to connect information and people, and people and people. Nesbit (2002) proposes six steps for creating a knowledge management system in organizations: first, define the organizational goals that knowledge management will address; second, perform a knowledge audit to identify all of the organization's knowledge bases as well as cases of knowledge duplication, gaps, and overlaps; third, create visual representation of units of knowledge and define their relationships to each other; fourth, develop an overall knowledge management strategy; fifth, acquire appropriate tools required for the successful capture, analysis, categorization, and distribution of knowledge, and; sixth, continuously assess the success of the knowledge management initiative and make adjustments when necessary. A potential additional step was suggested by Call (2005) who noted that Nesbit (2002) neglected the highly important factor of organizational culture, which has been discussed in previous sections of this dissertation.

1.2.14 Knowledge Management Challenges

Even when employees are motivated to share knowledge with colleagues, potential barriers exist that may prevent them from doing so. These barriers include organizational climate, organizational culture, and organizational structure (Amayah, 2013). It is also possible that some employees do not believe that they have anything to offer besides performing the basic duties of their job. These employees may have difficulties identifying the right time and setting for sharing knowledge that might be useful to other employees. Moreover, until recently, many organizations and employees failed to recognize the importance of sharing knowledge and that it has become an important characteristic of the work place. As with any other organizational change, employees may need time to adapt to a new way of doing things (Bloice & Burnett, 2016).

Schepers and van den Berg (2007) and Willem and Scarbrough (2006) explore the barriers presented by organizational climate. They suggest that, in an organization that prioritizes

individual competition, employees will be less likely to share knowledge with their peers. It also happens that managers are left out of informal networks in which employees feel comfortable enough to challenge certain organizational issues and share their knowledge to their peers. To overcome this obstacle, managers need to gain an understanding about where employees naturally seek knowledge for problem-solving, what their feelings are toward technological solutions, and how they behave in face-to-face interactions (Austin et al., 2008).

Regarding the barrier of a hierarchical organizational structure, Sharrat & Usoro (2003) claim that organizations with a centralized, bureaucratic management style tend to stifle the creation of new knowledge. This is in contrast to a flexible decentralized organizational structure that encourages and promotes knowledge-sharing, particularly knowledge that is more tacit in nature. Furthermore, in hierarchical organizational structures, employees primarily communicate with their immediate superiors and subordinates. This kind of organizational structure limits information flow, and hinders the sharing and transfer of knowledge through different levels of the organization (Alhamoudi, 2015). The majority of service organizations have strong divisional structures, being composed of groups of practitioners that engage solely in individual decision-making in relation to their users. Almost no group decision-making or problem-solving takes place. Typically these kinds of organizations do not offer many opportunities for internal networking. In comparison with other types of organizations, they also do not offer informal or formal activities that promote knowledge sharing between employees and their departments (van Beveren, 2003).

Organizational culture presents a particular challenge because it has such a strong potential to produce knowledge-related outputs. An especially challenging negative organizational culture is the so-called culture of resistance and knowledge hoarding (Liebowitz & Chen, 2003; Murray, 2001; Svieby & Simmons, 2002). In such a structure, managers and employees do not sufficiently value the benefits of knowledge sharing (Mason & Pauleen, 2003). They may even view knowledge sharing as an activity that can threaten their job security, and at the least feel that they will not receive recognition for sharing knowledge with others (Murray, 2001; Riege 2005). Moreover, in empirical studies, 45% of respondents indicated that organizational culture is the largest barrier for successful knowledge management implementation. This can be the result of low levels of trust, poor communication, and the lack of individual knowledge sharing. These factors can cause low success rates for knowledge management initiatives (Mason & Paulen, 2003).

Negative perceptions of employees may result in the hoarding of knowledge. The public sector has been identified as a context where it is difficult to develop and maintain a collaborative culture (Edge, 2005). Therefore, knowledge management initiatives should also aim to change organizational culture to improve both knowledge sharing and knowledge creation. This kind of organizational shift is associated with a transition from internal competition towards collaboration that promotes reasonable risk-taking as well as the

building of trust between co-workers and more broadly between different organizations. Jashapara (2011) argues that, from an organizational perspective, the assumption holds that greater collaboration will ultimately result in increased productivity, lower costs, and higher quality products and services.

There are also organizational structures that tend to restrict knowledge flows, or where communication and knowledge flows are restricted in certain directions, generally top-down (Bloice & Burnett, 2016; Riege, 2005). Slow progress in the field of knowledge management can also arise from difficulties in sharing and gathering knowledge outside of organizations. There is a general sense that a lack of collaboration in this area results from an excessive amount of red tape or because organizations do not want to share their knowledge with others (Bloice & Burnett, 2016).

The lack of incentives and an appropriate information system represent two additional barriers to the success of knowledge management initiatives (Ajmal et al., 2010). In the past and still today to a degree, academics and practitioners of knowledge management emphasize and advocate the need for ICT solutions to proactively manage knowledge. However, they offer little concrete guidance, mostly recommending tools such as groupware, document management systems, email, and internet (Mehrizi, Tehrani & Kazemi, 2008). As a result of this approach, many organizations understood knowledge management as the equivalent of providing technological infrastructure (Yahya, 2009). Another challenge for organizations that engage in knowledge management initiatives is to acknowledge and counter opposition from within the organization. To discourage such opposition in advance, it is advisable to obtain strong support in the form of both financial assets and moral support from senior or top management prior to launching knowledge management initiatives (Yeh, Lai & Ho, 2006).

While the management of many organizations recognizes that knowledge management is essential for improving performance, they still have difficulties developing proper strategies for implementation (Alhamoudi, 2015). When knowledge management initiatives are poorly planned and implemented, the paradoxical result can be inadequate organizational knowledge that in turn leads to poor management decisions, strategies, and policies all of which hinder overall performance (Stewart et al., 2000). Certain organizational barriers are impervious to management (Cabrera et al., 2006; Singh & Kant, 2008; Wang & Noe, 2010). For example, lack of employee commitment to the organization (Jo & Joo, 2011) and disbelief in the incentive system (Gagne, 2009; Tohidinia & Mosakhani, 2010) can result in ongoing knowledge hoarding. If the goal of management is that knowledge workers produce valuable outcomes for the organization, employee skills and competences need to be developed (Wong & Aspinwall, 2005). If not, as with tangible assets, their value will depreciate. To continue producing valuable outcomes, organizations need to devote time and effort to providing appropriate opportunities for the professional development of employees through training and educational programs (Alhamoudi, 2015).

Additional challenges to be met in the field of knowledge management relate to the measurement of organizational performance as the majority of stakeholders tend to prefer and be more acquainted with financial information. Partially this can be explained by legislation requiring organizations to disclose annual financial information (Jashapara, 2011). In recent years, some regulators have called for supplementing financial reporting for organizational performance with non-financial indicators that would provide a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the processes behind the financial measures (Eccles & Nohria, 1992). Ultimately, however, knowledge management is an investment decision and as such should deliver measurable results (Chong & Chong, 2009).

As a conclusion to this discussion of frequent barriers and challenges encountered in the field of knowledge management, we note that Bureš (2003) believes that some barriers may be overcome completely but others will remain. In order for organizations to optimize their operations, they must strive to minimize the negative effects of these barriers. To successfully tackle the challenges that block knowledge management initiatives, organizations should above all implement appropriate communications methods, build trust, invest in human resource management, encourage team work, and effectively designed the organization of the workplace (Bureš, 2003).

1.3 Social Work

1.3.1 Social Work Definition

Social work, not unlike knowledge management and organizational learning, has many different definitions that vary from country to country. In the United States, for example, social work is considered to be the most important social service profession with social workers being responsible for helping people to function better in their environments, improve their relationships with others, and solve personal and family problems through various services (such as counselling and psychotherapy provided in a range of different settings from public agencies to private organizations). The social work sector makes a core commitment to the segment of the population that is disadvantaged, oppressed, or suffering from poverty. The following three constructs inform the social work sector: biopsychosocial, the individual in the environment, and service systems for change. The aim of social work is to regard and ultimately understand the world in all of its complexity (Brekke, 2012).

Boehm (1961) puts forward the proposition that the effectiveness of social work is connected to its capacity to build an appropriate foundation in science and values. He argues that without such a foundation, the efforts of the social work sector to define and possibly enhance the reputation of the profession and add to its social usefulness will likely falter or even fail. Social work has a unique identity, positioning itself as distinct from other human service professions such as psychology and nursing. This ostensible uniqueness derives from

the values of social work, from the population being served, and from the biopsychosocial perspective on social phenomena. In terms of the domains of inquiry in social work, social workers seek answers to questions such as to what is the profession most dedicated to understanding and knowing, thus highlighting areas where the mental and material resources of social workers and their organizations will be highly invested. In brief, social work and their organizations seek to understand and foster change (Brekke, 2012). Parton (2000) believes that social work is essentially ambiguous, complex, and uncertain, and its major potential resides in its ability to improve dialogue, understanding, and interpretation as opposed to simply adhering to legislation and authority.

To illustrate the complexity of the social work mission, imagine a situation where a social worker must decide if an individual is qualified to receive public support. In general, such a decision should be made in accordance with prevailing legislation. However, in practice, the assessment will always include elements that are subject to the interpretation of the social worker (Alexanderson et al., 2009). Certain characteristics of the job are specific to public sector service workers. First, the situations that they encounter in practice are far more complicated than those described in various guidelines. Second, they are expected to meet and balance the needs of individuals who are specific, unique, and unpredictable (Lipsky, 1980). A range of informal and moral rationalities concerning care, trust, kindness, and respect reside at the centre of the social work mission (Broadhurst, Hall, White & Pithouse, 2010). These relational aspects create many different situations involving practical and moral dilemmas that are difficult to systematize (Horlick-Jones, 2005; Mattison, 2000). Although social workers increasingly interact with various technological tools, their work remains primarily relationship-based (Broadhurst et al., 2010).

The literature offers many examples of countries (the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) where there is a push for formal risk assessment tools in the social work setting. In child protection services, for example, the tendency toward a systemized approach has arisen from increasing demands for public accountability coupled with resource and budgetary constraints (Goddard, Saunders, Stanley & Tucci, 1999; Shlonsky & Wagner, 2005; Wald & Woolverton, 1990). Broadhurst et al. (2010) argue that externally driven systems intended for procedural control are unable to effectively second-guess the risks to which social workers are exposed in their users' relations. In my opinion, the bureaucratic-instrumental bias manifested in the proposed modernization of children's services (and other areas of social work in general) leaves the informal risks that are of paramount importance in social work practice under-emphasized and under-theorized. Broadhurst et al. (2010) have concluded from their research that the complexities of social work and social work practices exist in real time, namely "somewhere" and more importantly with "someone". Ferguson (2004) argues that the "smell" of social work practice cannot be captured by files or format.

1.3.2 The Social System in Slovenia

Social work does not exist in isolation. It is influenced by regulation, legislation, politics, and societal values (Alexanderson et al., 2009), and social workers and their organizations must deal with these influences in their everyday operations. The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities in Slovenia (hereinafter: MLFSAEO) (2019) has concluded that in the social work sector they must deal with new and complex needs of users and that the social problematics are in constant flux.

Social protection is one of the most important components of social security and is based on principles of social justice, solidarity, equal access, and freedom of choice. Ensuring dignity and equal opportunities and preventing social exclusion are the starting points of all meaningful measurements in the field of social affairs. MLFSAEO promotes basic guidelines and mechanisms in the field of social development that comprise a policy of social development aimed at promoting equal opportunities, facilitating social participation based on investing in people, evaluating existing social security systems, and finally defining personalized measures for services users. According to MLFSAEO, harmonious economic and social development are the fundamental conditions for Slovenia to be considered and to actually function as a social welfare state. Social policies represent a guide for social development strategy, and can be viewed as a set of objectives, measures, and other instruments that the state develops and uses to enable individuals and population groups to satisfy personal and collective interests, and to function as full and equal members of the society (Ministry of Family, Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2019).

Social policy is narrowly defined as measures that ensure the social security of individuals. Social security is defined by professional principles, rules, and activities that support the individual's efforts to become and remain involved in their social environment and to actively participate in it. In order for this system to function, the state provides material and social rights, and individuals contribute by way of taxes and other compulsory duties. Social security could also be defined as a widespread model of the state for the provision of social security, such as healthcare, employment, housing, education, and is considered superior to the concept of social protection defined by types of services and financial assistance to groups and individuals who do not have sufficient means to finance their basic human needs and existence.

In Slovenia, we have adopted the definition of social security as the right of individuals to be insured against risks associated with illness, unemployment, old age, injuries at work, disability, and maternity, and to provide support to children and benefits for family members after the death of the main caretaker or provider for the family, and other rights regulated by the Social Security Act. According to the Constitution of Slovenia, the state is also required to regulate compulsory health, pension, disability, and other social insurance policies, and is responsible for the adoption of measures for their appropriate functioning. At the same time, the state is obligated to protect family (both mothers and fathers), children, and youth, and to

create the necessary conditions for the protection of these members of society (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2019).

1.3.3 Types of Social Organizations in Slovenia

Direct social security tasks are carried out by a range of public social welfare institutions that include 16 new social work centers. According to Article 68c of the Social Security Act, the Community of Social Work Centers of Slovenia is an important stakeholder the role of which is to regulate social work centers, specify the tasks to be carried out by them, and establish standards and norms related to those tasks. Social work centers deal with financial assistance and subsidies, parental protection and family benefits, child and family care, protection of adults, and protection of the disabled.

In addition to social work centers, Slovenia has been operating crisis centers for young people since 1995. Today there are ten such crisis centers in Slovenia. Crisis centers are focused on providing social and personal assistance to children and adolescents who contact the crisis centers. The centers provide appropriate advice and care to resolve problems, find temporary shelter for children and adolescents, permanent removal from families if necessary, and arrange measures for return to the family whenever possible, always collaborated with social work centers and other state organizations responsible for dealing with minors. Crisis centers have also been established for adult women and men who are victims of violence. Two such public crisis centers are currently operational in Slovenia.

Senior citizen homes are another important social organization in Slovenia. The country currently has 55 public homes for the elderly. Their basic mission is to provide institutional care for the elderly. Institutional care in this case is intended, among other things, to eliminate personal distress and the problems of senior citizens over 65 years of age who, due to illness, age or other reasons, cannot continue living in their homes. Senior citizen homes replace or complement the care generally received in the home among family by providing accommodation, organized meals, general care, and health care.

Care and work centers for adults with mental and physical developmental disabilities are also among the social welfare institutions in Slovenia. These are organizations that improve the quality of life for people with disabilities by providing programs, guidance, care, work, and activities adapted to their needs and abilities. The principles that guide these organizations are that people with disabilities should be included and active in society. There are 33 such public centers for adults in Slovenia. There are also work and care centers focused on the younger population that offer job training services. Today there are five public centers in Slovenia serving the needs of the younger population.

Social welfare services also have the possibility of providing help at home. These services are intended for users who have guaranteed living and other conditions in their own home,

but cannot entirely take care for themselves due to age or severe disabilities, and their relatives are unable to provide such care. Such services can also be provided by private legal entities or by individual entrepreneurs as long as certain mandatory conditions defined in the legislation and dictated by the state are fulfilled. In recent years, assisted living facilities have emerged as a viable alternative for senior citizen homes and include services provided to senior citizens who are able to live in the environment of their own home but cannot provide all necessary care for themselves and would benefit from the proximity of professional staff (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2019).

The increasing number of volunteers in social care work represents a recent trend in Slovenian and international social work organizations that these organizations now need to manage (Brudney & Meijs, 2014; Vinton, 2012). This situation was predicted nearly a half century ago (Becker, 1964) and now has become the reality of social work organizations because of their inability to satisfy the needs of social services users without the help of volunteers because of chronic shortages of time, personnel, and finances.

Brudney and Meijs (2014) note that volunteer involvement creates the necessity for social workers to manage volunteers in different settings. However, social workers are not routinely trained in management and organization, and are often unable to obtain additional training when needed. This situation inevitably causes problems when social workers are required to coordinate and integrate volunteers in the operations of their organizations. In their research, Brudney and Meijs (2014), propose a range of approaches and tools to bridge this gap of knowledge in management and organization, and to increase social workers' competence to effectively manage volunteers. Some of the proposed solutions could be useful in the Slovenian context. Vinton (2012) endorses the involvement of volunteers, suggesting that a well-managed volunteer program may well mean that services for users do not need to be cut or suffer in terms of quality.

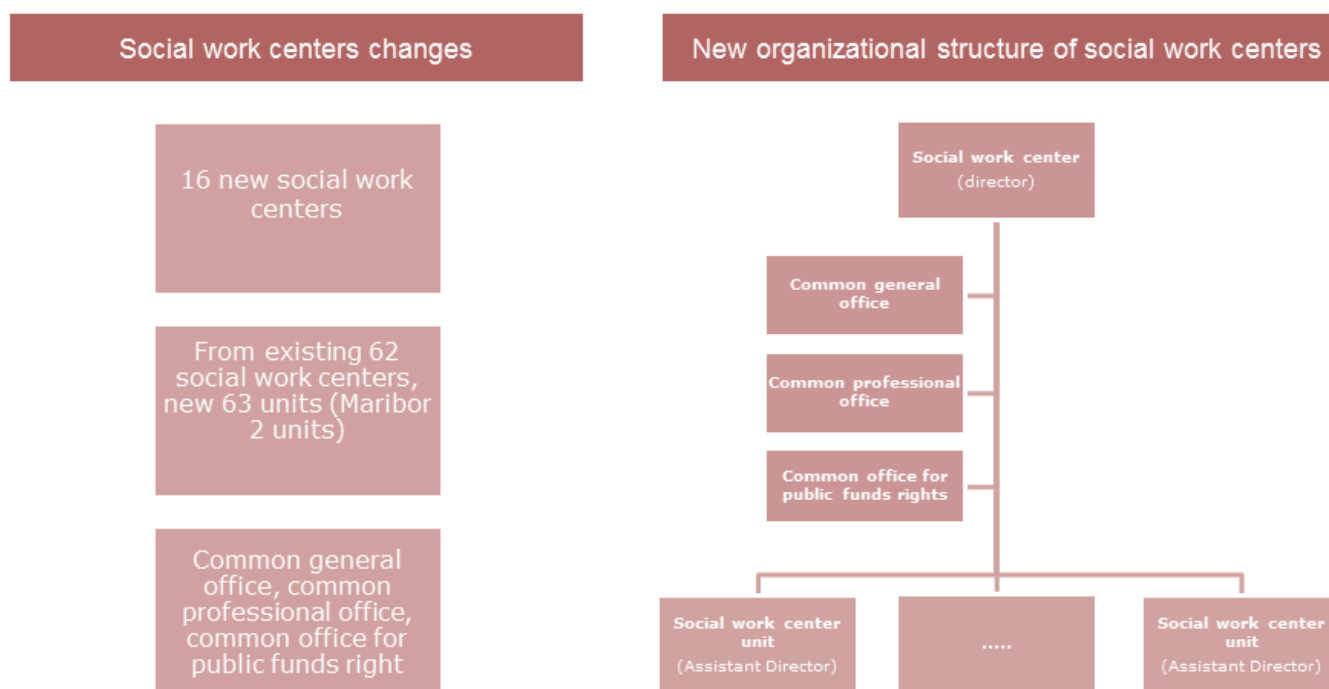
1.3.4 Social Work Centers in Slovenia

Social work centers play an important role in the social work system because they are the facilitators and providers of the entire social security system. In Slovenia, the role of social work centers in the community is becoming more important because of the recent increase in social problems resulting from the global economic and financial crisis. Alleviating the distress of individuals and helping to solve their problems requires rapid and effective professional help and support from existing public service organizations. According to MLFSAEO, a modern, professional, and effective system of social care will be needed in order to address the increasingly complex needs of services users. This was the primary motivation for the recent reorganization of Slovenian social work centers, the aim being to eliminate the weaknesses and shortcomings of the existing system. The reorganization was

focused on three major changes: the introduction of informative calculation, social activation, and a new organizational structure. MLFSAEO emphasized that the primary beneficiaries of the reforms should be the users of social work centers and the improvement of services provided to them (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2019).

From the management and organizational perspective, the most important part of the reorganization was a newly proposed organizational structure intended to unify the operations of social work centers and simplify their administrative procedures. MLFSAEO emphasized that social work centers would remain involved in local and regional problems, and would remain the primary professional institution in the field of social work. The reorganization involved the establishment of 16 new social work centers from the prior 62 social work centers that are now considered as 63 new units formed within the 16 new social work centers (the largest social work center in Maribor was divided into two units.) All 63 units remained autonomous in theory and practice. According to MLFSAEO, the new structure would allow more time for field work that is essential for fulfilling the primary missions of social work centers which requires proximity to their users. Individual social work organizations are also partially relieved of certain administrative procedures under the new system. An additional goal of the reorganization was to preserve some of the benefits of the previous organizational structure, such as the benefits of regional units that provide direct accessibility to users, have knowledge about the users and their specific situations, familiarity with the environment of users, and the ability to react rapidly when needed (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2019). Changes in the organizational structure of Slovenian social work centers are presented in Figure 5:

Figure 5: Reorganization of Social Work Centers in Slovenia in 2019



Source: Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (2019)

1.3.5 Challenges of Social Work in Slovenia

According to recent reports about the social situation in Slovenia, the field of social work is facing a host of new challenges. Following the latest global financial and economic crisis, the role of humanitarian (non-governmental) organizations in helping vulnerable groups and individuals and alleviating the impoverished social situation and various other disadvantages of affected populations has increased significantly. This role remains essential even now when certain macroeconomic indicators and the general state of the economy and trends related to the labour market are slowly improving. The role of humanitarian and other non-governmental organizations in the field of social work is particularly important because they can complement the social policies carried out by the state, and in certain cases replace the state in providing assistance to users when the state is temporarily or permanently unable to provide such services.

In recent years, the users of the services of humanitarian and non-governmental organizations require a greater amount of assistance and their problems have become more complex. Users of these services tend to be included in programs for longer periods of time, and the resolution of their problems often requires extensive knowledge from various fields (Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, 2017). The ongoing reorganization of Slovenian social work centers was intended to be a part of a solution that would address the broad spectrum of challenges related to the field of social work in Slovenia with the goal of creating and maintaining a modern, professional, and effective system of social care.

Examples of similar reorganizations of the social sector in foreign countries can be found in the literature. Bjorkenheim (2007) describes how the government of Finland carried out a project to reorganize the country's social services, incorporating the principles of knowledge-based good practice in the process. During the implementation of the new system, Finland developed a country-wide network of 11 government-funded centers of expertise and excellence in the field of social welfare. These centers facilitated collaboration between research, education, and practice. Finland and Slovenia are similar in that both countries have experienced increasing financial difficulties and cuts in resources devoted to welfare services, in particular after the global financial and economic crisis. The social work and welfare service system faced enormous challenges, not only related to shrinking resources but also an aging population, a transition from institutional to home care, a shift from publicly produced goods and services to more private and other types of services, an increasing need to include volunteers and families into social work institutions, a growing demand for the evaluation of social services and social work, and a raft of other legislative issues. The role of knowledge in the overall social work process has become particularly important. A stronger emphasis on knowledge, competence, and research therefore should be high on the agenda of important national decision and policy-makers and other integral stakeholders in the field of social work (Bjorkenheim, 2007). Several of the challenges in Finland and Slovenia have common characteristics and therefore Finland could be used by Slovenia as a model of good practice and a possible benchmark against which to measure progress.

Studies have also been conducted within the so-called third sector, that is the volunteer sector, that promote the importance of knowledge management. However, knowledge management in the public and in any other organizational context will have to overcome the challenges that have been described in the academic literature and indeed in this dissertation. There are no ready-made solutions. Knowledge management is spreading beyond its original private sector origins and creating links to other disciplines that were hardly conceived of when knowledge management first became known to the social work sector. As knowledge management migrates into different organizational contexts, researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders will need to establish common ground: namely, a set of existing knowledge management tools, techniques, and models that are transferrable to other organizational contexts, and methods as to how they should be adopted in order to enhance the potential benefits of knowledge management implementation (Bloice & Burnett, 2016).

In this regard, it should be noted that, both internationally and in Slovenia specifically, there has been a trend for social work organizations to promote social workers from direct practice to middle management positions and ask them to take on additional administrative responsibilities. This transition often causes problems for social workers as they are primarily equipped with knowledge and skills pertaining to direct practice. In contrast, their new roles force them to assume responsibilities that often contradict their direct practice and existing

skills (Toleson Knee, 2014; Toleson Knee & Folsom, 2012), and indeed highlight their lack of knowledge about common managerial and organizational skills and competences.

Shera and Bejan (2016) argue that many of these new managers do not have an adequate foundation of knowledge and skills needed to run human service organizations. Similarly, the Ministry of Public Administration in Slovenia (2014) (hereinafter: MPA) concludes that in general public sector employees and public sector middle and top managers have a deficit of managerial skills. MPA further suggests that the acquisition and development of managerial skills is not carried out in a comprehensive or systematic manner. As social work is part of the public sector, this gap in knowledge in both basic and advanced management topics represents a serious problem that needs to be addressed prior to any attempts to implement knowledge management in practice.

Boehm (1961) defines social workers as artists, and an additional challenge relates to the changing the mindset of individual social workers. Not only is their profession a combination of science and values, but they often view this combination as a particular skill that belongs to them and them alone. Moreover, they view the performance of these skills as an expression of their creativity, the creativity of the artist. Boehm further emphasizes that the presence of the artistic component is desirable in social work science and practice. I also found in my research that this mindset is still present in the majority of social workers and could become a barrier to introducing managerial and organizational approaches in the environment of social work. In other words, knowledge management and its gradual implementation into the everyday activities of social workers may contradict certain existing work patterns. However, even after taking into account the challenges and barriers that might stand in the way of successful implementation of knowledge management practices in the social work setting, I argue that the potential benefits of knowledge management outweigh the challenges.

1.4 Knowledge Management in Social Work

1.4.1 The Current State of Knowledge Management in the Social Work Sector

Over the last few decades, there has been an increasing focus on the social work sector and the question of whether it is possible to establish a sound knowledge base for its activities (Osmond & O'Connor, 2004; Osmond, 2005; Trevithick, 2008; Winston Lecroy, 2010). To date, little clarity has been established as to the end for which knowledge should be put to use in the social work sector (Osmond, 2006). Social work organizations provide a range of programs and services funded by public and private sources. In return, they are expected to collect and systematically analyse information regarding their services in order to justify existing and ensure future funding, and also to improve the quality of the services they offer (Carrilio, 2005; Kettner, Moroney & Martin 1999; Lewis, Lewis, Packard & Souflee, 2001; Poole, Carnahan, Chepenik & Tubiak, 2000; Scheirer, 2000). Researchers have come to a general agreement that the social work profession requires a stronger research culture in order

to be more effective and comparable to other professions, and also as a way for the profession to be promoted (Fook, 2003; Gilgun, 2005; Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2005; McCrae, Murray, Huxley & Evans, 2005). Nevertheless, the professional knowledge base of the social work segment, which has not expanded or promoted research activities, remains weak in comparison to other disciplines (McCrae et al., 2005).

All the same, scientific methodologies and knowledge relevant to social services have increased dramatically during the last 30 years. And yet two main indicators, the total number of journals and the impact factors of these journals, suggest that the field's contribution to expanding the scientific knowledge base has been relatively limited (Brekke, 2012). Based on different studies from different countries, it has become clear that there is no shared and up-to-date knowledge base used by the international social work sector (Bergmark & Lundstrom, 2002), and that social workers do not use research-based knowledge in their everyday activities. The results of a research study conducted among social workers working in the healthcare industry in Finland revealed that the social workers surveyed do not believe that they currently have the need for new knowledge (Bjorkenheim, 2007). Beddoe (2011) argues that most social work knowledge built from the ground up remains hidden within organizations because of a range of barriers and obligations such as the time and energy expended on other tasks. In contrast, Trevithick (2008) enumerates three basic features that comprise the knowledge base of social work: theoretical knowledge based on studies and research, factual knowledge (about specific users and cases), and practical knowledge (how to actually deliver social work care and services).

Research connected with the science of social work should be directed toward certain goals. First, the science of social work should be multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary as this is something that has always been strived for in social work (although not always achieved in practice). Second, positive attitudes toward advancing the frontiers of the science of social work should be promoted. Third, the ability for social work to contribute to knowledge in other disciplines (and likewise to translate work from other disciplines into specific social work applications) should be developed (Brekke, 2012). Authors Nurius and Kemp (2012) suggest that the science of social work is about the relationship of research to social impact. Moreover, Guo (2015) posits that social work researchers should integrate the latest advances in methods from other disciplines into the field of social work. Similarly, Fong (2012) believes that in the past social work education typically relied on professional practices but recently a need has emerged to reconsider social work as a science.

Brekke's (2012) propositions could provide a starting point on the path toward forging a positive attitude about incorporating knowledge from other disciplines into social work, possibly including the field of knowledge management that is presented in this doctoral dissertation. As early as 2005, it was commonly expected that social services organizations would account for their services and measure the outcomes of their work with vulnerable populations. In response to these expectations, certain organizations attempted to implement

computerized management information systems but often the systems ended up being under or poorly utilized (Carrilio, 2005). However, as was argued in previous chapters, knowledge management is much more than just utilizing the benefits from hardware and software solutions.

1.4.2 Examples of Knowledge Management Good Practice in Social Work

Austin et al. (2008) suggest six potential strategies that could assist human service organizations in the implementation of new knowledge management systems. Specifically, organizations should recognize that their greatest asset is the knowledge of their employees, and that knowledge and intellectual capital are the focal point of organizational wealth. This is especially true for human service organizations. Nevertheless, we know little about knowledge management in the public sector as a whole and even less about it in the context of human service organizations.

Knowledge management implementation in the context of the public sector is interesting because the ability of public service organizations to achieve their goals always closely correlates to the experience and skills of their employees (Bloice & Burnett, 2016). As became evident from the example of employees at government agencies in Western Australia, these employees are knowledge workers who perform judgement-oriented tasks that are highly dependent on their individual expertise, which is also grounded in organizational knowledge accumulated over many years (Sanchez & Morrison-Saunders, 2011). Today, even volunteers that help such organizations can be called knowledge workers (Hume & Hume, 2008; Hurley & Green, 2005; Kong, 2010; Renshaw & Krishnaswamy, 2009). Typically, knowledge intensive organizations rely on intellectual capital or the knowledge of employees, rather than on physical capital, to deliver services and/or products, (Lettieri, Borga & Savoldelli, 2004).

However, as regards the field of knowledge management implementation, a number of additional hurdles exist in the third and public sectors. In particular, lack of operational maturity has been identified as an obstacle (Hume & Hume, 2008), the inability to plan strategically (Ragsdell, 2013), sometimes connected with constant changes in the political environment and the ongoing battle between altruistic goals and more competitive organizational goals (Hume & Hume, 2008; Kong, 2007; Kong, 2010). These barriers are different from those that exist in the more competitive environment of the private sector. Research has been conducted on how to make the transition from private to public and third sector organizations (Hume & Hume, 2008, 2015; Hume, Clarke & Hume, 2012; Hume, Pope & Hume, 2012). However, many questions remain unanswered on this topic in the third and public sectors, which this doctoral dissertation will attempt to at least partially addresses.

Knowledge management practices can also be implemented in not-for-profit social organizations in order to meet organizational goals that are different from generating

financial profits through competitive advantage (Kong, 2007; Sillanpaa et al., 2010): for example, sharing good practices, increasing the body of knowledge, and contributing to a better society (Guldberg, Mackness, Makriyannis & Tait, 2013; Kong, 2007). Nevertheless, a not-for-profit organization can also have similar motives for implementing knowledge management as a private sector organization because the fundamental goal of all organizations is to provide quality services in a financially sustainable way. Sharing and collaboration between public organizations would be positive, not threatening the loss of individual organizational competitive advantage. The sharing of resources and collective learning could result in real benefits not just for individual organizations but for the entire social system (Bloice & Burnett, 2016; Kong, 2010). Indeed this should be the higher goal of knowledge management implementation in the public sector in general and in the context of social work specifically.

1.4.3 Benefits of Knowledge Management in Social Work

Organizations must be ready to adapt in order to survive and even thrive in today's (business) environment, which is characterized by turbulent change and fierce competition, (Baek-Kyoo & Lim, 2009). Because of this, many organizations, whether functioning in the private or public sector, have adopted learning organizational culture in order to promote the creation, acquisition, and transfer of knowledge (Garvin, 1993) with the ultimate goal of being able to rapidly adapt to changing conditions. Access to knowledge, and having employees with the skills to use knowledge effectively, can have a great impact on an organization's ability to generate benefits for stakeholders and meet organizational aims. A knowledgeable, highly skilled, and competent workforce should be an integral component in any attempt to transform outcomes for services users. Therefore, we must recognize the role of knowledge in achieving positive outcomes in empowering employees, service users, and carers, and providing them with the resources, skills, and ability to ask appropriate questions, see and share knowledge, and implement it in practice as an integral part of their everyday tasks and learning activities (Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, 2010).

A strategy to achieve these goals comprised of three main elements was described in a project carried out by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (2010). First, social services organizations were encouraged to develop knowledge management strategies that are part of a wider national network. Second, they were encouraged to equip employees with a range of existing knowledge management skills as well as additional training and education in those skills, that would enable them to improve the performance of their everyday tasks and supplementary learning activities. Third, the importance of improving access to information and knowledge among all stakeholders – including practitioners, service users, and carers – was emphasized. The ultimate goal was for knowledge to become accessible at the right time to the right people, and that knowledge would be incorporated into the daily operations of social work organizations.

As is already evident from the literature presented in previous chapters, a considerable effort would be required simply to achieve a shift in the mindset of various stakeholders in the social work sector. The project described above focused on promoting the importance and necessity of accessing, sharing, and using knowledge to improve overall services. The positive effects of evidence-based best practice was also emphasized in the findings of the project. As was the ongoing promotion of the benefits of sharing information, learning resources, and technology across the social service sector as a whole. Another aspect highlighted in this project, and that is also evident in the literature presented in previous chapters, is the need to gain strong support and guidance from top management of organizations in order to successfully implement knowledge management activities in practice (Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, 2010).

Finally, the importance of specific roles in the organization was presented in the project. Knowledge champions and, when appropriate, chief knowledge officers, would provide employees with vision, leadership, and a foundation for using knowledge in daily practice. The use of these roles could facilitate a smooth transition for this cultural change on the strategic level and would embed knowledge into social practices (Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, 2010).

1.4.4 Limitations of Knowledge Management in Social Work

Although knowledge management offers many potential benefits, there are also various pitfalls that need to be addressed. In theory, social workers, managers, and politicians have developed different methods of knowledge management such as systematic documentation of knowledge useful and relevant for their work. However, as Alexanderson (2006) points out in her analysis, few organizations have shown much interest in the results of such methods for their users. Moreover, she emphasizes that the knowledge base for social work is generally weak. A solid knowledge base is a crucial aspect of the identity of a profession (Payne, 2001). Conditions such as high staff turnover, lack of training and education in new methods, lack of preparation for additional tasks, and lack of data support hamper the successful implementation of knowledge methods. The obstacles encountered during the implementation of such new methods suggest that the process is extremely complex and that success is more than merely a question of policy.

While knowledge management is often viewed as an approach that could help countries as a whole achieve improved economic growth, it is an approach that is met with confusion and a generally poor understanding of its use, and this has prevented its implementation in specific fields (Raub & Von Wittich, 2004). Some of the misunderstandings could be attributed to the multidisciplinary evolution of knowledge management and the consequence that many different terms are used to describe knowledge management activities in a range of disciplines. Although some of these terms have very distinct meanings, they are often used interchangeably (Chase, 2006; Hicks et al., 2006) and misinterpreted.

There is some caution and scepticism in the field of social work regarding how knowledge about specific cases should be stored and then shared. Much of this information includes data about individuals that is restricted due to confidentiality issues. The question of confidentiality is an objective concern regarding knowledge sharing in social work as many users of services do not fully understand their situations and are unable to give properly informed consent. Therefore, it can be extremely difficult for organizations to design good practices that will respect codes of conduct, ethics, and confidentiality in the profession. Similarly, social workers strive to maintain a balance between the desirable individualized approach to each service user and more general needs. This is accompanied with the need to effectively manage the public resources available to social work organizations and to replicate good practices that can be used in similar cases encountered by employees on a daily basis. In a research study conducted by Bloice and Burnett (2016) on the topic of autism, one of the respondents expressed optimism about knowledge sharing, stating that *“no matter how individualized a case would be, autism underpins that. I think there’s always room for sharing, sharing knowledge, sharing insights, sharing ideas.”* This statement might serve as a general guideline for all employees dealing with similar issues in the field of social work.

However, some authors are sceptical about introducing a “quantocentric” culture into the social work sector. It is argued that the current homogenization of social work knowledge is moving in a direction that is detrimental to social workers and students of social work. The argument is that quantitative research tends to decrease the social context in social work practice, particularly for students who are pursuing roles as practitioners in the field (McCoyd, Johnson, Munch & LaSala, 2009). Moreover, some believe that managerialism has failed to incorporate the emotional component of individual lives and the importance of relationships in social work, and this may negatively impact the quality and effectiveness of social work in practice (Trevithick, 2014).

Tsui and Cheung (2004) also express scepticism about managerialism, arguing that it understands and treats social problems at an intra-organizational level rather than a societal level, and that it tends to overlook the roots of social problems. In addition, there is growing discontent among social workers because of the increasing formalization of the profession. This is particularly apparent in the introduction of risk management and audit practices (Broadhurst et al., 2010). Moreover, Gray, Plath, and Webb (2009) argue that it is difficult to measure and systematize social work into best practice guidelines that could be disseminated as diagnostic and effective knowledge intervention. Even as tools for managing and collecting data (such as management information systems) have gained recognition in various fields, they have not been fully embraced by social service organizations. Social service organizations are typically reluctant to embrace the benefits of these kinds of solutions, relying primarily on existing knowledge and skills. The reason that social service organizations have a tendency to reject such solutions along with the data they produce is that

they have historically emphasized the tacit skills and knowledge of their employees and the relationships developed with users of their services (Barrett, 1999).

Social workers struggle with information and communication solutions for a variety of reasons, one of them being problems they have experienced when working with the supposed solution (Bilson 1995; Carrilio, 2005; Dorsey 2002; Mutschler, 1992). The perspective of social workers that each case is unique hints at the potential problems and the general resistance to the categorization of data (Ames, 1999; Bilson 1995). Social work is still primarily concerned with individuals and their social relationships. And yet it must be recognized that social work now operates less on the terrain of the “social” and more on the terrain of the “informational” (Parton, 2008). To overcome this resistance, social workers, along with their supervisors and managers, need to feel that data can actually help them in their work and is not only a mechanism of surveillance (Carrilio, 2005). Lee and Austin (2012) argue that because standards for accountability and service outcomes are becoming more relevant in the public social service sector, the question of how to effectively incorporate the management of data and knowledge into daily operations has become even more important.

1.5 Extent of Knowledge Management

1.5.1 Management Responsibility for Knowledge Management

Managers must take direct responsibility for monitoring and directing knowledge management systems, otherwise organizations may not achieve the desired goals of knowledge management initiatives (Dehgani & Ramsin, 2015). Many organizations are beginning to develop the management role of chief knowledge officer so that a specific member of management is designated to create, process, and support knowledge management systems that employees and teams of employees can rely on (Aljuwaiber, 2016; Liebowitz & Frank, 2016; Navarro, Dewhurst & Eldridge, 2010). In the public sector, however, the creation of a separate position to manage knowledge may not be financially or practically feasible due to personnel and budget shortages. Therefore, existing managers may only be able to dedicate some portion of their time to monitoring and managing knowledge activities (Downes, 2014).

Management teams play an especially critical role during the phases of defining an effective knowledge management practice. Their support and guidance is crucial to the success of any knowledge management initiative (Kamaruzzaman, Zawawi, Shafie & Noor, 2016). Top level management also plays an integral role in assuring the success of knowledge management systems, mostly presenting a model or example of a knowledge user who is willing to share knowledge (Austin et al., 2008; Lee, Kim & Kim, 2012). In general, top management support is determined by the degree to which top management understands the importance of knowledge management and the extent to which top management participates

in knowledge management activities (Lin, 2011). Support and active involvement from top managers can have a significant impact on the outcomes of knowledge management in organizations (Azme, Kassim & Abdullah, 2017). Top level managers can provide guidelines for their subordinates on how to question existing knowledge patterns, how to creatively think about innovative solutions and analyse their applicability, and how to utilize this new knowledge in the organizational decision-making process (Austin et al., 2008). In this way, top managers provide a positive example and illustrate the importance of knowledge management participation to their employees (Holsapple & Joshi, 2000).

The role of middle or operational managers in organizations is also essential as they are responsible for implementing the overall knowledge management strategy in practice and promoting its use to all employees. Middle managers should play the role of facilitators, supporters, and champions of knowledge management in organizations. The direct contact that middle managers have with employees gives them an excellent perspective of which employees know what (the tacit knowledge of employees). The focus of middle managers should then be on how to extract and disseminate the tacit knowledge of their employees. Middle managers are also essential in the process of creating an open environment where employees feel comfortable enough to make mistakes, evaluate the objective reasons for mistakes, and compare them with success stories in order to move the organization in the right direction (Austin et al., 2008).

As mentioned in previous sections, forms of incentives are important in all organizations. Managers therefore need to create internal and external reward systems for employees who positively participate in knowledge management activities (Austin et al., 2008). This will both motivate them to continue engaging in such activities and will prevent negative effects such as knowledge hoarding. However, Miller and Whitford (2007) note that public organizations are often constrained in terms of the ability to offer incentives because of limited budgets and public expectations that public resources are prudently managed. As a result, public organizations are often legally or politically unable to offer large incentives to their employees. In terms of financial incentives, the public sector differs in comparison with the private. According to several studies, public sector employees are more intrinsically motivated than their colleagues in the private sector (i.e. Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007; Georgellis, Iossa & Tabvuma, 2011). This reduces the power of financial incentives. Indeed, certain studies (Lah & Perry, 2008; Weibel, Rost & Osterloh, 2010) suggest that financial incentives in the public sector have no positive effect on enhancing work effort.

Another difficulty in using incentives in the public sector is that the rigid hierarchical structure makes it difficult to determine what specific departments, teams, and individuals contribute to final outcomes (Burgess, Propper, Ratto & Tominey, 2017). This, along with the general scarcity of human resources and finances, provide the primary reasons why the majority of public organizations do not engage in formal knowledge management activities.

In practice, knowledge management activities in public sector organizations are generally based on informal daily work routines (Downes, 2014).

Because the organizational structure in the public sector tends to be stricter and more formal, Austin et al. (2008) suggest that managers should address their employees in a more formal manner when explaining the need for knowledge management implementation. When discussing knowledge management implementation with employees, it is crucial that managers provide a clear picture of the expected and desired outcomes of such activities.

1.5.2 Knowledge Creation

Knowledge creation usually involves tapping the tacit and, in many cases, highly subjective, insights, informal skills and practices (or know-how) of individual employees to create a knowledge base that organizations can systematically utilize (Ward, Smith, Keen, West & House, 2018). Creating new knowledge requires the integration of diverse interpersonal perspectives (Bledow, Frese, Anderson, Erez & Farr, 2009; Nonaka, Toyama & Hirata, 2008; Taylor & Greve, 2006). New knowledge usually does not arise from employees who work in isolation (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2010; Johnson 2010; Nonaka et al., 2008) or from groups of which the members are homogenous in terms of information and experience (Nonaka et al., 2008). To the contrary, new knowledge often emerges from the exploration of diverse and even paradoxical interpersonal perspectives (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000; Tsoukas, 2009). The focus in knowledge management studies is now shifting toward finding innovative ways for organizations to create new knowledge (AGIMO, 2004).

There are two basic knowledge creation strategies: survival strategies and advancement strategies. Survival strategies mean that organizations focus on knowledge in order to maintain their current operations and improve existing performance. Advancement strategies mean that organizations strive toward knowledge that can enhance future success and improve future performance. Knowledge transfer is considered to be the most important knowledge process in organizations that are focused on survival strategies, and knowledge creation is the most important process for organizations that are geared toward advancement strategies (Von Krogh, Ichijo & Nonaka, 2000). Knowledge creation in the public sector environment is both achievable and desirable as public service is generally a calling that leads civil servants to altruistically share knowledge in order to create more advanced organizational knowledge and improve public service performance (Chen & Hsieh, 2015).

Once again, however, it is important to note that organizations with a centralized and bureaucratic management style often have more difficulty creating knowledge in comparison with organizations that have a flexible and decentralized organizational structure that tends to encourage and promote knowledge creation (Sharrat & Usoro, 2003). Employee empowerment is also important when it comes to knowledge creation. Employee empowerment is often seen as one of the main drivers of knowledge creation because

empowered employees are more likely to engage in the creation of knowledge (Alhamoudi, 2015; Dimovski, Penger, Škerlavaj & Žnidaršič, 2005).

1.5.3 Knowledge Storage and Retrieval

Knowledge is stored in repositories – such as databases, guidelines, and manuals – and in the minds of individuals. The retrieval of knowledge refers to accessing and sharing codified knowledge in a timely and reasonable manner using simple, efficient, and user-friendly methods (Lettieri, Borga & Savoldelli, 2004). Knowledge can be found in different forms, explicit and tacit knowledge, and knowledge can be acquired by individuals or by networks of individuals (Tan, Lim & Ng, 2009). Therefore, it is important that knowledge in organizations is appropriately ordered and structured (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Heisig, 2009; Massey & Montoya-Weiss, 2006) in order to facilitate quicker and easier access (Baskerville & Dulipovici, 2006; Chou, Chang, Cheng & Tsai, 2007), and the distribution of knowledge within organizations. By combining or integrating knowledge, organizations can negate the effect of redundancy and positively influence organizational efficiency (Davenport & Prusak, 2000). The objective is to make knowledge accessible to those who need it when they need it (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

When discussing knowledge storage in the environment of the public sector, Austin et al. (2008) argue that public sector organizations are typically organized to store their internal information so that it can be translated into explicit knowledge. But they tend to neglect the aspect of collecting and disseminating tacit knowledge, which is often more important for maintaining the sustainable competitive advantage of public sector organizations. Finally, and interestingly, enjoyment in helping others is a significant predictor of the contribution of knowledge into knowledge repositories (Kankanhalli, Tan & Wei, 2005).

ICT is now the standard tool for storing and later retrieving knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). ICT provides solutions for advanced knowledge storage, increasing the capacity of organizational memory, which in turn contributes to the efficient re-use of knowledge (Tapio Inkinen, Kianto & Vanhala, 2015). Knowledge storage and retrieval is connected with organizational memory as it maintains knowledge of past experiences, events, and procedures that impact the way an organization currently engages in daily activities, stored in documents, databases, and networks of individuals for future retrieval (Ouriques, Wnuk, Gorschek & Berntsson Svensson, 2019).

Nevertheless, social work organizations and their employees are often sceptical about the general project of knowledge storage and retrieval because they deal with sensitive cases where data is often restricted due to confidentiality issues. This creates a challenge for social work organizations and their employees in creating systems for storing and later sharing knowledge that could be beneficial (Bloice & Burnett, 2016).

1.5.4 Knowledge Transfer and Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge transfer was first written about by Teece (1977). It is defined as a process in which an organization creates and maintains either a complex, casual, or ambiguous set of routines in a new setting (Szulanski, 1996). Knowledge sharing is defined as the provision of task information and know-how to help others, and collaboration with colleagues to solve problems, develop new ideas, and implement policies or procedures (Wang & Noe, 2010). As early as the 1990s, the ability to transfer knowledge within organizations was found to contribute to organizational performance in different sectors, including manufacturing (Epple, Argote & Murphy, 1996; Galbraith, 1990) and the service sector (Baum & Ingram, 1998; Darr, Argote & Epple, 1995).

Knowledge transfer is an integral part of knowledge management. The ability of organizations to absorb and appropriately use knowledge is of paramount importance to their operations and responds to the essential goal of transforming knowledge into organizational assets and resources (Dawson, 2001). Knowledge transfer has gained in recognition due to its undeniable value in organizational learning and knowledge creation, and improved organizational effectiveness (Hooff & de Ridder, 2004; Lee, Lin & Wang, 2008). Knowledge transfer can also potentially add value to innovation processes (Donate & Guadamillas, 2011).

It is important in this regard to differentiate between tacit and explicit knowledge. According to Polanyi (1967), tacit knowledge are things we know but cannot tell and can only be transferred through interaction. Tacit knowledge is not easily articulated or formalized, and is difficult to put into words, text, or other symbolic forms. Tacit knowledge can also be determined by the unique characteristics of an individual, namely knowledge that can be easily understood by that person but is difficult to transfer to another (Lee, Lin & Wang, 2008) or effectively externalize.

Dalkir (2011) and Harrison and Hu (2012) emphasize the value of tacit knowledge to organizations in comparison with explicit knowledge. It is through tacit knowledge that organizations transfer best practices because the emphasis is on defining how work actually gets done (Horvath, 2001). Tacit knowledge therefore requires greater cognitive efforts from individuals in order to be successfully transferred (Dalkir 2011; Harrison & Hu, 2012). Explicit knowledge, in contrast, is already captured, usually in a tangible form such as words, audio records, or images (Grant & Dumay, 2015), and is based on universally accepted and objective criteria that is easily coded and transferred (Cavusgil et al., 2003). Argote and Ingram (2000) point out that if knowledge is explicit enough to be easily transferred internally, this could cause the spillover effect to other entities that want to copy an organization's competitive advantage.

Typically knowledge transfer in organizations is driven by communication processes and information flows (Grant & Dumay, 2015), requiring individuals to come together and exchange ideas and share knowledge with one another (Alhamoudi, 2015). It is important for organizations to understand that knowledge transfer is a voluntary activity that occurs between employees (Lin, Lee & Wang, 2008), and organizations cannot force their employees to share and transfer knowledge with each other (Gibbert & Krause, 2002; Hall, 2001; Van den Hooff, de Ridder & Aukema, 2004). Organizations are therefore only able to promote such activities by modifying existing incentive structures with the aim of encouraging such behaviour. Liebowitz and Chen (2003) specifically address knowledge transfer and sharing in the public sector. They suggest that the vast majority of public sector employees view knowledge as a source of power. As a result, they view it as a personal competitive advantage in seeking potential opportunities for promotion. This interpretation may have an influence on the general willingness to share knowledge with others.

Knowledge transfer can occur informally or formally, personally or impersonally (Holtham & Courtney, 1998). Formal knowledge sharing occurs in various formats, the goal of which is to obtain, exchange, and disseminate information (i.e. at conferences or training events). These events are structured in a way that promotes the sharing of primarily explicit knowledge in a format where knowledge is readily available to a large number of employees. Knowledge can be informally shared through personal interaction between employees and in social networks (Ipe, 2003). Assusdani (2005) and Zboralski (2009) believe that knowledge sharing requires a willingness to collaborate with co-workers within an organization. Certain cultural values can influence whether individual employees are prepared to share their knowledge (Babič, Černe, Škerlavaj & Pengcheng, 2018). Therefore, social relationships are important within organizations as they facilitate an understanding of the perspective and behaviours of employees regarding knowledge sharing (Casimir, Lee & Loon, 2012). Similarly, Reus and Liu (2004) argue that how employees feel about their organization and co-workers will determine their attitude about voluntary knowledge sharing. Employees with a lack of desire to share and transfer their knowledge can present one of the biggest obstacles encountered by organizations when implementing knowledge management activities (Denning, 2006).

It is also valuable for organizations to identify which employees possess critical knowledge and find methods for interacting with those employees in order to benefit from their knowledge. Organizations can engage in knowledge transfer through social exchange, a process that involves personal communication and interaction, a socialization process with a strong emphasis on tacit knowledge that is based on the SECI model described by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). In contrast, knowledge codification is the process whereby knowledge is transformed in a tangible and explicit form, such as a document that can be later communicated to a larger group of employees at smaller costs (Grant & Dumay, 2015). Another powerful tool for promoting knowledge transfer in organizations is simply moving employees around (Galbraith, 1990; Rothwell, 1978). As Allen (1977) emphasizes,

individuals have the ability to adapt and to restructure explicit and tacit knowledge (Argote & Ingram, 2000), and placing them in new contexts triggers this process. Argote and Ingram (2000) believe that knowledge transfer can actually be measured in relation to changes in knowledge and organizational performance.

Today, an increasing number of public sector organizations are deliberately striving to actively and efficiently engage in the transfer, sharing, and use of the knowledge they possess (Henttonen, Kianto & Ritala, 2016). Knowledge transfer or knowledge sharing is viewed as equally important for employees in all types of organization, both private and public (Silvi & Cuganesan, 2006). Certain authors (i.e. Huang, 2014; Luen & Al-Hawamdeh, 2001) argue that public sector organizations are currently considered as knowledge-based organizations with a special focus on knowledge that relates to their output to service users. As knowledge is now perceived as one of their key resources (Siong et al., 2011; Willem & Buelens, 2007), knowledge transfer and sharing, along with other improvements to knowledge management practices, are high on the agenda in public sector organizations (Kim & Lee, 2006; Silvi & Cuganesan, 2006), and are attracting increased attention as these organizations seek to consolidate a sustainable competitive advantage (Felin & Hesterly, 2007). Nevertheless, the general lack of studies related to knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer in the public sector should once again be noted (Sandhu et al., 2011; Yusof, Bakhari, Kamsuriah & Yusof, 2012).

1.5.5 Knowledge Implementation

Knowledge implementation is the end goal of knowledge management activities in an organization and means creating value for the organization by making knowledge more active and relevant (Downes, 2014). Similarly, knowledge implementation can be defined as the final stage of a knowledge seeker's quest to solve a problem and achieve competitive advantage (Bock, Kankanhalli & Sharma, 2006; Watson & Hewett, 2006). Problems are actually solved and competitive advantages are only achieved if and when knowledge is directly implemented in practice (Bierly, Damanpour & Santoro, 2009; Choi, Lee & Yoo, 2010). Similarly, in the context of social work, Gray and Schubert (2012) argue that knowledge production on its own is not enough. Organizations and their employees must aim for knowledge transfer and implementation. In the context of human services or social work, knowledge implementation means to combine knowledge from multiple sources in order to support the decision-making processes involved in delivering quality services to users (Austin, 2008; Austin et al., 2008; Jang, 2013).

Every implementation of acquired knowledge in practice is important also because it provides feedback information that can be used as a source for learning in the organization (Grah, Dimovski, Snow & Peterlin, 2016). The mere existence of knowledge does not have any impact on organizational performance; the impact of knowledge management activities on organizational performance can only be discerned when knowledge is used in specific daily

routines, (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Penrose, 2009). Once an organization decides that knowledge should become a more valuable component of daily practice, the organization's management must provide support and enable employees to test the full potential of their knowledge (Bhatt, 2001).

Knowledge implementation could actually be understood as the most important part of the knowledge management process as it contributes the most to the creation of value (Haamann & Basten, 2019). Organizations that achieve excellence in knowledge implementation gain a considerable advantage in comparison with their competitors because of their ability to continuously translate intellectual capital into innovative services and products (Alawi & Tiwana, 2002). Thus it is paradoxical that knowledge management and implementation has received so little research attention (Alavi & Tiwana, 2002). Organizations must also be wary of the so-called knowing-doing gap, a situation where organizations are unable to actually apply knowledge in practice and thus experience losses from their knowledge management investments and misuse related solutions, for example in ICT (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000).

Authors mentioned in this section provide a solid foundation for the argument that appropriate knowledge implementation is integral to improving the overall performance of any organization. Existing literature also provides guidelines for how to promote and support knowledge implementation in organizations with a long-term orientation. These guidelines include the research and development budget, formal incentives, and information technology solutions all of which may positively impact the level of knowledge implementation in organizations (Song, van der Bij & Weggeman, 2005). However, Alavi and Tiwana (2002) warn that regardless of the amount of organizational will and efforts to share and apply knowledge, in practice knowledge transfer and knowledge implementation are complex and difficult tasks for all organizations.

Although concepts from knowledge management have gained acceptance in the public sector and are now considered an important asset for more dynamic public environments, we need to find ways to systematically and effectively capture, disseminate, transfer, and finally implement knowledge in order to achieve true progress in this field (Accenture, 2004; OECD, 2001). If the public sector does not invest more time and effort into improving implementation of knowledge management activities, it is at risk of falling behind, especially compared to the private sector. It is essential to gain a complete understanding of knowledge management, and particularly of knowledge implementation in the context of the public sector, including social work services. The final goal of knowledge management implementation in the environment of the public sector is to embed knowledge within organizations, namely into their processes, practices, and culture, and also incorporate it into the practice of creating public policies (Riege & Lindsay, 2006) in order to improve the quality of public services (Hardina, 2005; Ukil, 2016).

1.6 Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

1.6.1 Public Sector Effectiveness

In most countries in the world, public sectors are undergoing reforms or are subject to some kind of restructuring (de Vries & Nemec, 2013; Mayne & Zapico-Goni, 2017). In the face of profound financial and managerial reforms, it is important for public organizations to develop and maintain a positive attitude toward change (Giauque, 2015). However, if such reforms fail to achieve their goals, then the public sector may experience a knowledge-based crisis, which represents a serious risk to the survival of the public system. Lobbies for narrow interests often exploit this kind of crisis to challenge the fundamental principles of public service (Touati, Denis, Roberge & Brabant, 2015). Therefore, the goal of public sector organizations must be to provide improved services to its users even as the sector is under pressure to downsize in response to ongoing fiscal challenges, and is forced to constantly balance users' needs and expectations with reduced available public resources (Longo & Notarnicola, 2018). Keeping down costs is an unavoidable priority for most managers in the public sector, but it must still be balanced with the effort to at least maintain and sometimes improve existing standards for the quality of services in accordance with government requirements (Hafford-Letchfield & Bourn, 2011).

What's more, governments in contemporary post-industrial societies are searching for socially and economically sustainable solutions to meet the needs of an increasingly aging population (Anttonen & Karsio, 2016). At the same, the general public tends to believe that they are not getting value back for their taxes and are convinced that they are entitled to better services than those currently provided by the state. According to Mayne and Zapico-Goni (2017), reforming public administration could be part of the solution. The goals of such reform would be to streamline government administration to be able to more quickly and innovatively respond to changes in a turbulent environment and deliver quality services to its users at lower costs. It might also try and correct the negative perceptions of the general public towards public administration in general.

This general characterization of the public sector also applies to the specific field of social work where social workers have an increasing workload but less time and resources, not to mention fewer opportunities for reflection and learning (Kelly, 2016). This is the result of the ongoing trend in social work to simultaneously improve service effectiveness and efficiency while also reducing costs (Austin et al, 2008; Edge, 2005; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004). There have been calls for the social work sector to become more like a business (Gillingham, 2015), with increased systematization, documentation, and cost effectiveness (Hubner, 2016). Such recommendations, though not without limitations, could be considered a starting point in promoting the positive effects of knowledge management on organizational effectiveness.

As a first step, it is particularly important for organizations to determine the current effectiveness of knowledge management and its overall contribution to organizational performance. Previous research supports the assumption that knowledge management practices are directly related to organizational performance, which, in turn, is directly related to financial performance (Zack, McKeen & Singh, 2009). But knowledge is still considered an intangible strategic asset of organizations (Freeze & Kulkarni, 2007), and therefore its measurement remains a challenge (Bharadway, Chauhan & Raman, 2015). Anantatmula (2007), however, succeeded in correlating knowledge management effectiveness with a number of useful outcomes such as enhanced communication, enhanced collaboration, enhanced employee skills, better decision-making, and improved productivity.

Furthermore, successful implementation of knowledge management can contribute to the improvement of specific measures of performance such as customer satisfaction due to better products or, as is the case in most public sector organizations, due to the improved quality of services (Anantatmula, 2007). In addition, the success of knowledge management must be understood as a multidimensional concept. It can be defined as capturing the right knowledge, getting the right knowledge to the right user, or using knowledge to improve both individual and organizational performance. It can be measured by its impact on organizational processes, strategy, leadership, and knowledge content (Jennex, Smolnik & Croasdell, 2009). Ragab and Arisha (2013) identify the need for new knowledge management measurement models that would include measures of dynamic knowledge flows, embedded adjustments to organizational environment and strategy, and be more able to focus on the individual knowledge worker rather than just the organizational level.

1.6.2 Collaboration in Organizations

Collaboration is defined as the way people in organizations participate in work-related activities (Zahidul Islam & Jasimuddin, 2015). Collaboration is typically seen as the combination of communication, coordination, and cooperation. Communication is the exchange of messages and information between employees, coordination is the management of employees including their tasks and resources, and cooperation is the production that takes place in a shared space (Eliss, Gibbs & Rein, 1991). To achieve organizational goals, employees need to work together and engage in effective collaborative processes (Ben Yahia, Bellamine & Ben Ghezala, 2012). Successful knowledge management projects encourage and promote collaboration among employees (Clarke & Cooper, 2000). Laycock (2005) believes that organizations, regardless of size and sector, should promote a more collaborative and sharing environment that will positively impact the satisfaction of their users.

Moreover, there is also the need for improved collaborative and team decision-making processes (Turban, Liang & Wu, 2011), and for a more supportive decision-making environment (Falconer & Shardlow, 2018). In this context, managers must learn to recognize the value of knowledge when making decisions (Carneiro, 2000). Improved collaboration as

an extension of knowledge management should therefore be viewed as a valuable strategic tool for enhancing organizational decision-making (Carneiro, 2000; Cole-Gomolski, 1997; King, 2009), as it combines various resources that support decision-makers in a range of ways (Keen, 1991). Managers need to identify and acknowledge their organization's critical knowledge bases, including the intellectual skills of individual employees and accumulated experience that can positively influence organizational performance and foster strategic decision-making (Carneiro, 2000). The decision-making process is crucial because it leads to improved understanding and has the potential to create new knowledge (Saad, Rosenthal-Sabroux & Grundstein, 2005).

In many organizations, groups of individuals or teams generate, share, and transfer knowledge by working in teams (Eppler & Sukowski, 2000; Sapsed, Bessant, Partington, Tranfield & Young, 2002), yet teamwork tends to be an area overlooked in research (Marm-Garcia & Zarate-Martinez, 2007). Using teamwork, organizations can make use of the specialized knowledge of individuals (Grant, 1996) and convert the tacit knowledge of individual employees into explicit knowledge, thus improving the processes and services of the entire organization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Teamwork is also one of the critical facilitators of knowledge management (Choi, 2000; Chong & Choi, 2005; Nadkarni, 1995). Finally, collaboration positively influences organizational effectiveness (De Long & Fahey, 2000; Garvin, 1995; Holmqvist, 2004; Sanders, 2007; Sveiby & Simons, 2002). Innovation in organizations also occurs through collaboration (Jensen, 2014). For this reason, it is important for the organizational culture to support collaborative relations among employees in order to encourage innovation (Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018).

Interactions among employees allow the transformation of the knowledge of individuals into general knowledge, and at the same time produce new knowledge that results from these interactions (Argote, 1999). Newly gained knowledge in turn triggers evolution and innovation (Carneiro, 2000). The exchange of any kind of knowledge positively impacts innovative organizational performance (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Rost, 2011). Such an exchange requires personal contact, good relations, and trust between involved employees (Dhanaraj & Parkhe, 2006). On the most fundamental level, innovation in organizations tends to thrive when insight is gained into the individual perspectives of employees (Elenkov, Judge & Wright, 2005; Hu, Horng & Sun, 2009).

Collaborative tools that support the social construction of knowledge are beneficial to all types of organization anywhere in the world (Ryan, Windsor, Ibragimova & Prybutok, 2010). Implementing knowledge management in organizations has the aim of institutionalizing collaboration and ensuring the sharing of knowledge in practice (Riviera-Vazquez, Ortiz-Fournier & Flores, 2009). Moreover, activities related to knowledge sharing are collaborative in nature and facilitate learning among employees (Jurišević Brčić & Mihelič, 2015). Previous research has demonstrated the positive relationship between knowledge sharing and collaboration (Kotlarsky & Oshri, 2005; Zahidul-Islam & Jasimuddin, 2015).

For an organization to succeed in collaboration and knowledge sharing, it is important for it to communicate to employees that the creation, sharing, and implementation of knowledge is valued at the individual, group, and team level as well as on the overall organizational level. Informal networks, typically environments where employees trust their co-workers and are willing to freely share their knowledge and understanding, are extremely important (Riege, 2005).

Improved employee skills are among the most useful potential knowledge management outcomes (Anantatmula, 2004). However, improving the skills of employees in an organization is dependent on the organization's ability to expand its knowledge base and the collaborative networks among employees. A culture of collaboration positively contributes to the improvement of individual employee skills (Anantatmula & Kanungo, 2008). All of the above makes it abundantly clear that organizations should strive to train employees to gain collaboration skills (Gratton & Ericson, 2007).

1.6.3 Communication in Organizations

Communication is an essential activity in organizations (Touhidil & Sorooshian, 2018). The primary goal of the communication process is to give meaning to stimuli and signals. Internal communication in organizations should include all interested stakeholders so that the mission, values, and behaviour patterns of communication are collective and thus facilitate organizational development (Rodrigues, Azevedo & Calvo, 2016). Today, communication has become greatly influenced by technology as organizations make use of electronic mail, social media, and other digital methods of communication. E-mails are particularly useful for sharing formal information in organizations (Jerejian, Reid & Rees, 2013). Responding and dealing with e-mails can also be time-consuming and stressful, but it cannot be avoided in the contemporary work environment (Burgess, Jackson & Edwards, 2005) of any organization. Social media (i.e. Facebook, Skype, Viber) are also becoming a viable alternative communication method. Social media are transforming communication patterns in organizations as they offer potential cost savings and can be an extremely effective tool in comparison with traditional methods (Baruah, 2012).

Organizational social media platforms are providing new ways of sharing knowledge, collaborating and communicating within organizations, and have the potential to positively affect the social capital and knowledge of employees. But these solutions are not yet the main driving force behind knowledge sharing and collaboration as the majority of respondents in research indicate the preference for traditional forms of communication and face-to-face interactions (Razmerita, Kirchner & Nielsen, 2016). Moreover, internal communication in organizations should attempt to include all interested stakeholders in order to unite mission, values, and behaviour patterns, and to facilitate organizational the development and motivation of all members of the organization. Communication remains an integral

component of interpersonal relations within organizations, it being virtually impossible for employees to avoid communication. Therefore, the internal communication system of an organization must be carefully developed in order to promote openness and transparency (Rodrigues et al., 2016).

Improved communication is one of the expected benefits of knowledge management implementation (Alavi & Leidner, 1999; Anantatmula & Stankosky, 2008). Communities exist in organizations that function on the basis of predefined informal activities and roles in which their members engage. These informal activities also facilitate communication between employees and promote knowledge sharing (Alavi, Kayworth & Leidner, 2005). Earl (2001) suggests that such communities are the essence of a communication network, and include both technological and social variants where employees who have questions are connected to others who can provide answers. Earl believes that face-to-face communication is still more likely to release more valuable tacit knowledge, and that improved communication networks influence an organization's ability to learn, enhance intellectual capital, and fulfil their mission (both in improved decision-making processes and overall organizational performance) (Downes, 2014). Both formal and informal communication promotes greater transfer and acquisition of knowledge, positively influences organizational learning, and leads to consensus decision-making (Cruz, Perez & Cantero, 2009).

1.6.4 Organizational Learning

Organizational learning has been defined in previous sections and will be further developed here. Dixon (2017) argues that learning is the critical currency of the knowledge economy. Each organization must search for optimal solutions to mobilize knowledge resources and to create long-term value in an innovative and sustainable way (North & Kumta, 2018). To maintain a competitive advantage in today's turbulent environment, organizations must improve their learning, emphasize learning from experience, promote learning from knowledge embedded within the organization, and evolve the practice of using knowledge gained outside organizational boundaries (Choo, 1998; Senge, 1990). Learning is the process that ultimately leads to knowledge and broader organizational learning. Organizational learning is the intentional use of the learning processes at the individual, group, and system levels to transform the organization and better meet the needs of its stakeholders (Dixon, 2017).

1.6.5 Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is the implementation of measures that enhance organizational competitiveness and sustainability. For this reason, boosting organizational performance is high on the agenda of managers in virtually all organizations (Muthuveloo, Shanmugam & Ping Teoh, 2017; Tseng & Lee, 2014; Valmohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015). Performance management in public services has become an important research topic in the fields of social

policy and management (Lowe & Wilson, 2017). Ho (2008), for example, highlights the importance of organizational performance as an indicator of whether an organization is on track in achieving its objectives. Performance can also be used as an indicator of whether an organization will survive or not (Wang, Bhanugopan & Lockhart, 2015).

Performance measurement is relevant to knowledge management as a way of transparently presenting the potential benefits or misfits of a knowledge management system. When budgets are under pressure, stakeholders are more likely to doubt the feasibility of knowledge management in part due to quantification issues because success can only be detected through indirect measures (Resatsch & Faisst, 2004) such as enhanced collaboration, communication, learning, and organizational performance (Mills & Smith, 2011). For this reason, it is essential to examine both financial and non-financial criteria. Although the introduction of performance management systems is often criticized in the public sector, they are likely to remain a permanent part of the landscape. Therefore, it is important to find solutions that will improve their reliability (Greener, 2019). On one level, knowledge management means the establishment of a successful relationship between knowledge and performance (Kalling, 2003). It is widely believed that knowledge management can positively influence an organization's ability to achieve necessary objectives (Valmohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015) and thus positively impact overall organizational performance (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2007).

Knowledge management also positively influences the ability of organizations to create innovations. Moreover, specific leadership aspects and organizational arrangements tend to enhance organizational performance due to more efficient and effective management of knowledge resources (Inkinen, 2016). Tacit knowledge management in particular has a considerable impact on organizational performance (Muthuveloo et al., 2017). More specifically, tacit knowledge management influences organizational performance as it equips employees with better capabilities that are crucial to organizational performance (Karim, 2014; Siu, 2006). Furthermore, even the knowledge acquisition, sharing, and utilization that occur without deliberate managerial intervention are related to different aspects of organizational performance outcomes (Chen, Huang & Hsiao, 2010; Lee, Leong, Hew & Ooi, 2013). In contrast, Andreeva and Kianto (2012), Foss and Michailova and Kianto et al. (2009) explore how deliberate managerial efforts contribute to achieving organizational goals while also allowing for the efficient and effective management of organizational knowledge resources.

Nevertheless, organizations should be aware that merely measuring performance is not enough. While performance is indeed a useful metric, the ultimate measure of value is the capacity for knowledge management to enhance an organization's competitive strategy (Zack, 1999). Therefore, it is of paramount importance to use measures that comprehensively assess organizational performance and also evaluate the role of knowledge management on strategy (Valmohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015). It is therefore necessary to measure organizational performance using both financial and non-financial criteria. To conclude,

knowledge management practices are core practices for developing new knowledge and promoting innovation in organizations. However, a much deeper understanding is needed to explain the actual relationship between knowledge management activities and financial outcomes. Knowledge management performance remains difficult to measure in financial terms because an organization's financial performance depends on a range of factors and is a reflection of organizational complexity (Inkinen, 2016).

1.7 Influences of Organizational Factors on Knowledge Management

1.7.1 Influence of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Management

1.7.1.1 Commitment to the Organization's Mission

Mission statements have been widely adopted as a strategic tool that enables organizations to deliver superior value to users and other stakeholders while also improving organizational performance (Macedo, Pinho & Martins Silva, 2016). In modern management theory, mission statements have been recognized as one of the cornerstones of all organizations (Bart & Tabone, 1998). In part as a result of the recent financial and economic constraints that are the consequence of the most recent global financial and economic crisis, non-profit and public sector organizations have become increasingly interested in developing strategies that will enhance their effectiveness and long-term sustainability in order to achieve their financial and performance goals (Unerman & O'Dwyer, 2010; Weeravardena, McDonald & Sullivan-Mort, 2010).

In order to improve performance, organizations need to have a clear sense of their primary mission that will provide the path toward achieving long-term important strategic objectives (Mullane, 2002; Siciliano, 2008). In the non-profit or public sector, the appropriate articulation and later implementation of mission statements are considered an integral management tool (Forbes & Seena, 2006; McDonald, 2007). Currently, missions statements play a more important role than in private companies (Oster, 1995). But, as in the public sector, there are increasing calls for the transparency of doing business. The ability of organizations to attain and retain financial resources is critical to their performance and to help organizations become more resilient, and achieve their purpose while also accomplishing their primary mission (McDonald, 2007; Weerawardena, McDonald & Sullivan-Mort, 2010).

As the purpose of public sector organizations is not to generate profit for their shareholders, they are generally considered to be primarily driven by a set of core values, norms, and motivations linked to their societal role and the fulfilment of their primary mission (Liao, Foreman & Sargeant, 2001; McDonald, 2007). Public sector organizations should therefore engage in defining and following a mission that is feasible, distinctive, and also services to motivate employees (Andreasen & Kotler, 2003). The importance of organizational

commitment as a mediator construct is elaborated in research conducted by Yang and Pandey (2009) that suggests that organizational commitment has a significant impact on the performance of individual employees and the entire organization. In addition, Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) state that organizational commitment consists of a strong belief and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, the willingness to exert considerable amount of effort on behalf of the organization, and the general desire to be a part of the organization. Therefore, it is clear that employees are committed to organizations only if they are emotionally attached to them and personally identify with their goals, norms, and values (Kacmar, Carlson & Brymer, 1999).

1.7.1.2 Impact of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Sharing and Learning

Although both topics – knowledge sharing and learning – have already been extensively covered in previous sections, I will further explore the two topics and their relationship to knowledge management in this chapter. To reiterate, it has been frequently emphasized in the literature that particularly the tacit knowledge of individuals must be shared (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016). Knowledge sharing is considered one of the most important elements in the wider field of knowledge management,. As such, knowledge sharing is an integral part of every organization's success story (Witherspoon, Bergner, Cockrell & Stone, 2013). Knowledge sharing in organizations depends on a number of different components such as the personal features of the knowledge bearer as well as the other characteristics of the team or organization that potentially influence the relationship between individual employees and knowledge sharing (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016). Organizations create knowledge through the sharing process, and this also influences organizational performance (Dess & Shaw, 2001; Kalling, 2003) and potentially reduces employee turnover (Reychav & Weisberg, 2009).

Knowledge sharing can also help organizations to create an advantage against their competitors as successful organizations make more out of available knowledge than their competitors (Egan, Yang & Bartlett, 2004). Superior knowledge sharing also enables better decision-making and allows organizations to have more efficient daily operations (Reychav & Weisberg, 2009). Knowledge sharing can also help organizations provide more efficient and effective services to their users (Merlo, Bell, Menguc & Whitwell, 2006). Finally, knowledge sharing can be beneficial in organizational efforts to apply best practices, and minimize the learning curve and the efforts needed for employees to master new fields and gain new expertise (Hansen, 2002; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

Because we live in an increasingly complex world, learning is more essential than ever (Saadat & Saadat, 2016; Sessa, 2015). Learning can be defined as the process of gaining new skills, knowledge, and views. At the individual level, the results of learning can be discerned in new behaviours. At the organizational level, the impact of learning can be discerned in changes in vision, strategy, policies, structure, and also in the quality of products and services. Continuous learning is defined as regularly and purposefully acquiring new and

deeper understanding, knowledge, skills, and competences that are later applied in new practices and behaviour (Sessa, 2015). In addition, an organizational learning culture positively impacts individual and organizational success (Watkins & Marsick, 2003; Weinzimmer & Esken, 2017). Both organizational culture and environment are important to learning as they determine the type and quantity of learning events that occur and also effect employee job satisfaction and the motivation to integrate newly acquired knowledge in the workplace. It is crucial for organizations to gain a wider understanding of the factors connected to the organizational learning environment, which continuously influences the organizational success story (Egan et al., 2004). Employees' attitudes such as satisfaction, motivation, and retention are especially vital to any discussion of general learning and development in organizations (Kontoghiorghes, 2001).

Learning from mistakes is also a component of organizational learning and an essential catalyst for organizational change (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2017). Managers should devote effort and time explaining to employees the necessity and value of learning from mistakes, which is an important part of changing and improving existing organizational practices. Mistakes should be used as effective opportunities for potential organizational learning because they cause members of an organization to question existing assumptions and work patterns, and apply corrective measures and innovative ideas (Sitkin, 1992). Mistakes also have a motivational aspect as employees tend to be motivated to correct a mistake in order to avoid making the same mistake in the future (Ellis & Davidi, 2005). Although mistakes tend to be undesirable in the functioning of organizations, a forgiving environment that understands how to learn from mistakes when they occur can promote the organizational learning process (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2017). Finally, researchers believe that improvements in the learning process that emerge at least in part from mistakes tend to indirectly result in overall improved performance.

1.7.1.3 Trust and Collaboration

Trust in an organization is described as the confident positive expectations of employees regarding the intention and behaviour of multiple constituencies of an organization as they impact the organization's conducts, motives, and intentions (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011). Managers should not neglect the importance of building trust in their organizations as it can result in improving employees' attitude, behaviour, and performance (Ozyilmaz, Erdogan & Karaeminogullari, 2018). Organizational trust is also important as it creates a context that engenders positive attitudes and improved performance, and increases the chance of employee participation (Alfes, Shantz & Truss, 2012; Brown, Crossley & Robinson, 2014). Trust is positively related to numerous work related outcomes such as organizational commitment and citizenship behaviour (Aryee, Budhwar & Chen, 2002). Moreover, employees that consider themselves attached to and trust their organization will be more inclined to remain in the organization (Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991).

In contrast, the lack of employee trust in an organization is typically identified as a barrier, contributing to organizational vulnerability, causing employees to be more cautious, which ultimately can be discerned in decreased efforts toward fulfilling organizational objectives (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Similarly, negative instances affecting trust can have a negative influence on employee performance and may make employees consider the decision to remain part of the organization (Robinson, 1996). Enhancing trust levels among employees in an organization is also important as it increases the potential for knowledge sharing among colleagues (Rutten, Blaas-Franken & Martin, 2016). Numerous examples in the existing research show a positive correlation between trust and knowledge sharing (i.e. Chang & Chuang, 2011; Chiu, Hsu & Wang, 2006; Fathi, Eze & Goh, 2011).

Collaboration among employees has long been recognized as having potential as a tool to improve the performance of organizations in the public sector. In organizations with strong patterns of collaboration, employees are able to make use of interpersonal networks to gain access to a broad set of expertise, skills, experience, and resources that they can use to their own and their organizations' advantage (Campbell, 2016). Many researchers specifically discuss the potential of collaborative behaviour to improve performance in the context of the public sector (i.e. Christensen & Lagreid, 2007; O'Leary & Bingham, 2009; Thomson & Perry, 2006). Collaboration occurs at different levels in organizations. Employees act collectively in order to achieve organizational goals that would be impossible to achieve through independent or individual efforts (Whitford, Lee, Yun & Jung, 2010).

Because public sector organizations sometimes engage in activities that reflect complex, interdependent, and potentially conflicting organizational goals (Rainey & Jung, 2015), solutions that allow employees to access tacit knowledge and other resources available in their organization can be extremely effective to the overall organizational success. These processes typically intersect with collaboration (Gajda & Koliba, 2007). Because the motivation and attitudes of employees are integral to overall performance in the public sector (Kim, 2005), understanding how collaboration among employees occurs in practice is of particular importance. Collaboration in the public sector environment is partially influenced by the formal authority structure and predefined goals that impact the organizational roles of participants (Campbell & Im, 2015).

1.7.1.4 Creativity and Innovation

Creativity plays a critical role in the innovation process, and innovation is a critical element affecting the successful functioning of organizations. For this reason, both innovation and creativity are now recognized as two of the core components in organizational performance (Serrat, 2017). Moreover, workplace creativity is a force that tends to be generated by individual employees or in small teams where interest is sparked in promoting new and creative ways of thinking and acting in order to achieve organizational change (Montag, Maertz & Baer, 2012; Shin, Kim, Lee & Bian, 2012). Individual creativity usually implies a

combination of intrinsic motivation, appropriate attitude, work experience, and other personality traits (Torugsa & Arundel, 2016). Team creativity, on the other hand, usually indicates the presence of a supportive organizational culture in which constructive conflicts are appreciated and where there is appropriate leader, commitment, support, resources, incentives, and recognition for such activities (Shin et al., 2012).

The past few decades have seen a growing interest in the topic of innovation in the public sector because of its potential to increase organizational effectiveness and quality of public services (Hartley, 2005; Osborne & Brown, 2013). Improved performance in terms of effectiveness and efficiency is the main organizational motivation in the public sector for engaging in creativity and innovation processes (Kim & Lee, 2009). In contrast to the private sector, innovation in the public sector faces additional hurdles such as bureaucratic issues and functioning in a political environment (Arundel & Huber, 2013; Bloch & Bugge, 2013; Hartley, 2005). Regardless of the type of organization, lack of creativity and innovation can lead to stagnation and result in the organization's inability to successfully enact organizational change (Serrat, 2017).

1.7.2 Influence of Organizational Infrastructure on Knowledge Management

1.7.2.1 Adequacy of Resources for Knowledge Sharing

Previous literature drawing on the resource-based view of organizations has already established that adequate resources are crucial to team performance (Belso-Martinez, Molina-Morales & Mas-Verdu, 2011). From this, it is clear that a team without adequate resources within an organization may view itself as in a no-win situation (Waldman & Cohn, 2008) and this will cause them to be ineffective. In contrast, successful teams are able to enhance their internal knowledge and strive toward accumulating sufficient resources as a starting point on the path to superior team performance. Today, it is unreasonable to assume that organizations have unlimited budgets, particularly in the public sector. Therefore, it is even more important for management to distribute resources (i.e. working environment, personnel, finances) for the adequate functioning of teams in the organization (Chieh-Peng, Kuang-Jung, Chu-Mei & Chiu-Hui, 2019).

Barriers to knowledge sharing at the organizational level result from poor economic conditions, lack of infrastructure and resources, the inaccessibility of formal and informal meeting venues, and shortcomings in the physical environment (Riege, 2005). The efficient allocation of human or process-oriented resources, including competent employees, finances, ICT, can enhance the ability of an organization to create effective knowledge sharing environments. Therefore, enabling appropriate infrastructure and sufficient resources that support sharing practices in organizations is the starting point for successful knowledge management programs (Coleman, 1999; Schlegelmilch & Chini, 2003). To the contrary, such

practices are destined to fail if an organization is unable to provide basic infrastructure and capabilities (Gold et al., 2001).

1.7.2.2 Organizational Practices that Enable Knowledge Management

Motivating employees to share knowledge is not an easy task. In order for employees to engage in knowledge sharing activities, they must feel motivated to do so (Perry-Smith, 2006) and their participation should be rewarded by the organization (Paroutis & Al-Saleh, 2009). Intrinsic motivation is the most powerful incentive for employees to engage in knowledge sharing activities (Gagne, 2009; Reinholt, Pedersen & Foss, 2011). Nevertheless, organizations can also use rewards to motivate their employees and show them that their participation in knowledge sharing activities is valued (Lombardi, Cavaliere, Giustiniano & Cipollini, 2017). The social exchange theory (Molm, 1997) hypothesizes that people behave in a way to maximize benefits and minimize costs. If employees feel they are not being compensated in an appropriate way, they may decide to hoard knowledge and be unwilling to share it with their colleagues (Lombardi et al., 2017). Extrinsic rewards are also important as they have the power influence how employees will behave (Fehr & Falk, 2002). In practice, human behaviour is most likely to be influenced by the presence of both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (Frey & Oberholzer-Gee, 1997).

Managers can also play an active role in clearly explaining the benefits of ICT systems and the role they plays in strategic knowledge management initiatives. Communicating such benefits will encourage employee participation and is one of the key elements of managerial support for basic implementation issues (Paroutis & Al-Saleh, 2009). It is also essential to connect knowledge management efforts with their intended outcomes (Gray & Meister, 2006). These findings are similar to those of previous studies (i.e. Cabrera et al., 2006), where researchers posit that top management has the ability to send strong messages to organization members, such as emphasizing the importance of knowledge sharing. If employees understand that such behaviours are valued by top managers, they are more likely to engage in them. Creating norms can also clearly communicate parameters about knowledge sharing, namely that it is not only an organizational expectation but a necessity. A clearly communicated set of norms and standards related to knowledge sharing will also potentially reduce feelings of anxiety that come with the uncertainty about whether such behaviours are acceptable in an organization (Ardichvilli, 2008).

Rewards and recognition emphasize knowledge sharing by making it more visible. Rewards and recognition demonstrate what organizations perceive as important, sending a message that the time and effort employees spend on knowledge sharing, for example, will be positively assessed in performance evaluation and open paths to career advancement. An organization that incorporates knowledge sharing into daily routines, typically also includes knowledge sharing in the performance evaluation of their employees (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

Knowledge retention includes knowledge capture, knowledge codification, and the internalization of knowledge in organizations, and, as such, is a complex phenomenon. Knowledge retention implies a continuous way of working for the whole organization, and generally emphasizes tacit knowledge (Wikstrom, Eriksson, Karahmedovic & Liff, 2018). Knowledge retention processes should focus on critical knowledge that can be lost and requires a particular strategy to be retained within the organization (Liebowitz, 2009). Today, as the population is aging, employees that are particularly important in this regard are those that are nearing retirement, one of the obvious situations when organizational knowledge can be lost (Probst & Romhardt, 2000). Organizations must first go through a process of evaluating which knowledge is essential, namely knowledge that, if lost, would have a massive impact on potential knowledge gaps and thus effect overall organizational performance (Liebowitz, 2009).

Knowledge retention efforts should focus on developing appropriate retirement plans, succession plans, bridging jobs, and other organizational measures that are linked to the organization's overall strategy (De Long, 2004). Many researchers emphasize the importance of knowledge retention but managers tend to neglect this aspect of operations (Ebrahimi, Saives & Holford, 2008). In practice, very few organizations have formally defined and appropriately implemented knowledge retention practices and strategies (Dalkir & Liebowitz, 2011; Geisler & Wickramasinghe, 2015; Massingham & Massingham, 2014).

Paroutis and Al-Saleh (2009) suggest that it is managers who must provide the necessary training for their employees in areas related to knowledge management. Education and training is one of the seven critical factors that lead to success in knowledge management initiatives (Argote, McEvily & Reagans, 2003; Valmohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015; Von Krogh, 1998). Employee training can also affect the development of knowledge management capacity (Chung-Jen & Jing-Wen, 2009). It is essential for organizations to provide not only knowledge management training and education but also awareness raising. Employees must be made aware of the necessity of knowledge sharing and the overall significance of knowledge management for organizations. Because knowledge management typically requires the use of an ICT system infrastructure in order to capture and store important information, employees must also be trained to use such systems in their daily work. Formal training courses on collaboration techniques, learning with peers, teambuilding, creative thinking, problem solving, documentation, knowledge transfer (especially from experienced employees to the younger generation), as well as training outside of the organization, are all potentially useful. Training and education are typically associated with the human resource aspect of knowledge management (Valmohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015).

In conclusion, organizations should provide their employees with sufficient internal and external training opportunities to acquire relevant knowledge and skills (Jaw & Liu, 2003; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Employees who participate in such programs are more likely to

acquire new knowledge, skills, and expertise, have broader horizons, and think innovatively (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Employees who participate in such programs would also be more inclined to share their experience and skills, and to use what they have learned in their daily routines. Empirical studies carried out by Gabbay et al. (2003) confirm that employees who receive training, facilitation, or direction are more likely to efficiently and effectively perform the knowledge-related tasks that they are assigned.

1.7.2.3 Adequacy of Information Communication Technology

In this section, I will discuss the influence of ICT on knowledge management. Information technology has and will continue to have a strong influence on employees and their work (Torkzadeh & Doll, 1999). ICT systems support knowledge management practices as they facilitate knowledge acquisition and creation, knowledge dissemination, knowledge conversion, and knowledge utilization (Martelo-Landroguez & Cegarra-Navarro, 2014; Palacios-Marques, Soto-Acosta & Merigo, 2015). Technology is an essential component and critical facilitator in any knowledge management plan (Olobunmi Omotayo, 2015). Adams and Lamont (2003) propose that knowledge management systems composed of hardware, software, and other processes that organizations use to enhance communication and the processing of information (i.e. technological information systems) must be part of any conversation about the establishment of a sustainable competitive advantage. New ICT systems that include social networks can help employees share knowledge through common platforms and also offer the possibility of electronic storage. Furthermore, ICT systems can facilitate collaboration between employees and teams of employees, and enrich communication through the internet (Olobunmi Omotayo, 2015). With appropriate employee training and education, new ICT systems have become crucial to organizations as they carry out the many tasks connected to knowledge management (Soto-Acosta & Cegarra-Navarro, 2016).

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that technology alone cannot propel an organization forward. Human resources, that is people, remain an integral part of organizational success (Olobunmi Omotayo, 2015). In other words, it is not technology that compels employees to share knowledge within their organization (Sun & Scott, 2005). Knowledge will only be shared if employees have the desire to do so, and only then does technology influence the potential reach and scope of knowledge exchanges. I conclude this section with the truism that successful knowledge management practices and solutions are eighty percent organizational culture and human factors and twenty percent technology (Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2014).

1.7.2.4 Employee Knowledge Related to Information Communication Technologies and Technical Support

In this section, I will discuss the necessity of maintaining existing levels of employee knowledge and appropriate technical support as these issues relate to the ICT aspect of knowledge management. In their study, Williams, Coles, Wilson, Richardson, and Tuson (2000) established the need for ICT systems that include appropriate access to technical support and advice so that teachers (the users in their study and, by extension, other employees in other fields) do not feel the need to become technical experts themselves. As regards education specifically, Bingimlas (2009) endorses the need for technical support to be provided to employees. Potential barriers related to the use of ICT include lack of confidence, resistance to change, and insufficient training on how to solve problems (Becta, 2004). Lack of technical support and employee expertise can prove detrimental when attempting to improve organizational performance (Earle, 2002). Without good technical support, employees are sometimes unable to overcome challenges that limit the potential benefits of ICT systems (Lewis, 2003). Empirical studies have found that many teachers perceive a lack of technical assistance as the most substantial barrier preventing them from reaping the full benefits of ICT (Pelgrum, 2001). Similarly, other research emphasizes the importance of organizations providing technical support to their employees in the use of ICT (i.e. Liu & Szabo, 2009; Tezci, 2011; Yildirim, 2007).

ICT literacy is defined as users' possessing the appropriate skills and knowledge related to computer systems. In general, this means an understanding of how the computer functions, and how to both input and retrieve information (Adeyoyin, 2005). Again, drawing on examples from the educational sector, surveyed teachers suggested that their use of ICT in the workplace is negatively influenced by their lack of technical skills and knowledge (Williams et al., 2000). Likewise, employee illiteracy in ICT negatively impacts the competitiveness and overall capabilities of organizations (Hashim, 2007).

In conclusion, the ICT skills of employees are critical for the organizational use and development of applications that support effective and efficient knowledge flows within organizations (Melville, Kraemer & Gurbaxani, 2004). A lack of organizational commitment to develop the information and communication skills of employees can cause resistance and hamper the ability to take advantage of such technologies to solve daily work problems (Mao, Liu, Zhang & Deng, 2016). Because ICT is increasing in importance, becoming relatively cheaper, and more rapidly affecting an increasing number of organizations, management of organizations must increase their efforts and investments in information systems as well as in employee training in skills related to the use of technological applications (Iyengar, Sweeney & Montealegre, 2015).

1.7.2.5 Proactive Knowledge Sharing, Social Networks, and External Education and Training

Informal training in organizations can occur at unexpected venues and times, even during breaks, and it often appears as casual interactions. But such interactions often result in fruitful dialogues among employees and allow knowledge sharing to thrive (Al-Saifi, Dillon &

McQueen, 2016). Pescosolido (2006) posits that informal and subjectively meaningful social relationships that emerge from various forms of consultation and communication can promote the creation of networks of social interaction within organizations. It was already proposed that organizations should focus on providing opportunities for employees to informally meet and interact in order to promote dialogue (Davenport & Prusak, 2000). This contributes to the creation of a positive working environment and increases the level of trust among employees (Sveiby & Simons, 2002). Higher levels of trust built in informal gatherings positively influence the willingness of employees to share their experiences and personal knowledge (Nya-Ling Tan, 2015).

When trust in the organization is high, employees are more likely to share their ideas, work together as a team, and care about the opinions and experiences of others. They will also have the courage to express their own opinions, allow enquiries, and be more motivated to share knowledge (Van den Brink, 2003). Therefore, organizations are encouraged to promote social events, external conferences, workshops, and seminars as they encourage informal friendships among employees that encourage them to regularly share knowledge (Von Krogh, 1998).

Social networks emerge from interactions between individuals or organizations in many different settings (Valente, Palinkas, Czaja, Chu & Hendricks Brown, 2015). Social networks are important as they provide resources, access to resources, and emotional support (Birley, 1985; Lin, 1982). The following are the four main factors that social networks provide for employees: information, support, credibility, and governance (Birley, Cromie & Myers, 1991). Organizational networks have the potential to be the catalyst for creating a competitive advantage (Gulati, Nohria & Zaheer, 2000) as networks enable the organization to fully exploit and develop its resources (Hung, 2002). Social network analysis can also be used as a tool for gaining insight into knowledge flows within organizations (Chan & Liebowitz, 2006; Liebowitz, 2005).

To summarize, social networks in an organization provide information about how ideas and knowledge spread through interpersonal contacts (Pahor, Škerlavaj & Dimovski, 2008). They also can have significant consequences on knowledge management systems. Managers need to be aware of the existence of such networks and use them in order to successfully share knowledge throughout the entire organization.

Management must also be aware of the importance of providing training for employees for their professional development and to positively influence their performance (Hafeez & Akbar, 2015). If organizations invest in training, employees tend to show more positive work-related behaviours (Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). Moreover, organizational training programs have the potential to positively affect employee commitment as it is often viewed by employees as a sign of the organization's belief in them and concern for their future development (Chew & Chan, 2008). Because of this, employees are more willing to engage

in activities that continue to increase their commitment and their overall performance. Offering opportunities to attend training programs to employees is often viewed as a non-financial reward or benefit (Yeo & Li, 2011). These activities have a positive influence on job satisfaction, commitment, and dedication of employees. As a result, many organizations consider investments in employee training as a strategic tool to provide employees with the necessary skills and knowledge (Mercer & Reilly, 2006). Finally, effective training and professional development and progress tend to reduce employee turnover (Arnold, 2005).

1.7.3 Influence of Organizational Structure on Knowledge Management

1.7.3.1 Encouraging Knowledge Sharing

Although extensively covered in previous sections, here I will further explore how knowledge sharing among employees can be encouraged and have a positive influence on knowledge management initiatives. Prior research has established that organizations should deliberately engage in activities that encourage employees to create and share knowledge (Holsapple & Joshi, 2000; Roda, Anghern, Nabeth & Razmerita, 2003). Some of the important motivators of knowledge sharing were already enumerated, such as the positive feelings generated by helping others, monetary compensation, and management support in general. The latter includes policies that encourage and motivate knowledge sharing behaviour among employees and demonstrate that knowledge sharing is recognized and valued by the organization (Razmerita, Kirchner & Nielsen, 2016). Different functions of an organization can be used to encourage knowledge sharing, including organizational culture, values, beliefs, and systems that can either encourage or be detrimental to efforts to create and share knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Janz & Prasarnphanich, 2003; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012).

Managers should provide support for employees in the process of seeking information and knowledge from their co-workers (Zhang & Yan Jiang, 2015). Knowledge sharing is of paramount importance for organizations in implementing knowledge management initiatives (Park, Ribiere & Schulte, 2004), and all organizations must find effective methods to encourage employees to share knowledge in practice. Such methods will not only increase knowledge sharing among employees but also impact employee perceptions of how useful such behaviour is (Cabrera et al., 2006; Kulkarni, Ravindran & Freeze, 2006). There are numerous positive effects when employees develop their own special skill or knowledge set, enabling individual employees to become experts on a specific aspect of organizational operations and share this knowledge with others (Zhang & Yan Jiang, 2015).

1.7.3.2 Empowerment, Hierarchy, Status, Power and Communication Patterns

Empowerment is an integral part of the successful functioning, productivity, and growth of all organizations (Hunjra, UIHaq, Akbar & Yousaf, 2011). It is considered a motivational tool that can influence the performance of employees by allowing them to participate in decision-making, and it typically also decreases barriers in relations between employees and managers (Meyerson & Dewenttinck, 2012). Empowerment consists of giving employees the authority to make decisions and assume responsibility for their actions (Saif & Saleh, 2013). Employee empowerment is comprised of sharing knowledge, increasing the autonomy of decision-making, and enhancing intellectual capabilities (Karim & Rehman, 2012). An organization with higher levels of employee empowerment has a competitive advantage when dealing with existing issues and exploring options for long-term sustainable operations (Wellins, Byham & Wilson, 1991).

Today organizations are exposed to constant challenges when it comes to improving performance and productivity in a turbulent environment. Employee empowerment is considered an effective tool that has the potential to improve organizational performance, employee satisfaction (Hanaysha, 2016), and the quality of services. Empirical data show the employee empowerment is significantly correlated with employee satisfaction and that satisfied employees in general provide higher quality services (Ukil, 2016).

Power has to do with control over valued resources and can transform psychological factors in such a way that people with power think and act in ways that allow them to retain and acquire more power. Status has to do with the respect people have in the eyes of others, and generates expectations about their behaviour (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Hierarchy is defined through status and power (Mannix & Sauer, 2006). Both power and status also have important implications for organizations (Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips, 2006), being integral components of formal and informal hierarchies in the workplace (Fiske, 2010). Status and power also affect social interactions. Status is often expressed by helping, cooperating, giving advice, and seeking justice (Blader & Chen, 2012; Cheng, Tracy & Henrich, 2010). Power enables actions as power-holders have the ability to act according to their own goals and interests (Galinsky, Gruenfeld & Magee, 2003). Those that are lower in the pecking order in a social hierarchy are less likely to proactively share their perspectives and insights. In terms of collective learning, it has already been established that the perspectives and insights from higher ranking members potentially receive disproportionate attention, whereas those of people in lower ranking positions are often overlooked even in cases when their contributions could enhance team and organizational learning and performance. In conclusion, under conditions of unequal power and status, the assumption that employees will learn and benefit from the knowledge, experience, and skills of their co-workers is unlikely to be true in practice (Bunderson & Reagans, 2011).

Communication is the exchange of information, thoughts, and emotions among individuals and groups. Communication plays an important role in balancing individual and organizational objectives and is a key factor in organizational success (Agarwal & Garg,

2012). Communication is also a process that influences how relationships are instituted, sustained, altered, and sometimes ended (Serrat, 2017). We distinguish between different types of communication channels depending on the message sent on the channel, and also the roles and positions of the communicators. The first channel is top-down, and is typically used by managers to communicate messages to employees and users. It is the most common type of communication in organizations. The second channel is bottom-up, and is used by employees usually to share information with their superiors. It also enables employees to participate in the setting of goals, the creation of policies, and problem-solving. A third channel is horizontal communication, which allows employees and teams to communicate with each other. Informal communication channels are also important for the functioning of organizations (Vrhovec, 2003). Although effective communication across hierarchies is extremely challenging, both top-down and bottom-up communication are essential for managing existing knowledge in organizations (Kluge, Stein & Licht, 2001).

Poor communication is identified as one of the most frequent aspects of organizational failure. Poor bottom-up communication from employees to supervisors often leads to the neglect of problems related to users as well as ignorance of the impact of policies and the effectiveness of systems. As a result, simple changes that could enhance performance are not made. Poor top-down communication can mean that employees do not understand organizational initiatives and the future direction of the organization, and this can create an environment filled with speculation and rumours that negatively influence employee behaviour and performance. As communication is described as the lifeblood of an organization, breakdowns in communication almost always negatively influence organizational performance (Longenecker, Simonetti & Sharkey, 1999).

Egelhoff (1991) suggests that top-down knowledge flows tend to be fairly unambiguous as they there is a clear understanding of the cause-effect relationship. The value of top-down knowledge flows, understood as a tool that improve recipients' performance of current tasks, is generally known (Schulz, 2003). Managers who engage in top-down communication have complex knowledge about key functions in the organization that can be structured in the form of communicable top-down information (Torres, Drago & Aqueveque, 2015). However, the more managers use a combination of top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal communication channels flows, the more advanced the levels of potential exploration and exploitation of knowledge in the organization (Mom, Van den Bosch & Volberda, 2007). Such flexibility of communication is desirable as it allows managers to manoeuvre between short-term and long-term orientation and goals (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2004; Probst & Raisch, 2005).

The middle-up-down management process suggested by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) may also be effective. It combines the benefits of the top-down and bottom-up management models and is described as the most appropriate model for the creation of organizational knowledge. Edwards and Kidd (2003) emphasize the importance of middle managers to effectively integrate the top-down and bottom-up models, and further enhance the

organizational knowledge. In conclusion, I emphasize that knowledge flows that are limited to one direction (i.e. top-down) are one of the key barriers to effective knowledge management in organizations (Riege, 2005).

1.7.4 Influence of Organizational Leadership on Knowledge Management

1.7.4.1 Formal Strategy for Knowledge Management and Alignment with Strategic Vision

Today public and non-governmental organizations are under constant pressure to use limited financial and human resources to improve their performance. Because of this, there is a growing consensus that such organizations, similar to their counterparts in the private sector, need a formal knowledge management strategy to adapt to changing conditions in the environment, and ensure sustainable and continuous success. Non-governmental organizations have an enormous amount of knowledge that is difficult to exchange, particularly tacit knowledge, and yet this knowledge is essential for their future development. Because of this, a formal knowledge management strategy is of paramount importance in this sector (Edwards, 1997). The Toronto District School Board is an example of a public-sector organization that did not have a formal knowledge management strategy, but engaged in a range of activities to improve strategies related to their staff's tacit knowledge that was perceived as important to the future functioning of the organization. At the outset of the project, many employees in the school were unfamiliar with up-to-date knowledge management theory, but ultimately their willingness to engage in implementing knowledge management activities could serve as an example for other public organizations (Edge, 2005). It is also worth noting that, in contrast to this case, sometimes when organizations develop formal knowledge management strategies, they do not necessarily produce desirable outcomes (Bettiol, Di Maria & Grandinetti, 2012).

In conclusion, the potential success of a formal knowledge management strategy greatly depends on how management understands the characteristics of the informal knowledge sharing structures that already exist in the organization (Jewels, Underwood & de Pablos Heredero, 2003). There are organizational cases when a formal knowledge management strategy is absent, and cases where organizations are actually sharing information rather than knowledge (Nielsen & Michailova, 2004).

1.7.4.2 Management Support and Communication for Knowledge Sharing, Learning Opportunities and Efforts to Develop an Efficient Knowledge Sharing System

Management support is defined as the encouragement provided by management in organizations (Lee, Hsieh & Ma, 2011). In organizational settings, new solutions, whether technological or not, are often not voluntary and can cause major disruptions to employees in their daily routines (Simon, 1997). Management can help in these transitions by shaping organizational values, beliefs, and behaviours (Lin & Wu, 2004; Simon, 1997). Management

can also communicate to employees the importance of solutions implemented in the organization. This kind of management support has been regularly linked to higher success levels especially as regards change, innovation, and the perception of employees toward new solutions (Lin & Wu, 2004).

Knowledge transfer has its roots in individual and organizational value systems, norms, and daily routines. Within organizations, it is essential that these value systems, norms, and daily routines are also embodied and personified in top and middle managers. They must provide support, promote knowledge transfer, and also lead by example. Support by top management is seen as an integral ingredient in organizational success because of top management's ability to influence strategic and operational aspects of the organization, and to have a powerful voice in defining human, organizational, and technological challenges. Furthermore, it is important for managers to align business and knowledge management strategy (Riege, 2007). Soliman and Spooner (2000) advocate the inclusion of top management in knowledge management initiatives as it enhances the motivation of employees to share their knowledge, which in turn has a positive influence on the success of such initiatives. Support from top management enables individuals within organizations to openly share knowledge and problems with each other (Dave & Koskela, 2009). Several other authors, (i.e. Blackler, 1995; Caplan, Naidu & Tripathi, 1984; Nonaka & Konno, 1998) have also found that top management support is essential for the success of knowledge management initiatives.

In learning organizations, managers, along with the help and support of human resource staff, play a very important role in developing and supporting opportunities for learning and sharing knowledge in the workplace environment both among individual employees and teams (Garavan, 1991; Watkins & Ellinger, 1998). The support and commitment of top management for learning efforts is extremely important. In the research of Sambrook and Stewart (2000), employees mentioned that if managers are not involved, it reduces their motivation to learn. In contrast, the involvement of managers was reported as a crucial factor in a number of cases. Moreover, employees' immediate supervisors have a significant role in creating a non-controlling environment that allows for their development. If management understands the value of individual self-development, they will be more open to creating a learning environment in their organizations (London & Smither, 1999).

The communication climate is the atmosphere in an organization as it relates to communication behaviour (Putnam & Cheney, 1985). Communication climate is a key variable in the success of knowledge management initiatives as a constructive communication climate positively influences knowledge donating (communicating one's personal intellectual capital to others), knowledge collecting (consulting colleagues in order to get them to share their intellectual capital), and affective commitment (van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004). Other authors (i.e. Moffett, McAdam & Parkinson, 2003; Zarraga & Garcia

Falcon, 2003) have also established that communication climate affects knowledge sharing in organizations.

The following are some of the key factors in the communication climate: horizontal information flow, vertical information flow, openness, and reliability of information (Crino & White, 1981; Dennis, 1974). A supportive communication climate promotes the open exchange of information, accessibility of colleagues, confirming and cooperative interactions, and an overall culture of knowledge sharing (Larsen & Folgero, 1993). To conclude, the creation, transfer, and existence of organizational knowledge is dependent on a supportive communication climate (Ali, Pascoe & Warne, 2002).

Communication and social networks are central elements in the distributed learning environment (Cho, Gay, Davidson & Ingraffea, 2007). Learning in a specific setting is influenced by communicative acts such as conversation, collaboration, and social exchanges (Harasim, Hiltz, Teles & Turoff, 1995). In addition, different organizational approaches to learning opportunities are directly influenced by top management, and its commitment and attitudes toward learning (Keeling, Jones, Botterill & Gray, 1998). Keeling et al. (1998) report that employees negatively reacted to the lack of participation of members of top management in formal training and educational courses, which was perceived as a lack of commitment to learning within the organization.

The engagement of members of top management in an organization's communication processes has a particular influence on employees, increasing the high expectancy of successful learning, and encouraging an increased commitment to their organization. The communication of information related to the organization serves to increase the perceived importance of successful learning (Ng, Butts, Vanderberg, DeJoy & Wilson, 2006). The potential for immediate (i.e. skill-based pay) and long-term (i.e. promotion opportunities) rewards can be communicated to employees and positively influence their attitudes toward successful learning (Noe & Wilk, 1993). In order to increase the intrinsic motivation of employees, top management communication may also report how successful learning impacts organizational productivity (i.e. when, where and how will the acquired competences be used), and in this way increase employee understanding of the significance of their work to organizational outcomes (Soupata, 2005).

Knowledge management systems mean the introduction of technologies for effective and efficient knowledge management in organizations (Maier & Hadrich, 2011). Knowledge sharing is an integral part of all knowledge management systems (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Earl, 2001). From the perspective of knowledge work, an organizational knowledge management system is a system that supports knowledge creation, the collection of externally-created knowledge, the use of existing knowledge, and the use of knowledge from both internal and external sources (Meso & Smith, 2000). According to Nonaka's (1995)

findings, such a system supports organizational learning by promoting the exchange and sharing of both tacit and explicit knowledge.

When considering such systems, it is also important to acknowledge the socio-technical perspective as it promotes the idea that organizational knowledge management systems are composed of more than just the technological component. These are complex systems combining technological infrastructure, organizational infrastructure, corporate culture, knowledge, and individuals (Meso & Smith, 2000). While technology is crucial to the successful functioning of knowledge management systems, people are even more important (Kurtzman, 1998). The knowledge sharing of employees within an organization that has a knowledge management system are motivated by organizational culture dimensions, including management support (Al-Busaidi, Olfman, Ryan & Leroy, 2010). Information sharing is also heavily influenced by technology, agency (including top management support), and environmental factors (Akbulut-Bailey, 2011). To conclude, top management support can significantly influence the ability of organizations to effectively create inter-organizational knowledge management systems (Lin, 2006).

1.7.4.3 Involving Employees in the Decision Making Process

Employee involvement is an aspect that enables employees to share their knowledge within the boundaries of organizations without fear of discrimination (Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Wagner, 1994). Employee involvement not only increases the decision-making power of employees but it also increases their willingness to engage in problem solving (Wagner, 1994). Existing research has demonstrated a positive relationship between satisfied employees and their organizations (Pacheco & Webber, 2016). Because of this, employee satisfaction has become an important aspect for management to assess and, when necessary, devote additional efforts toward involving employees in important job-related decisions (Harley, Ramsey & Scholarios, 2000; Scott, Bishop & Chen, 2003).

The hypothesis is that employee participation in decision-making increases job satisfaction as it fulfils employees' higher-order needs (Maslow, 1943) and allows them space to express themselves (Miller & Monge, 1986). Similarly, Lange (2009) suggests that employees are grateful when they are allowed to freely engage in decisions and are given personal responsibility in their working environment. Increasing the level of employee motivation by enabling them to participate in job-related decisions has a significant positive influence on job satisfaction and enrichment (Greenberg, 1975).

Existing research proves that employees experience higher levels of job satisfaction and empowerment (Kim, 2002; Van der Westhuizen, Pacheco & Webber, 2012; Wright & Kim, 2004) as their freedom to engage in job-related decisions increases. More satisfied and empowered employees are less likely to leave organizations (Grissom, 2012). In addition, when employees are more involved in decision-making processes, the quality of products and

services may increase, innovation levels are higher, and absenteeism can be lower (Conley, 1991; Vandenberg, Richardson & Eastman, 1999).

1.7.4.4 Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment can be defined as a cognitive condition when employees feel that their intrinsic motivation has increased or experience an enhanced feeling of self-efficacy at their job (Spreitzer, 1995). It can also be defined as a managerial approach that is concerned with sharing information, resources, incentives, and authority levels with frontline employees (Bowen & Lawler, 1995). Finally, employee empowerment can be defined as the sharing of power between top management and other levels of employees in an organization (Khan, Tang, Hamayoun & Bhutta, 2014). In many professions, including those in the public sector, empowerment activities have been identified as positive contributors that improve performance (Lee, Cayer & Lan, 2006) and employees' job satisfaction (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016), organizational commitment, and involvement (Guthrie, 2001; Lee et al., 2006; Wright & Kim, 2004). Employee empowerment also reduces potential and actual turnover (Gardner, Wright & Moynihan, 2011; Grissom, 2012). An empowering leader is a manager who promotes behaviours that add to the meaningfulness of work, allows increased participation in decision-making, encourages employees to express confidence in their performance, and provides them with a higher level of autonomy, and the courage to contradict the bureaucratic constraints that hamper their job performance (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades & Drasgow, 2000).

It is also beneficial in the context of the public sector to nurture employee empowerment as it positively impacts job satisfaction (Kim, 2002; Lee et al., 2006; Wright & Kim, 2004). Empowered employees are typically more committed to their organizations as they perceive that their organizations value their contribution and support their active participation to a greater degree (Kim & Fernandez, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to focus on employee empowerment because it is a tool that enables organizations to survive and thrive in the long term (Wellins et al., 1991). Typically, empowered employees believe that they have the power to deal with specific situations, events, and people by using the skills and knowledge they possess (Conger, & Kanungo, 1988). Saifullah, Alam, Zafar, and Humayan (2015) believe that employee empowerment is a productive strategy that organizations can use to improve the level of capabilities and responsibilities of its employees, the operative assumption being that empowered employees are more efficient at performing their tasks.

1.7.4.5 Role of Titles, Status and Formality in the Organization

In the current environment, scholars of the organization have found that status dynamics can help them gain a better understanding of the many phenomena that occur both within and between organizations (Piazza & Castellucci, 2014). Status is a signal of a particular position that an employee or an organization holds within a well-defined social hierarchy (Sauder, Lynn & Podolny, 2012). Understanding status dynamics is important at all levels of an

organization as it can be used to explain various phenomena, for example job discrimination and organizational change (Piazza & Castellucci, 2014). The literature proposes that none of the complex organizations that exist today have a completely level or flat structure as they all require at least some degree of authority to function efficiently (Morand, 2010).

Similarly, power and status exist in virtually every organization and are the inevitable result of differences in the characteristics of managers and employees, including reputation, formal authority, knowledge, skills, and control over resources (Bunderson & Reagans, 2011). Once organizations recognize this, they must confront the complex task of how to promote open communication and foster an egalitarian culture. To do this, organizations often try to diminish or blur existing status distinctions, and yet organizational status systems are constantly linguistically reinforced by job titles and other labels (Baker, 1997; Morand, 2005). For organizations that wish to abolish such status systems, a possible path is to remove this type of vocabulary (such as the word employee) and replace it with terms such as associates or co-workers. Bunderson and Reagans (2011) find that status and power both function as an expression of social hierarchy and this has an impact on the collective learning in organizations. The authors claim that power and status differences may “*distract members from collective learning goals, compromise risk-taking and experimentation, and decrease the open sharing and equal consideration of different member knowledge and insight*” (Bunderson & Reagans, 2011, p. 1186).

1.7.4.6 Workload of Managers

Public sector managers constantly confront a range of complex challenges. They operate in a complex environment, potentially lack formal training for tasks related to management, and perceive themselves as having limited power to implement management changes (Howe, 1997). For many public sector organizations, this situation means that in practice managers tend to prefer action over research and analysis. The public sector has often been slower to adopt sophisticated and modern management practices (Young, 1993). This can partially be explained by the emphasis by public sector organizations on a “just-do-it” mentality (Letts, Ryan & Grossman, 1999). Furthermore, many public sector managers perceive time spent on research, analysis, and organizational improvement as time that could be better spent trying to accomplish the primary tasks defined by their mission.

Many public sector organizations, because of the need to simply survive in the current environment, struggle to devote enough time and effort to important organizational aspects such as strategic planning. Such important management issues are generally not high on the agenda of public sector managers as they are dealing with so many other pressing issues. Moreover, relatively few funders of public sector organizations are prepared to invest in solutions that could improve organizational performance as they tend to see this as a normal cost of administration rather than as a valuable tool for achieving improvements in efficiency (Tyler, 2005). In addition, due to the many demands, especially the necessary daily activities,

there is little incentive for public organizations to engage in a process, such as knowledge management, that could potentially expose some of their weaknesses (Letts et al., 1999).

1.8 Knowledge Management and the Sustainable Development of Social Work

1.8.1 Sustainability of Skilled Social Workers

The growing shortage of skilled social workers, accompanied by an aging population and the increasing number of fragile, elderly individuals that require social services, possesses a serious challenge for our society. The magnitude of this problem is seen in the various predictions hypothesizing that globally there is likely to be a shortfall of millions of social workers for the successful provision of social services. To make matters worse, there are not enough social work students to fill that void, whereas the existing employee turnover is another serious concern for the social work field. Policy makers in many countries do not yet understand the pattern of growing needs and have no tool to forecast the future increase in educational requirements for creating a pool of adequately skilled social workers. In addition to this, understanding the patterns of workforce entrance and exit for social workers and the dynamics of transition becomes important for national policy and decision makers. Therefore, knowledge management can have a positive impact in helping to fulfil the important role of social work in our aging society.

In my dissertation, I additionally present a multiple decrement model of social workers' entrance and transition from social work student and social worker trainee to fully productive social worker, to their exit, whether by changed profession, retirement or death. I argue that the availability of social workers in a national economy depends on the development and operationalization of appropriate policies, where knowledge management can be influential. My model allows measuring the quality of the national policy system related to the social work profession, something which has not been achieved yet, and shows how knowledge management solutions can positively influence the whole field of social work. I apply an objective measuring tool, grounded in an already developed actuarial–mathematical method. My case relies on the collection and analysis of relevant data found in publicly available statistical reports for Slovenia. Existing data enables me to provide assumptions on how to better forecast the transition of social workers (Colnar, Dimovski & Bogataj, 2019).

1.8.2 Social Sustainability

Social sustainability can be defined as a process for creating sustainable, successful environments that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places where they live and work (Social Life, 2019). Moreover, social sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world, namely infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve (Woodcraft, Bacon, Caistor-Arendar & Hackett, 2012). The social

dimension of sustainability has gained rather inadequate attention and recognition in previous studies, considering that this aspect is typically difficult to define and operationalize (Ajmal, Khan, Hussain & Helo, 2018; Staniškiene & Stankevičiute, 2018). Consequently, most of the previous initiatives have primarily focused on the economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development while overlooking the social dimension of sustainability (Cuthill, 2010; Vavik & Keitsch, 2010). Social sustainability, however, is integral to the quality of a human system, as it fosters lasting conditions for human wellbeing, particularly for the most vulnerable individuals or groups (Ajmal et al., 2018; Boström, 2012), including the elderly.

Mutual development of knowledge management and social sustainability could potentially enhance the overall performance levels of social work organizations. Moreover, if knowledge management initiatives are properly implemented, they may positively influence the sustainability of the entire social system in our aging society. Additionally, I argue that the sustainability of any social system is not only a problem of public finances but that it is also about ensuring an adequate number of skilled social workers. Currently, we are dealing with a decrease in the availability of social workers, while at the same time the requirement of social services for the elderly is constantly growing. Therefore, we must determine whether we have enough social workers available for the sustainable provision of wellbeing for services users in social work. Such initiatives may also positively influence the sustainability of public finances, following possible efficiency improvements (de Vries & Nemec, 2013).

1.8.3 Social Work Challenges and the Supply of Skilled Social Workers

Social work is considered as particularly important because it closely follows its mission to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (Hartnett et al., 2019). Its commitment to support and help people makes social work different from many other professions (Hall, 2006), and authors (Hartnett, Tabone & Orlsene, 2019) believe that it has an important role to play in any aging society. In my dissertation, I opted to focus on social work centers in Slovenia. Slovenia is similar to other countries (Harlow, 2004) experiencing a shortage of skilled social workers. Due to the existing shortage, guaranteeing the supply of an adequate workforce that is engaged in practice and for educating future social workers is one of the core challenges for all societies. Such shortages should also raise an important concern for national policy and decision makers.

I argue that similar to the case of nursing staff shortages, specific models for workforce forecasting with regard to social workers will be gaining in importance and recognition. Effective forecasting models help managers and policy and decision makers to predict possible shortages or excesses of workforce and its consequences for organizational activities such as planning of activities and annual budgets (Squires, Jylha, Jun, Ensio & Kinnune, 2017). Actual data from 2015 show that the European Union had the second highest old-age

dependency ratio (29.2%) after Japan (42.7%). The old-age dependency ratio is expected to rise in the European Union by 25 percentage points by 2070, reaching 54.2% (European Commission, 2017). As such, this ratio is going to have a significant impact on the future functioning of our aging society. Population aging accompanied by the decrease in births and increasing life expectancy over the last century has already had a strong influence on the changes in the global age structure (Dimovski, Grah & Colnar, 2019). The number of people over 60 will grow from 901 million in 2015 to 1.4 billion in 2030 (United Nations, 2019). In addition to this, for example in Slovenia, there will be 31.5% of persons aged 65 years or more in 2060 in comparison to the 20.4% in 2020 (Eurostat, 2019). As the population ages and lives longer, the need for social services increases. For example, long-term care will become even more important and will require an additional number of skilled social workers (Marc, Bartosiewicz, Burzynska, Chmiel & Januszewicz, 2019).

In addition, Kong et al. (2010) posit that the elderly care sector is exposed to big challenges due to the aging of the population in many Western countries and due to the increasing pressure to produce cost-effective and high quality services. Therefore, I consider knowledge management as the ability of social workers to be able to better utilize their existing resources for achieving the wellbeing of services users. Knowledge management can additionally positively influence the job satisfaction of individual employees (Kianto, Vanhala & Hielmann, 2016), which raises motivation levels of individuals (North & Hornung, 2002) and mitigates their turnover intentions (Muchinsky & Tuttle, 1979). As such, I argue that it can foster the sustainable development of the social dimension of sustainability and social work, which is of paramount importance in aging societies.

Moreover, I believe that examining the relationship between knowledge management and the availability of social workers is important, given that this aspect has been neglected in previous studies. In my dissertation, I also present a multiple decrement model of social workers' entrance and transition from social work student and social worker trainee to fully productive social worker, to their exit, whether by changed profession, retirement or death. With this, I am also again following the proposition advanced by Al Ahbabi et al. (2019), of continuing the evolution of public sector knowledge management and tackling existing research needs to provide insight to other practitioners, academics and national policy and decision makers. The impact of knowledge management on the sustainable development of social work is analyzed using a multiple decrement model. In determining special cases of a multistate transition models I follow the examples of Bogataj, McDonnell and Bogataj (2016), Bogataj, McDonnell and Bogataj (2015) and Rogelj and Bogataj (2018).

The application of life table techniques to the study of labor force status and mobility was first suggested by Hoem (1970). Such a life table can be constructed for a fixed group of people who share a membership-defining event (the cohort) (Nurminen & Nurminen, 2005), such as members of a defined profession, in my case social workers. Similarly, multistate work-life expectancy models have been used in studies by several authors (i.e. Dudel, Lopez

Gomez, Benavides & Myrskylä, 2018; Dudel & Myrskylä, 2017; Nurminen & Nurminen, 2005; Nurminen, 2008; Pedersen & Bjorner, 2017; Schoen, 2016), especially focusing on occupational health or pension models. Authors Nurminen and Nurminen (2005) argue that work-life and related expectancies are conceptually the same as health expectancies, both being an expected occupation time, with the difference being that the former occur in the context of labor force activity rather than in health statistics. Therefore, as my focus is on examining the availability of social workers and their entrance into and exit from the profession, I rely on using multiple decrement models.

1.9 Moderating Effect of Employee Empowerment on the Relationship of Management Support and Incentives and Knowledge Implementation

1.9.1 Management Support and Knowledge Implementation

Management support is an organizational factor that focuses on openly supporting and encouraging knowledge management (Downes, 2014). Moreover, management support can be perceived as the degree to which management understands the importance of knowledge management and the extent to which it participates in its activities (Lin, 2011). In previous research, management support has been put forward as a generic critical success factor (Yew Wong, 2005) and enabler (Lee, Kim & Kim, 2012) in knowledge management. Additionally, support and active involvement from managers can have a significant impact on all positive outcomes of knowledge management in organizations (Azme et al., 2017). Furthermore, such support from top management should be ongoing and delivered in a practical manner (Storey & Barnett, 2000). In fact, neglecting management support for knowledge management can potentially negatively impact the overall success of knowledge management initiatives (Akbari & Ghaffari, 2017).

Management support has also been determined as one of the components of knowledge management infrastructure that is an important facet for all knowledge management processes (Kulkarni, Ravindran & Freeze, 2007). As such, knowledge management infrastructure, including management support can potentially also improve knowledge implementation (Hoffman, Hoelscher & Sherif, 2005). Moreover, in their study Lee, Kim and Kim (2012) predict and empirically support that management support positively affects knowledge process capabilities. One of their examined knowledge process capabilities was the implementation of knowledge that enabled the realization of its practical values. Similarly, Kamhawi (2012) establishes and supports a positive relationship between management support and knowledge management activities. In addition to this, Yeh et al. (2006) identify management support as an important factor that promotes knowledge implementation. Moreover, Akbari and Ghaffari (2017) also posit that management supportive behavior is of paramount importance for creating a workplace environment, where employees are motivated to actually implement their knowledge in their work. Although,

some research on the relationship between management support and knowledge management exists, such combination is novel in the context of knowledge management in social work.

Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Management support is positively related to knowledge implementation in social work.

1.9.2 Incentives and Knowledge Implementation

Additionally to openly supporting and encouraging knowledge management, managers should be aware of the need to recognize and reward contributions made by their employees (Downes, 2014). Therefore, in my research, I have also focused on the organizational factor of incentives and its relationship with knowledge implementation. Especially how incentives could influence the levels of knowledge actually implemented in practice within an organization. In general, incentives are often regarded as a reflection of worth that an organization gives to their knowledge employees (Cabrera & Bonache, 1999). Both management support and an incentives system are already established as common organizational factors that influence knowledge management (Svetlik, Stavrou-Costea & Lin, 2007). Authors, Ajmal et al. (2010) suggest that incentives for knowledge efforts could in general potentially influence the success of knowledge management initiatives.

Moreover, in the opinion of Yew Wong (2005), establishing the right levels of recognition, incentives and rewards can be perceived as one of the most important factors that encourage employees to implement their knowledge. To further increase such knowledge related behaviors of employees, they must feel motivated (Cho & Korte, 2014) and their participation should be rewarded (Paroutis & Al-Saleh, 2009). Furthermore, the organization must provide support for improving their ability to do so (Černe, Jaklič & Škerlavaj, 2013) and enable them to respond to existing challenges (Škerlavaj, Indihar Štemberger, Škrinjar & Dimovski, 2007). Typically, incentives are considered as appropriate mechanisms to encourage and value the participation of employees in such activities. Incentives also show employees that their actions are visible and recognized by the organization and its management (Razmerita, Kirchner & Nielsen, 2016). In addition to this, Ho (2009) claims that incentives will positively influence the levels of knowledge implementation in an organization. Previous research therefore already examined the benefits derived from the relationship between incentives and knowledge implementation. However, such a combination of constructs is unexplored in the context of knowledge management in social work.

Therefore, my second hypothesis is the following:

Hypothesis 2: Incentives are positively related to knowledge implementation in social work.

1.9.3 Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment

Bowen and Lawler (1992) developed one of the globally most recognized conceptualizations of employee empowerment, which defines employee empowerment as a multifaceted approach to service delivery in which managers share with their employees four key organization ingredients: (1) information about the organization's performance; (2) rewards based on the organization's performance; (3) knowledge, that enables employees to understand and contribute to organizational performance; and (4) power to make decisions that influence organizational direction and performance. The overall package of empowerment practice works well in the public sector as well (Fernandez, Resh, Moldogaziev & Oberfield, 2015). However, little has been written regarding best methods for achieving empowerment in non-profit social work organizations (Hardina, 2005). Therefore, organizations that aim to become knowledge-based organizations should also invest in employee empowerment as an important influencing factor (Akbari & Ghaffari, 2017).

Employee empowerment is nowadays also considered as an important research topic that has gained more attention in the context of studies on knowledge management (Akbari & Ghaffari, 2017). Consequently, empowerment can occur and be analyzed at multiple different levels, affecting different employees in different contexts (Amichai-Hamburger, 2008). In addition to this, generally exploring moderator effects has a long and important history in numerous different research areas (Aiken & West, 1991), including management. Moreover, researchers are nowadays more and more interested in examining complex relationships between variables, such as moderating effects (Fassott, Henseler & Coelho, 2016). To conclude, Dawson (2014) defines statistical models that deal with moderation effects as one of the most common types found in management and organizational literature.

Previous research supports that empowerment has a significant role in influencing knowledge management practices (Hasan, 2012; Muhammad, 2006). However, we must also acknowledge that employees include their expectations and evaluate their experiences in relation to empowerment. Therefore, it is important for them to have clear empowerment related expectations. In the case of under-fulfilled and / or unclear empowerment expectations, they might become puzzled about their decision-making roles, which can lead to their poor judgement with work related activities (Wong & Kuvaas, 2018) and can hinder their perception of competence mobilization (Wong, Škerlavaj & Černe, 2017). To sum up, how employees evaluate the utilization of their competence is less dependent on the level of autonomy they are given and is more dependent on their own expectations (Wong et al., 2017).

Management has the ability to encourage employee empowerment by changing the organizational structures that support empowerment (Leitch, Nieves, Burke, Little & Gorin, 1995). Moreover, any significant increase in empowerment typically requires management support for such important changes (Yukl & Becker, 2006). In addition to this, Akbari and

Ghaffari (2017) propose and support that there is a significant and positive relationship between management and employee empowerment. Their study is one of the few applied studies that acknowledge the relationship between knowledge management initiatives and employee empowerment. Additionally, their study aims to fill the identified gap between knowledge management and employee empowerment. Similarly, on merely a theoretical basis Ahmed, Rafiq and Saad (2003) propose that employee empowerment has a very strong tie with management and for it to be successful management support is integral. Contrary, the inability of organizations to implement successful empowerment practices, often include a lack of management support (Cunningham & Hyman, 1999).

Similarly, the idea that employee empowerment endorses knowledge implementation has arisen in many different research fields (Wall, Cordery & Clegg, 2002). Moreover, employee empowerment represents the potential structure within which knowledge can actually be implemented in practice (Blumberg & Pringle, 1982). Additionally, Ahmadi, Daraei, Khodaie and Salamzadeh (2012) suggest and empirically support that there is a direct relationship between employee empowerment and knowledge implementation. Furthermore, significant relationships between dimensions of knowledge management, including knowledge implementation were also found and reported in the research of Hasani and Sheikhesmaeili (2016). Additionally, empowered employees perceive that they gained the power to deal with specific complex situations, events and users by using the knowledge and skills that they possess (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). To conclude, when employees feel empowered they tend to be more committed towards using their knowledge for the general good of the whole organization (Chong & Choi, 2005).

Research thus far, however, has failed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how employee empowerment influences the relationship between management support and knowledge implementation in the context of knowledge management in social work. For example, previous research focusing on knowledge management has neglected the interaction effect of employee empowerment and management support. Although, it is noteworthy that employee empowerment, management support and knowledge implementation have been considered extensively in the existing literature, those concepts, their relationships and interaction effects require further conceptual development. In light of the above, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Employee empowerment moderates the positive relationship between management support and knowledge implementation, in such a way that the positive relationship is stronger with high levels of employee empowerment.

Previous research also indicates that to implement empowerment within an organization, management must provide appropriate incentives that are linked to desired employee behavior. Therefore, a recommendation for management is to link empowerment behavior to incentives, potentially in the form of financial benefits or promotion possibilities to further

endorse empowerment within the organization. Moreover, it was empirically supported that the link to incentives is positively related to the extent of empowerment (Baird & Wang, 2010). Additionally, the provision of incentives is crucial in the context of empowerment as employee empowerment increases risk and responsibility for individual employees and it raises the demands for them to perform (Goldsmith, Nickson, Sloan & Wood, 1997). Similarly, recognition and financial incentives are positively related to enhancing empowerment (Gkorezis & Petridou, 2008). To conclude, in the opinion of Spreitzer (1995), incentives are a work context factor that determines the employee's feeling of empowerment.

Therefore, I identify another potential research opportunity. Models that combine different streams of literature such as knowledge management and social work, different methods and tools and include moderator variables to gain in-depth understanding of relationships between the constructs of employee empowerment, incentives and knowledge implementation are absent from the existing literature. Even though employee empowerment, incentives and knowledge implementation have been extensively covered in the literature, the combination of those concepts is novel. Moreover, determining the interaction effect between empowerment and incentives and the relationships between constructs requires additional research. In light of the above, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Employee empowerment moderates the positive relationship between incentives and knowledge implementation, in such a way that the positive relationship is stronger with high levels of employee empowerment.

To wrap up, I once again present all of my proposed hypotheses below:

Hypothesis 1: Management support is positively related to knowledge implementation in social work.

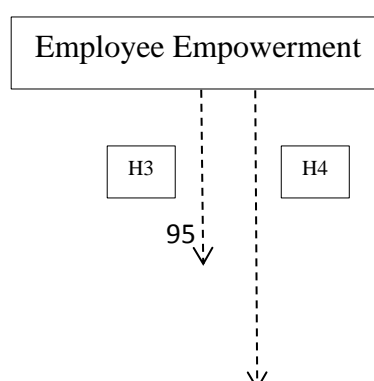
Hypothesis 2: Incentives are positively related to knowledge implementation in social work.

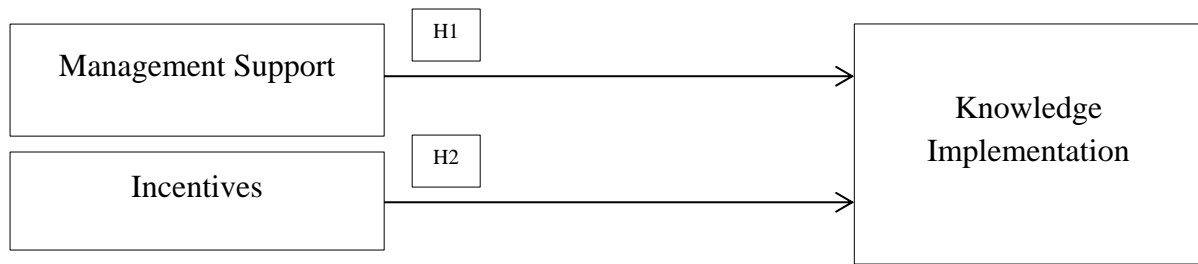
Hypothesis 3: Employee empowerment moderates the positive relationship between management support and knowledge implementation: specifically, the positive relationship becomes stronger when levels of employee empowerment are high.

Hypothesis 4: Employee empowerment moderates the positive relationship between incentives and knowledge implementation in such a way that the positive relationship is stronger with high levels of employee empowerment.

My conceptual model with hypotheses is presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Conceptual Model of the Relationships Between Management Support, Incentives, Knowledge Implementation and Employee Empowerment





Source: Colnar & Dimovski (2019)

2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

2.1 Mixed Methods Research – Explanatory Sequential Research Design

The mixed methods research approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It is a comprehensive research technique in social sciences that integrates statistical and qualitative data, thus generating in-depth overall research findings that permit the researcher to provide more precise conclusions with greater reliability (Jogulu & Pansiri, 2011; Saunders et al., 2012; Stentz et al., 2012). Many researchers (i.e. Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; O’Cathain, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) endorse the added-value and benefits of the mixed methods research method that integrates of quantitative and qualitative research methods (Molina-Azorin, 2011).

A common purpose and central premise of mixed methods research is that the combined use of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a better understanding of research problems and complex phenomena than does the use of a single approach (Molina-Azorin & Cameron, 2010). By utilizing the technique of combining and comparing multiple data sources, analysis and processes, researchers are able to triangulate (Jogulu & Pansiri, 2011), which reinforces the credibility of the findings (Jack & Raturi, 2006). Jogulu and Pansiri (2011) confirmed this conclusion in their examination of several doctoral dissertations. The authors find that the qualitative findings confirm the quantitative findings, thereby increasing the validity and reliability of the research. Utilizing mixed methods, researchers are able to reduce over-reliance on statistical data in order to explain social events and experiences that are subjective in nature. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is epistemologically comprehensible and useful for both validation and outcome generation (Jogulu & Pansiri, 2011). Jogulu and Pansiri (2011) support mixed methods as a methodological design that integrates statistical and qualitative data to generate more refined research findings (Jack & Raturi, 2006; Pansiri, 2009) that better describe and explain social phenomena (Gubi, Arlbjorn & Johansen, 2003).

With the formal introduction of mixed methods research, researchers were able to present a set of typologies to describe and classify mixed methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In my dissertation, I use the explanatory

sequential research design to support the findings of my quantitative research with qualitative findings (Saunders et al., 2012). The explanatory sequential design is used to explain the results of the quantitative phase with qualitative methods that enable us to better understand unexpected results (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003 in Hayes, Bonner & Douglas, 2013). The benefit of explanatory sequential design resides in its clarity and ease of implementation (Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009).

2.2 Used Methodology

In the empirical part of my doctoral dissertation, I tested the conceptual model on a sample of social work centers in Slovenia. I used explanatory sequential research design that combines quantitative and qualitative research methods. Relying on the results of quantitative research, I confirmed or rejected my research hypotheses generated to examine the research model (Dimovski, Černe, Penger, Škerlavaj & Marič, 2011). The qualitative part of the research included in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Each selected construct in the proposed model relied on established and widely-used measurement instruments (that will be presented later in the dissertation).

The quantitative part of the research included the following: (1) **confirmatory factor analysis**, the most commonly used form of factor analysis in social research (Kline, 2010), to verify the factor structure of a set of observed variables (Suhr, 2006); (2) **regression analysis** to identify the factors that significantly contribute to the prediction of dependent variables and the size of the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable, and to assess the unique contribution to the dependent variable by each independent variable; (3) **multiple decrement models**, an objective measuring tool derived from an already developed actuarial- mathematical model, to predict the availability of skilled social workers, and; (4) **hierarchical regression analysis** to test my hypotheses with a series of hierarchical regression analysis with centred variables.

I conducted my qualitative research through semi-structured in-depth interviews with managers and employees in social work centers in Slovenia. I chose this type of interview as it is a flexible data collection technique (Vogrinc, 2008). For the framework of such interviews, I prepared some basic questions in advance (see Appendix 4). The interviews lasted from a minimum of 70 to a maximum of 100 minutes. The final goal of the interviews was to implement thematic coding that is a form of qualitative analysis whereby a common theme or idea is identified that allows the researcher to index the text into categories and therefore establish a framework of thematic ideas (Gibbs, 2007).

2.3 Research Design

I designed my research on the basis of explanatory sequential design, in which the qualitative part of the research would help to explain quantitative results. The data collection took place

from May 2018 to May 2019. Table 2 is a graphic presentation of the outline of the research design used in the doctoral dissertation.

Table 2: Doctoral Dissertation Research Design

1. Background of the research	
1.a Designing research questions (RQ1 to RQ5)	1.b Designing hypotheses (H1 to H4)
2. Conceptualization of the doctoral dissertation model: constructs, relationships, hypotheses	
3. Selection of measurement instruments for selected constructs: well established, frequently used, up to date	
4. Data collection for the quantitative research section	
4.a Secondary data	4.b Questionnaire
5. Editing and processing quantitative data: confirmatory factor analysis, regression analysis, hierarchical linear regression analysis	
6. Analysis and interpretation of quantitative results: After this first phase, the qualitative section is added for the purpose of clarification and triangulation.	
7. Qualitative interviews: individual face-to-face semi-structured open-ended interviews with social work managers and social work employees	
8. Editing and processing qualitative data: analysis and thematic coding	
9. Analysis and interpretation of qualitative results: The results of the quantitative phase are further explained by qualitative results. Collection of information about knowledge management in social work centers.	
10. Multiple decrement models: forecasting the availability of skilled social workers	
11. Contributions to science, limitations and practical implications	
12. Completion of research	

Source: Own work

2.4 Quantitative Data - Sample and Data Collection Procedure

2.4.1 Respondents and Procedure

I collected primary quantitative data from respondents from May 2018 to January 2019. I used an adapted online and in-person questionnaire, which was filled out by managers and

employees in Slovenian social work centers with approximately 1,250 employees (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2017). Social work centers are and have been the basic institutions, which through measures and services for social security, cover the predominant part of social protection on the national level. Their founder is the state that devotes social work centers the central role of the coordinators of social protection and welfare services (Kuzmanič Korva, Perkovič, Kovač, Rapoša-Tajnšek & Flaker, 2004). The sample frame consists from the e-mail contacts of employed individuals available to the Social Chamber of Slovenia and later personal contacts with individual respondents. I invited the whole population within the available e-mail contacts framework to participate in my research and later additional individuals through personal contacts.

Prior to the start of data collection in accordance with the Braun, Silke, Weisweiler and Frey (2013) procedure, potential respondents received an email invitation to complete the questionnaire with a cover letter explaining the purpose of my research and ensuring them anonymity and voluntary participation (see Appendix 2). Therefore, participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous and the respondents provided informed consent when they opted to answer the items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire and all communication was in Slovenian.

To avoid non-response bias, I developed several personal relationships with individuals employed in social work centers and sent numerous reminders to respond to my questionnaire. Common method bias could potentially result from artifactual covariance between independent and dependent variables, where one individual respondent provides answers to all measures, similarly to single source data collected from questionnaires (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) as is the case in my research. To reduce common method bias, I allowed the respondents' answers to be anonymous at all times. Furthermore, the respondents were assured that there are no right or no wrong answers and that I encourage them to answer questions as honestly as they can. With the use of such procedures, I intended to reduce people's apprehension and make them less likely to construct their responses as socially desirable, lenient and consistent with how they think the researcher wants them to respond (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, as data for my conceptual model variables indeed came from single respondents in a one-time survey, common method bias might influence some proposed relationships (hypotheses) in the model. To test for the potential existence of common method bias in my conceptual model, I first apply Harman's (1976) single factor test. The first factor accounts for 82.3% of the overall variance, which is more than the 50.0% threshold, recommended by Podsakoff, Bommer, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (2006) and indicates that common method bias is an issue. As this test suffers some limitations (Kemery & Dunlap, 1986), I additionally adopt the common latent factor (Liang et al., 2007) and marker variable (Lindell & Whitney, 2001) approach. Both additional approaches also reveal a threat of common method bias present in the conceptual model (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The questionnaire covers selected measurement instruments of knowledge management in social work. The whole

questionnaire was filled out by 98 respondents, which is equivalent to a response rate of around 7.9%. It took 13 minutes on average for respondents to respond to all questions in the questionnaire. The data were edited in the SPSS 24.0 program.

2.4.2 Respondents and Procedure

The largest share of respondents worked in an organization with 26 to 50 employees (33.3%) and in an organization with 50 or more employees (33.3%). 29.2% of respondents worked in an organization with 11 to 25 employees. The largest share of respondents belongs to the age cohort from 40 to 49 years, accounting for more than 40.0% of the total age structure. More than two thirds of respondents (71.3%) are aged from 30 to 49 years. Of the 98 respondents, 80.2% are women, 11.5% are men and 8.3% of respondents did not provide an answer. The proportion of female respondents is consistent with McPhail's observation (2004) that social work is predominantly a female profession. More than half of my respondents (64.5%) have successfully acquired level 7 of education according to the Decree on the introduction and use of the classification system of education and training in Slovenia⁴. 15.7% of respondents acquired level 6/2 of education and 10.5% of respondents acquired level 8/1 of education. Almost four fifths (78.7%) have been employed in their organization for at least six years. Over half of the respondents (58.5%) have been employed in their organization for at least 11 years and 24.5% of the respondents have been employed in their organization for at over 21 years.

The part of my research that deals with the effectiveness of knowledge management required that respondents declare that their organization formally or informally engaged in knowledge management practices. Nine respondents stated that their organization had a formal knowledge management strategy and 21 respondents indicated that their organization engaged in such activities on an informal basis. 63 respondents stated that their organizations did not engage in any knowledge management practices and five respondents did not provide an answer. The resulting sample size of 30 respondents is relatively small but, because this is the first study to attempt to evaluate knowledge management in Slovenian social work centers, I believe that my research will nevertheless provide important insights.

In general, in the literature there is an abundance of recommendations regarding the appropriate sample size to use when conducting such research (Mundfrom, Shaw & Lu Ke, 2005). Therefore, various rules-of-thumb have been advanced, where Boomsma (1985) argued a minimum sample should consist of at least 100 respondents. However, such rules can also be problematic as they are not model-specific and can result in grossly over or underestimated sample size requirements (Wolf, Harrington, Clark & Miller, 2013).

⁴ 6/1 - višješolski programi; višješolski strokovni programi; 6/2 - specializacija po višješolskih programih; visokošolski strokovni programi; visokošolski strokovni (1. bolonjska stopnja); univerzitetni programi (1. bolonjska stopnja); 7 - specializacija po visokošolskih strokovnih programih; univerzitetni programi; magisteriji stroke (za imenom) (2. bolonjska stopnja); 8/1 - specializacija po univerzitetnih programih; magisteriji znanosti (pred imenom); 8/2 doktorati znanosti (pred imenom); doktorati znanosti (pred imenom) (3. bolonjska stopnja)

2.5 Qualitative Data - Sample and Data Collection Procedure

2.5.1 Respondents and Procedure

In-depth interviews are a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of interviewees to explore their perspective on a particular topic, idea, program, or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Such interviews are appropriate when the researcher wishes to obtain detailed information about an individual's thoughts and behaviours, or wants to enrich and make more sense of studied phenomena (Roulston, 2010). In-depth interviews have certain strengths in comparison with other research techniques, such as the greater amount of detailed information than can be gathered in other data collection methods such as questionnaires. In addition, interviews usually take part in a more relaxed setting where people tend to feel more comfortable and open with their counterpart than they do filling out a lengthy questionnaire.

One potential pitfall or bias, which is also true of certain other data collection methods, is that interviewers may wish to confirm their assumptions, or that the interviewees provide answers that confirm their fixed viewpoints on a specific matter. Using the interview data collection technique can also be a long process as more time is required to conduct interviews, transcribe them, and later analyse results obtained during interviews. Another shortcoming of interviews is that they cannot be generalized because small samples are chosen in advance and there is seldom a random sampling method in selecting interviewees and no ideal sample size for interviews. Interviewers must also be sensitive to where stories, themes, situations, and topics that a group of interviewees express have commonalities. At this point, the argument could be made that the sample size is big enough to provide valuable research results. The general process for conducting in-depth interviews is similar to research methods. The phases that are involved are as follows: planning, developing instruments, collecting data, analysing data, and disseminating findings (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

As part of this doctoral dissertation, I conducted follow-up semi-structured in-depth interviews with selected participants from social work centers from March 2019 to May 2019. The interviews were conducted with the aim of securing additional information on themes that emerged (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006) during the analysis of the questionnaire, and when the initial results of the quantitative analysis were compared with existing literature on knowledge management in the private and public sector. This approach is appropriate when the goal of the second (qualitative) phase is to explore and elaborate on the results from the first (quantitative) phase of the study (Creswell et al., 2003). With the in-depth interviews, I was able to triangulate study findings from my survey data and come to a better understanding of the underlying phenomena, a process proposed by Jayachandran, Hewett, and Kaufman (2004).

The data were collected via nine in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with managers and employees in social work centers in Slovenia. Of the nine selected subjects for interviews, six were managers working at social work centers. Managers were selected as interview subjects because most of the unexplored and underutilized knowledge management practices in social work are dealt with by managers. However, I also selected a number of employees as interview subjects in order to gain their perceptions into this topic with which they tend to be largely unfamiliar.

This dual perspective allowed a thorough and multi-faceted examination of perceptions of knowledge management topics, especially the current extent and effectiveness of knowledge management and the impact of organizational factors on knowledge management in their organizations. Since all of the interviewed managers and employees had worked in their organizations for at least five years, I assumed that they were aware of the chronological development of knowledge management activities in their organizations over those years. Nine interviews were conducted in seven different locations at the premises of social work centers. Each interview lasted from a minimum of 70 to a maximum of 100 minutes, sometimes with additional discussion not related to the interview topics. The interviewees were informed about the purpose of the research and their autonomy was guaranteed.

The data were gathered in one step. In this one step, social work managers and employees (identified from Interviewee A to Interviewee I) were interviewed in person. The interviews took place in four phases. First, general questions about the social work center and the individual profile of the interviewee were asked. These were then followed by several open-ended questions that enabled the collection of data related to individual perceptions, experiences, and attitudes related to knowledge management in social work centers (similar to the example of Sitar and Mihelič (2018)).

Second, I asked so-called warm-up questions regarding organizational structure and ICT. Regarding the topic of organizational structure, the interviewees were asked if they believed hierarchy was important, and if they believed that more decentralization and flexibility was possible and desirable to counteract hierarchy in public sector organizations. I explored to what extent interviewees were involved in decision-making processes and if they believed that they could be more involved in the future. I also attempted to gain an understanding regarding typical communication patterns, focusing in particular on the top-down direction. I asked interviewees if they believed it would be better for knowledge sharing to be primarily top-down.

Interviewees also had the opportunity to discuss whether they would change anything regarding communication patterns in their organizations if it were possible to do so. Later in the interview, they were asked if they believe that there are enough employees in their organization and how they thought the shortage of workforce affected their daily routines. Interviewees were asked to discuss whether they believed the quality of services for users

was affected by personnel issues. Regarding knowledge management, interviewees were asked if they believed that the attitude toward knowledge management would change if organizations had more personnel and if certain knowledge management activities were more prevalent in practice.

The second section of warm-up questions focused on ICT solutions. First, I asked my interviewees how satisfied they were with the available ICT systems available to assist them in their daily tasks. I wanted to gather their insights about current challenges related to ICT usage and other interesting topics of discussion. Another topic that was broached was interviewees' perception of their co-workers' level of knowledge about ICT solutions. I was especially interested in their opinions about whether some employees avoid using ICT due to their lack of competence. A unique feature related to this field in Slovenian social work centers is the recent introduction of a new information system called Krpan. Interviewees were encouraged to discuss if they view Krpan as an appropriate solution that will help them with their work in the future. I also brought up the topic of whether their co-workers believe that Krpan is primarily a tool of surveillance.

In the third phase of the interview, I covered the topics that were most directly related to knowledge management. This set of questions began with a simple question that has no right or wrong answer. Interviewees were asked to present their own definition or view of knowledge management. The next question explored whether knowledge management is present in their organizations in a formal or informal manner. Similarly, interviewees were asked how long their organization had already engaged in knowledge management. Interviewees were also asked to discuss whether they think the previous experience or education of managers could influence the level of knowledge management activities in their organization. I specifically focused on whether their organization has a designated manager who is responsible for all activities related to knowledge management. Interviewees also expressed their opinion about why such a manager was not present in their organization if that was the case. This set of questions concluded with questions about their organizations' efforts to actively and clearly communicate the expectations and potential benefits related to knowledge management.

The second part of the third phase of the interview dealt with the perceived effectiveness of knowledge management in social work centers. I was especially interested in gaining the interviewees' evaluation of the aspects mentioned above. Interviewees were encouraged to avoid quantitative evaluations and try and provide a more qualitative and detailed assessment. Interviewees were asked to discuss the potential of knowledge management for enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced performance. In addition, they were asked to provide remarks about whether they view one of these four potential benefits to knowledge management as more important than the others. The last question in this section was aimed at gaining an understanding of their perceptions regarding the financial aspect of knowledge management.

In the fourth and last phase of the interviews, I covered the topics of organizational culture and terminology. Regarding organization culture, interviewees were asked to describe a typical social network in their organization and if they believed that all employees were involved in such social networks. I also covered the topic of employee participation in training activities, where I particularly wanted to discover if they have the opportunity to attend training sessions outside the framework of social work. Moreover, interviewees were given the possibility to discuss how important it is to them to receive training outside the field of social work in order to gain supplementary knowledge. I also raised the general question of the financial funds available in their social work centers. I wanted to discover if they believe their organizations currently dedicate any funds to knowledge management activities. I also tried to establish whether they believed that such funds would be necessary and why in their opinion they are currently not available.

The next question related to incentives. Interviewees were given the opportunity to describe the system of rewards and recognition in their organizations. They were encouraged to discuss both the financial and non-financial aspect of incentives and how they thought the reward system should be ideally arranged. During the period that I wrote this doctoral dissertation, Slovenian social work centers had been reorganized and interviewees were asked to respond to the reorganization. Specifically, I asked them if they had observed any changes in the behaviour of their colleagues following the reorganization. I was particularly interested in discovering if they had observed a decrease in the levels of trust or any kinds of secretive behaviour. I also wanted to know how they perceived the safety of their jobs during and following the reorganization process.

My last topic covered the terminological aspect of knowledge management in social work. This is a somewhat unexplored area and perhaps underutilized approach. First, interviewees were asked to evaluate the general understanding of management and knowledge management topics in the social work sector. More specifically, I asked them if, in their opinion, social workers understand terms such as knowledge sharing, knowledge implementation, social network, and employee empowerment. Next I asked if they believed it would be possible to change the negative perception toward management in general (a finding that had been established during prior research and informal debate) and knowledge management, and specifically if social workers had received any previous training. I particularly wanted to know how they would respond if they realized that many knowledge management activities were already informally part of their daily practices. To conclude the interview, interviewees had the opportunity to add anything that they deemed significant and was related to the topic of knowledge management in social work centers.

I analysed the collected data according to qualitative research guidelines and followed steps that ensure the validity and reliability of research findings (Myers, 2013; Schreirer, 2012). I developed my interview guide prior to conducting interviews. The interview guide was based

on the literature review, a comparison between existing literature and questionnaire results, and certain preconceived ideas I had about the general context of social work centers in Slovenia. All nine interviews were recorded and the data transcribed the same or the following day that the interview was conducted. Prior to the interviews, I spoke to interviewees and we decided together that it would not be necessary to send them the transcriptions and findings for potential revision. In the data analysis, I read the transcripts several times to identify important terms and categories within each topic that might indicate a specific pattern or the underlying shared perception of respondents. During this phase, I became very familiar with the contents of the interviews. I was also able during this process to organize the data into predetermined categories (for example, hierarchy in the category of organizational structure, incentives in the category of organizational culture, etc.). I used content analysis and thematic coding for the qualitative data analysis. This essentially allowed me to record and identify passages of texts that were linked to a common theme or idea, and place these passages of text into various categories in order to establish a framework (Gibbs, 2007). In this way, I generated a set of conclusive findings regarding knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

2.5.2 Description of the Sample

Nine social work managers and employees in seven social work centers willing to participate in the second part of my research of knowledge management in social work centers were selected for the follow-up, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The selection of interviewees was made according to the following four criteria. First, there should be diversity in the size of their organizations measured by the number of employees of the social work centers of the selected interviewees: three interviewees from a social work center with more than 50 employees, two from a social work center with 26 to 50 employees, two from social work centers with 11 to 25 employees, and two from social work centers with 6 to 10 employees. Second, I chose interviewees based on their education. I had an interest in obtaining in-depth answers from both interviewees that had a background only in social work and those who had a background in other fields. Four selected interviewees had background exclusively in social work, and five interviewees had backgrounds in related and non-related fields. Third, I wanted some interviewees who were members of management and others who were employees. Six interviewees identified themselves as managers, and three respondents identified themselves as employees. Fourth, as I had not included a regional element in my first phase of research, I decided it would be interesting to include in the quantitative phase as many different Slovenian regions as possible. I identified interviewees from four different regions in Slovenia.

I contacted 13 social work managers and employees from nine social work centers in Slovenia. Of those I contacted, seven social work centers and nine social work managers or employees agreed to participate in the study, representing a sufficient level of variety. All the background information of the interviewees for follow-up interviews is provided in Table 3

To assure anonymity, the interviewees are referred to as Interviewees A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I. In Table 3, I present the Background Information/Profiles of Interviewees.

Table 3: Background Information/Profiles of Interviewees

	Interviewee A	Interviewee B	Interviewee C	Interviewee D	Interviewee E	Interviewee F	Interviewee G	Interviewee H	Interviewee I
Organization size	50+	26-50	50+	26-50	11-25	6-10	6-10	50+	11-25
Education ⁵	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1
Manager or employee ⁶	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
Region ⁷	1	2	1	3	2	4	4	2	4

Source: Own work

2.6 Measurement Instruments

For individual constructs, I select measurement instruments that are in the scientific environment: 1) well established: developed and / or used by some of the key authors of the studied topics; 2) frequently used: scientific papers that consider the development of measurement instruments are often cited; and 3) up to date: the relevant measurement instruments are also used in the latest research. The scales for measuring the level of agreement with statements related to knowledge management in social work centers, were assessed on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (I completely disagree) to 5 (I completely agree).

To measure management responsibility, I used the seven-item scale ($\alpha = .90$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The scale includes items such as “in my organization managers are active in communicating the benefits of knowledge sharing and learning opportunities.” I measure knowledge creation with the two-item scale ($\alpha = .84$) that Downes (2014) adapted from existing literature. The scale includes items such as “my organization has methods to critically analyze information for future use”. I measure knowledge storage and retrieval using the five-item scale ($\alpha = .87$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. Sample items include “my organization has a standard process for storing reference materials such as standards, strategies, guidelines and similar materials.” I measure knowledge transfer with the five-item scale ($\alpha = .82$) that followed Downes (2014) and his adaptation of existing literature. Sample items include “my organization showcases new ideas or practices from employees for other members of staff.” I measure knowledge implementation using the six-item scale ($\alpha = .91$) that Downes (2014)

⁵ Education: 1 – strictly related to social work; 2- other fields

⁶ 1 – manager, 2 - employee

⁷ Different regions are numbered with 1 – 4

adapted from already existing literature. Sample items include “my organization uses lessons learned or best practice from projects to improve successive projects or tasks.”

To measure improved collaboration, I used the three-item scale ($\alpha = .90$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The scale includes items such as “in my organization managers are making better decisions.” I measure improved communication with the two-item scale ($\alpha = .62$) that Downes (2014) adapted from existing literature. The scale includes items such as “in my organization the knowledge of individuals has become available to the whole organization.” I measure improved learning using the seven-item scale ($\alpha = .86$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. Sample items include “in my organization learning by individuals has improved.” I measure improved performance with the four-item scale ($\alpha = .42$) that followed Downes (2014) and his adaptation of existing literature. Sample items include “overall, the organization is functioning better.”

I measure commitment or affiliation to the organization’s mission using the two-item scale ($\alpha = .81$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. Sample items include “in my organization the primary concern of staff is delivering the organization’s mission.” To measure the impact of organizational culture on knowledge sharing and learning, I used the two-item scale ($\alpha = .76$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The scale includes items such as “in my organization mistakes are accepted as opportunities to learn.” I measure trust and collaboration with the two-item scale ($\alpha = .45$) that Downes (2014) adapted from existing literature. The scale includes items such as “in my organization there is a lack of trust in people because they misuse knowledge or claim credit.” I measure creativity and innovation using the one-item scale that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The exact item is “my organization values creativity, innovation and lateral thinking.” I measure adequacy of resources for knowledge sharing with the one-item scale that followed Downes (2014) and his adaptation of existing literature. The exact item is “my organization provides appropriate resources to facilitate knowledge sharing.”

I measure organizational practices that enable knowledge management using the five-item scale ($\alpha = .85$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. Sample items include “my organization has a knowledge retention program to ensure that experience and expertizes are not lost when employees leave.” To measure the adequacy of information communication technology, I used the three-item scale ($\alpha = .57$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The scale includes items such as “in my organization information and communication technologies meet the needs of individual users.” I measure knowledge of employees related to information communication technologies and technical support with the two-item scale ($\alpha = .04$) that Downes (2014) adapted from existing literature. The scale includes items such as “in my organization people are reluctant to use information technology due to unfamiliarity or inexperience.” I measure proactive knowledge sharing, social networks and external education and training with the three-item scale ($\alpha = .62$) that followed Downes (2014) and his adaptation of existing literature. Sample items

include “in my organization social networks between employees are encouraged.” I measure encouraging knowledge sharing with the one-item scale that followed Downes (2014) and his adaptation of existing literature. The exact item is “my organization encourages the sharing of knowledge.”

I measure empowerment, hierarchy, status, power and communication patterns using the three-item scale ($\alpha = .43$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. Sample items include “in my organization there is strong evidence of hierarchical, position-based status and power within the organization.” To measure whether the organization has a formal strategy that is aligned with its strategic vision, I used the one-item scale that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The exact item is “my organization has a formal knowledge management strategy that is aligned with its strategic vision.” I measure management support and communication for knowledge sharing, learning opportunities and their efforts to develop an efficient knowledge sharing system with the three-item scale ($\alpha = .91$) that Downes (2014) adapted from existing literature. The scale includes items such as “in my organization managers are active in communicating the benefits of knowledge sharing and learning opportunities.” To measure whether the organization involves employees in the decision making process, I used the one-item scale that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The exact item is “in my organization managers regularly involve employees in decision making.”

To measure whether the organization empowers employees, I used the one-item scale that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The exact item is “in my organization managers empower their employees.” To measure whether titles, status and formality are important in the organization, I used the one-item scale that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The exact item is “in my organization titles, status and formality are important.” To measure whether managers were overburdened with daily tasks, I used the one-item scale that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The exact item is “in my organization managers are too busy delivering services to step back and look how they could manage better.” To measure management support, I used the three item scale ($\alpha = .79$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. The scale includes items such as “my organization has a designated manager for administering knowledge management processes.” I measure incentives with the five item scale ($\alpha = .90$) that Marsick and Watkins (2003) developed. The scale includes items such as “my organization rewards employees for new ideas.”

I measure knowledge implementation using the five-item scale ($\alpha = .90$) that Downes (2014) adapted from already existing literature. Sample items include “my organization has mechanisms for converting knowledge into action plans.” I measure employee empowerment with the six-item scale ($\alpha = .87$) that followed one of the most well-known conceptualizations of employee empowerment developed by Bowen and Lawler (1992). With the measurement instrument I emphasize to what extent managers share information about the organization’s

performance, rewards based on the organization's performance, knowledge that enables employees to understand and contribute to organizational performance and power to make decision that influence organizational direction and performance. Sample items include “my organization has information in a form that is readily accessible to employees” and “in my organization managers regularly involve staff in decision making.”

In Table 4, I summarize all measurement instruments that were used in this doctoral dissertation accompanied with their Cronbach's α .

Table 4: Measurement Instruments Used in this Doctoral Dissertation

Measurement Instrument	Number of Items	Cronbach's α
Management Responsibility	7	.90
Knowledge Creation	2	.84
Knowledge Storage and Retrieval	5	.87
Knowledge Transfer	5	.82
Knowledge Implementation	6	.91
Improved Collaboration	3	.90
Improved Communication	2	.62
Improved Learning	7	.86
Improved Performance	4	.42
Commitment or Affiliation to the Organization's Mission	2	.81
Impact of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Sharing and Learning	2	.76
Trust and Collaboration	2	.45
Creativity and innovation	1	-
Adequacy of Resources for Knowledge Sharing	1	-
Organizational Practices that Enable Knowledge Management	5	.85
Adequacy of Information Communication Technology	3	.57
Knowledge of Employees Related to Information Communication Technologies and Technical Support	2	.04
Proactive Knowledge Sharing, Social Networks and External Education and Training	3	.62
Encouraging Knowledge Sharing	1	-
Empowerment, Hierarchy, Status, Power and Communication Patterns	3	.43
Formal Strategy for Knowledge Management and Alignment with Strategic Vision	1	-
Management Support and Communication for Knowledge Sharing, Learning Opportunities and their Efforts to Develop an Efficient Knowledge Sharing System	3	.91
Involved Employees in the Decision Making Process	1	-
Employee Empowerment	1	-
Role of Titles, Status and Formality in the Organization	1	-
Workload of Managers	1	-
Management Support	3	.79
Incentives	5	.90
Knowledge Implementation –	5	.90

Moderating Effect		
Employee Empowerment – Moderating Effect	6	.87

Source: Own work

2.7 Control Variables

I controlled for five control variables, including organization size, age, gender, highest level of education and average tenure in the organizations. The reason why I use control variables is that the inclusion or exclusion of control variables has important consequences for substantive research conclusions (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). Organization size as a control variable may affect the organization's ability to implement knowledge (Aragon-Correa, Garcia-Morales & Cordon-Pozzo, 2007). The reason why I include age (Radaelli, Mura, Spiller & Lettieri, 2011), gender (Feingold, 1994) and highest level of education (Srivastava, Bartol & Locke, 2006) as control variables in the context of knowledge management is that there might be some significant influences of these control variables on the overall level of knowledge implementation. I also include average tenure as it was used as a control variable in the research of Jain and Moreno (2015) related to the context of knowledge management.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Ensuring Reliability

Reliability represents the degree of consistency across multiple measurements of a variable (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). It also sheds light on whether data collection techniques and analytical procedures produce consistent results if repeated at another time or with another researcher (Saunders et al., 2012). As a diagnostic measure of internal consistency of the measurement scale, and to test whether individual items of the measurement scale measure the same construct and correlate well with each other, I used the Cronbach's α reliability coefficient that is the most widely used measure of its kind. The overall consensus of the lower bound of reliability on the Cronbach's α is 0.7. In exploratory research, it can be as low as 0.6 (Hair et al., 2010). The Cronbach's α values for the used measurement scales are presented in chapters 2.6 and 3.3.

3.2 Ensuring Validity

Validity means research in which we explore the elements that we want to find. It articulates the theoretical relevance of empirical research and the deviation of measured variables from theoretical variables (Ferligoj, Leskošek & Kogovšek, 1995). It represents the degree to which the measurement scale accurately represents the studied construct (Hair et al., 2010). Data validity is crucial to the validity of research as empirically measured data link theoretical constructs with reality. It requires a precise and complete operationalization of the researched constructs (Ferligoj et al., 1995). I ensured the validity of my research by

choosing clearly defined constructs that are properly operationalized. I also used developed, well-established, and widely-used measurement instruments.

3.3 Normal Distribution of Measures

The normality of the data can be assessed graphically by examining a normal probability plot, which compares the cumulative distribution of actual data (plotted data) with the cumulative distribution of a normal distribution (a straight diagonal line). In the case of a normal distribution, the plotted data closely follows the diagonal (Hair et al., 2010). In my research, I used the Q-Q normal plot in IBM SPSS Statistics 24 (IBM Corp., 2016) (where “Q” stands for quantile and is a widely used graphical approach) to evaluate agreement between the two probability distributions (Korkmaz, Goksuluk & Zararsiz, 2014).

Similarly to Hair et al. (2010), Korkmaz et al. (2014) proposed that each axis refers to the quantiles of probability distributions to be compared, where one of the axes indicates theoretical or hypothesized quantiles and the other quantile indicates the observed quantiles. If the observed data fits the hypothesized distribution, the points in the Q-Q plot will approximately lie on the $y=x$ line, which was also the case in my Q-Q normal plots. Another measure to assess the normality of the data is skew or skewness, where, according to Garson (n.d.), the skew should be within the +2 to -2 range when the data is normally distributed. Researchers can also use kurtosis to assess the normality of the data, where authors, according to Garson (n.d.), proposed that the range for normal data distribution is between +2 and -2.

3.3.1 Normal Distribution of Measures – Extent of Knowledge Management

In my research, management responsibility, knowledge creation, knowledge storage and retrieval, knowledge transfer, and knowledge implementation are within the proposed skewness and kurtosis ranges (see Table 5). The Cronbach’s α for all five constructs included in this part of my research (management responsibility, knowledge creation, knowledge storage and retrieval, knowledge transfer, and knowledge implementation) range from 0.82 to 0.91, therefore showing high reliability.

Table 5: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Extent of Knowledge Management

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
RESPONS	-0.16	-0.83	0.90
CREATION	-0.30	-1.08	0.84
STORAGE	-0.29	-1.00	0.87
TRANSFER	-0.61	0.10	0.82
IMPLEM	-0.11	-0.86	0.91

Source: Own work

3.3.2 Normal Distribution of Measures - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

Enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced performance in the research also fall within the proposed skewness and kurtosis ranges (see Table 6). The Cronbach's α for all four constructs included in this part of the research (enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced performance) range from 0.42 to 0.90. The Cronbach's α for enhanced communication and enhanced performance show poor internal consistency, while the Cronbach's α for enhanced collaboration and enhanced learning show high reliability.

Table 6: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
COLLAB	-0.26	-0.19	0.90
COMMUN	-0.76	-0.68	0.62
LEARN	0.10	0.12	0.86
PERFORM	-0.35	-0.38	0.42

Source: Own work

3.3.3 Normal Distribution of Measures – Influence of Organizational Culture

Commitment or affiliation to the organization's mission, impact of organizational culture on knowledge sharing and learning, trust and collaboration, and creativity and innovation also fall within the proposed skewness and kurtosis ranges (see Table 7). Cronbach's α for all four constructs included in this part of the research (commitment or affiliation to organizational mission, impact of organizational culture on knowledge sharing and learning, trust and collaboration, and creativity and innovation) range from 0.45 to 0.81. The Cronbach's α for trust and collaboration show poor internal consistency. In contrast, the Cronbach's α for commitment or affiliation to the organization's mission and impact of organizational culture on knowledge sharing and learning show high reliability.

Table 7: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Influence of Organizational Culture

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
MISSION	-1.10	1.17	0.81
SHALEA	-0.83	0.14	0.76
TRUCOL	0.19	0.15	0.45
CREINO	-0.66	-0.07	-

Source: Own work

3.3.4 Normal Distribution of Measures – Influence of Organizational Infrastructure

Adequacy of resources for knowledge sharing, organizational practices that endorse knowledge management, adequacy of information communication technology, knowledge of employees related to ICT, technical support and proactive knowledge sharing, social networks, external education and training fall within the proposed skewness and kurtosis ranges (see Table 8). Cronbach's α for all five constructs included in this part of the research (adequacy of resources for knowledge sharing, organizational practices that endorse knowledge management, adequacy of information communication technology, knowledge of employees related to ICT, technical support and proactive knowledge sharing, social networks, external education and training) range from 0.04 to 0.85. The Cronbach's α for adequacy of information communication technology, knowledge of employees related to information communication technologies, and technical support and proactive knowledge sharing, social networks, external education and training show poor internal consistency. In contrast, the Cronbach's α for organizational practices that endorse knowledge management shows high reliability.

Table 8: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Influence of Organizational Infrastructure

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
RESUR	-0.29	-0.68	-
HRMKM	0.15	-0.77	0.85
IKTTEH	-0.64	0.71	0.57
TEHSUP	-0.64	0.57	0.04
PROACT	-0.56	0.70	0.62

Source: Own work

3.3.5 Normal Distribution of Measures – Influence of Organizational Structure

Encouraging knowledge sharing and empowerment, hierarchy, status, power and communication patterns in the research fall within the proposed skewness and kurtosis ranges (see Table 9). The Cronbach's α for empowerment, hierarchy, status, and power and communication patterns is 0.43, showing poor reliability.

Table 9: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Influence of Organizational Structure

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
APPROP	-1.18	1.48	-
POWORI	-0.58	1.13	0.43

Source: Own work

3.3.6 Normal Distribution of Measures – Influence of Organizational Leadership

Formal strategy for knowledge management and alignment with strategic vision, management support, inclusion of employees in the decision making process, employee empowerment, titles, status and formality and workload of managers are within the proposed skewness and kurtosis ranges (see Table 10). The Cronbach's α for management support is 0.91 and shows high reliability.

Table 10: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Influence of Organizational Leadership

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
STRPLA	-1.52	1.74	-
SUPMNG	-0.51	-0.19	0.91
EMPINC	-0.28	-0.86	-
EMPOWER	-0.42	-0.82	-
STAFOR	-0.22	-0.50	-
DAITAS	-0.35	-0.69	-

Source: Own work

3.3.7 Normal Distribution of Measures – Moderating Effect of Employee Empowerment

Management support, incentives, knowledge implementation, and employee empowerment fall within the proposed skewness and kurtosis ranges (see Table 11). The Cronbach's α for all four measured constructs range from 0.79 to 0.90, showing high reliability.

Table 11: Skewness, Kurtosis and Cronbach's α - Moderating Effect of Employee Empowerment

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
PROM	0.12	-1.06	0.79
PROI	-0.12	-0.74	0.90
KNOI	-0.20	-0.86	0.90
EE	-0.23	-0.74	0.90

Source: Own work

3.4 Descriptive Statistics

3.4.1 Descriptive Statistics – Extent of Knowledge Management

The results in Table 12 show that a relatively high mean value is only present for the construct of knowledge transfer (3.51). The mean results for the other four constructs show relatively moderate or even low values: specifically, management responsibility (2.77), knowledge creation (2.87), knowledge storage and retrieval (2.94), and knowledge implementation (2.81). The mean values indicate that the activity levels of knowledge management in practice are at best moderate. This addresses and answers my first research

question: to what extent knowledge management is employed in social work centers in Slovenia.

Table 12: Mean and Standard Deviations – Extent of Knowledge Management

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation
RESPONS	2.77	0.97
CREATION	2.87	1.10
STORAGE	2.94	1.15
TRANSFER	3.51	0.86
IMPLEM	2.81	0.96

Source: Own work

3.4.2 Descriptive Statistics – Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

The results in Table 13 show relatively moderate values for all four measured constructs: enhanced collaboration (3.60), enhanced communication (3.43), enhanced learning (3.63), and enhanced performance (3.50). Mean values indicate that knowledge management in practice is moderately effective. This addresses and answers my second research question: how effective is knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

Table 13: Mean and Standard Deviations – Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation
COLLAB	3.60	0.72
COMMUN	3.43	0.74
LEARN	3.63	0.50
PERFORM	3.50	0.47

Source: Own work

3.4.3 Descriptive Statistics – Influence of Organizational Culture

The results in Table 14 show relatively low to moderate values for the four measured constructs: trust and collaboration (2.77), impact of organizational culture on knowledge sharing and learning (3.35), creativity and innovation (3.41), and commitment or affiliation to the organization's mission (3.71). Low to moderate mean values indicate that organizational culture has a low to moderate influence on knowledge management in practice. These findings partially clarify my third research question: which organizational factors influence knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

Table 14: Mean and Standard Deviations – Influence of Organizational Culture

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation
MISSION	3.71	0.89

SHALEA	3.35	0.91
TRUCOL	2.77	0.63
CREINO	3.41	1.04

Source: Own work

3.4.4 Descriptive Statistics – Influence of Organizational Infrastructure

The results in Table 15 show low to moderate values for the five examined constructs of the influence of organizational infrastructure. The lowest mean value was obtained for organizational practices that endorse knowledge management (2.52), followed by knowledge of employees related to ICT and ICT support (2.98), adequacy of resources for knowledge sharing (3.07), adequacy of ICT (3.27), and proactive knowledge sharing, social networks, external education, and training (3.36). Low to moderate mean values suggest that organizational infrastructure only has a limited influence on knowledge management in practice. With these results, I partially answer my third research question: which organizational factors influence knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

Table 15: Mean and Standard Deviations – Influence of Organizational Infrastructure

Construct	Mean	Std. deviation
RESUR	3.07	0.97
HRMKM	2.52	0.84
IKTTEH	3.27	0.71
TEHSUP	2.98	0.71
PROACT	3.36	0.73

Source: Own work

3.4.5 Descriptive Statistics – Influence of Organizational Structure

The results in Table 16 show moderate mean values for encouraging knowledge sharing (3.61), and empowerment, hierarchy, status, power and communication patterns (3.19). Similar to other organizational factors, the influence of organizational structure on knowledge management is only moderate. These findings provide additional insight that provide a partial answer to my third research question: which organizational factors influence knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

Table 16: Mean and Standard Deviations – Influence of Organizational Structure

Construct	Mean	Std. deviation
APPROP	3.61	0.89
POWORI	3.19	0.59

Source: Own work

3.4.6 Descriptive Statistics – Influence of Organizational Leadership

The results in Table 17 show the mean values for all six constructs used to measure the influence of organizational leadership on knowledge management are low to moderate: knowledge management and alignment with strategic vision (2.84), inclusion of employees in the decision-making process (2.99), employee empowerment (3.04), titles, status, and formality (3.18), management support (3.20), and workload of managers (3.44). The fourth organizational factor also displays a low to moderate influence on knowledge management, providing further insight into my third research question: which organizational factors influence knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

Table 17: Mean and Standard Deviations – Influence of Organizational Leadership

Construct	Mean	Std. deviation
STRPLA	2.84	1.46
SUPMNG	3.20	0.90
EMPINC	2.99	1.16
EMPOWER	3.04	1.18
STAFOR	3.18	1.09
DAITAS	3.44	1.22

Source: Own work

3.4.7 Descriptive Statistics – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment

Table 18 presents descriptive statistics for all variables analysed in this paper. The results in Table 18 show that, on average, interviewees gave the best evaluation to employee empowerment (2.98), closely followed by their evaluation of knowledge implementation and incentives (2.84 and 2.83). Management support had the lowest mean value (2.63).

Table 18: Mean and Standard Deviations – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment

Construct	Mean	Std. deviation
Organization size	3.96	0.89
Age	3.98	0.91
Gender	1.97	0.45
Highest level of education	3.80	0.78
Average tenure	3.98	1.78
Management support	2.63	1.07
Incentives	2.83	1.02

Knowledge implementation	2.84	0.97
Employee empowerment	2.98	0.91

Source: Own work

3.5 Correlation Coefficients

Correlation coefficients allow us to quantify the power of a linear relationship between two ranked numerical variables. The coefficient can have any value between +1 and -1, with +1 indicating a completely positive correlation, -1 a completely negative correlation, and 0 complete independence. A coefficient of 0.2 shows no correlation, between 0.2 and 0.35 a weak correlation, between 0.35 and 0.6 a moderate correlation, between 0.6 and 0.8 a strong correlation, and between 0.8 and 1 a very strong correlation (Hair et al., 2010; Saunders et al., 2012).

3.5.1 Correlation Coefficients – Extent of Knowledge Management

The results in Table 19 show the correlation coefficients between variables that measure the extent of knowledge management.

Table 19: Correlation Coefficients Between Variables Measuring Extent of Knowledge Management

	RESPONS	CREATION	STORAGE	TRANSFER	IMPLEM
RESPONS	1	0.78**	0.58**	0.82**	0.86**
CREATION		1	0.50**	0.72**	0.81**
STORAGE			1	0.57**	0.72**
TRANSFER				1	0.79**
IMPLEM					1

***correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$*

**correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$*

Source: Own work

Correlation coefficients between the measured variables are moderately, strongly, or very strongly positive, with ranges between 0.50 and 0.86. There was a significant positive correlation between management responsibility and knowledge creation (.78; $p < 0.01$), management responsibility and knowledge storage (.58; $p < 0.01$), management responsibility and knowledge transfer (.82; $p < 0.01$), and management responsibility and knowledge implementation (.86; $p < 0.01$). Knowledge creation shows a significant positive correlation with knowledge storage (.50; $p < 0.01$), knowledge transfer (.72; $p < 0.01$), and knowledge implementation (.81; $p < 0.01$). Knowledge storage shows a significant positive correlation with knowledge transfer (.57; $p < 0.01$) and knowledge implementation (.72; $p < 0.01$). Knowledge transfer shows a significant positive correlation with knowledge implementation (.79; $p < 0.01$).

3.5.2 Correlation Coefficients – Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

The results in Table 20 show the correlation coefficients between variables that measure the effectiveness of knowledge management.

Table 20: Correlation Coefficients Between Variables Measuring Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

	COLLAB	COMMUN	LEARN	PERFORM
COLLAB	1	.65**	.81**	.69**
COMMUN		1	.54**	.63**
LEARN			1	.73**
PERFORM				1

**correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$

*correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Own work

Correlation coefficients between the measured variables are moderately, strongly or very strongly positive with ranges between 0.54 and 0.81. There is a significant positive correlation between enhanced collaboration and enhanced communication (.65; $p < 0.01$), enhanced collaboration and enhanced learning (.81; $p < 0.01$), and enhanced collaboration and enhanced performance (.69; $p < 0.01$). Enhanced communication shows a significant positive correlation with enhanced learning (.54; $p < 0.01$) and enhanced performance (.63; $p < 0.01$). Enhanced learning shows a significant positive correlation with enhanced performance (.73; $p < 0.01$).

3.5.3 Correlation Matrix of Influencing Factors and Extent of Knowledge Management

The results in Table 21 show the correlation matrix of influencing factors and the extent of knowledge management.

Table 21: Correlation Matrix of Influencing Factors and Extent of Knowledge Management

	RESPONS	CREATION	STORAGE	TRANSFER	IMPLEM
ORGCUL	0.429**	0.428**	0.243*	0.536**	0.476**
ORGINF	0.783**	0.671**	0.378**	0.718**	0.731**
ORGSTR	0.405**	0.445**	0.230*	0.363**	0.456**
ORGLEA	0.563**	0.448**	0.258	0.680**	0.521**

**correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$

*correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Own work

Seventeen correlations were positive and significant at $p < 0.01$. Two correlations were positive and significant at $p < 0.05$. One correlation was non-significant. Strong relationships

were found in eight of the twenty correlations (criteria > .500, as suggested by Downes, 2014). Organizational culture shows a strong relationship only with knowledge transfer. Organizational infrastructure shows a strong relationship with management responsibility, knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, and knowledge implementation. Organizational structure is not strongly correlated with any knowledge management activity representing the extent of knowledge management in my research. Organizational leadership shows a strong correlation with management responsibility, knowledge transfer, and knowledge implementation.

Overall, knowledge transfer was the principle knowledge management activity influenced by organizational factors, showing strong correlations with three of the four organizational factors. Knowledge implementation and management responsibility were each strongly correlated with two organizational factors, while knowledge creation was strongly influenced by only one organizational factor. Knowledge storage did not have a strong correlation with any of the knowledge management factors.

3.5.4 Correlation Matrix of Influencing Factors and Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

Five correlations were positive and significant ($p < 0.01$). Eight correlations were positive and significant ($p < 0.05$). Three correlations were positive and non-significant as their p-values exceeded the 0.05 level. In sum, strong relationships were found in six of the sixteen correlations. Organizational infrastructure showed a strong correlation with enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced overall performance of the organization. Organizational learning showed a strong correlation with enhanced communication and enhanced overall performance of the organization. Organizational culture and organizational structure were not strongly correlated with any knowledge management activity that was associated with the effectiveness of knowledge management in my research. These results are presented in Table 22.

Table 22: Correlation Matrix of Influencing Factors and Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

	COLLAB	COMMUN	LEARN	FUNCTI
ORGCUL	0.412*	0.491**	0.314	0.434*
ORGINF	0.601**	0.562**	0.627**	0.526**
ORGSTR	0.421*	0.402*	0.398*	0.372
ORGLEA	0.471*	0.520*	0.363	0.572*

**correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$

*correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Own work

Overall, the main knowledge management activities influenced by organizational factors were enhanced communication and enhanced overall performance of the organization, having

strong relationships with two of the organizational factors, enhanced collaboration and enhanced learning were influenced by only one factor.

3.5.5 Correlation Coefficients – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment

The results in Table 23 show the correlation coefficients between the constructs that were used to measure the moderating role of employee empowerment on the relationship of management support and incentives and knowledge implementation.

Table 23: Correlation Coefficients Between Variables Measuring the Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Organization size	-								
Age	-.15	-							
Gender	-.11	-.08	-						
Highest level of education	.05	-.01	-.02	-					
Average tenure	-.02	.45**	-.04	-.07	-				
Management support	-.14	.03	-.15	.11	-.07	(.79)			
Incentives	-.14	-.03	-.13	.24*	-.14	.71**	(.90)		
Knowledge implementation	.19	.00	-.12	.16	-.12	.80**	.84**	(.90)	
Employee empowerment	-.25*	.11	-.12	.21*	-.06	.66**	.84**	.80**	(.87)

Note: n = 98 managers and employees employed in social work centers in Slovenia. Reliability indicators (Cronbach's alphas) are on the diagonal in the parentheses. *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01

Source: Own work

Correlation coefficients between the measured variables are mostly moderately or strongly positive, since their ranges are between 0.2 and 0.6. To additionally explain correlations, I found a significant positive correlation between incentives and management support (.71; p < 0.01) and incentives and highest level of education (.24; p < 0.05). Knowledge implementation had a significant positive correlation with management support (.80; p < 0.01) and incentives (.84; p < 0.01). Employee empowerment is in a significant positive correlation with management support (.66; p < 0.01), incentives (.84; p < 0.01), knowledge implementation (.80; p < 0.01) and highest level of education (.21; p < 0.05). Employee empowerment has a significant and negative correlation with organization size (-.25; p < 0.05). Among the control variables average tenure is significantly and positively correlated to age (.45; p < 0.01).

3.6 Multiple Linear Regression

Regression analysis is a statistical technique for estimating the relationships between variables that have a reason and result (Uyanik & Guler, 2013). In addition, regression analysis is a mathematical method for determining which variables have an impact (Gallo, 2015). Multiple linear regression is a useful and powerful technique for exploring the underlying complex correlations between data in social science research (Nimon, 2010). Nathans, Oswald, and Nimon (2012) identify multiple linear regression as a standard statistical technique in the researchers' toolbox across all the behavioural social science disciplines. Multiple linear regression, as an extension of a simple linear regression, enables researchers to provide answers to questions that deal with the role(s) of multiple independent variables that might account for variance in a single-dependent variable.

3.6.1 Multiple Linear Regression - Extent of Knowledge Management

The data in Table 24 show the results of multiple linear regression for the variables that were used to measure the extent of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

Table 24: Multiple Linear Regression - Extent of Knowledge Management

	ORGCUL	ORGINF	ORGSTR	ORGLEA	Constant
RESPONS	-0.121	1.247**	0.029	0.021	-0.719
CREATION	-0.054	1.053**	0.270	0.079	-1.243
STORAGE	-0.004	0.671**	0.700	0.036	0.603
TRANSFER	0.345*	0.896**	-0.181	0.126	-0.082
IMPLEM	0.052	0.984**	0.130	0.060	-0.914

***correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$*

**correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$*

Source: Own work

Regression coefficients were significant ($p < 0.01$) for organizational infrastructure in predicting all five knowledge management activities used to measure the extent of knowledge management in social work centers. Organizational culture was significant for knowledge transfer ($p < 0.05$), while all other activities had non-significant predictor measures.

This analysis allowed me to describe the relationship between influencing factors (independent variables or predictors) and specific knowledge management activities (dependent or predicted variables) in the following equation:

Knowledge transfer = $-0.082 + 0.345 \times \text{Organizational culture} + 0.896 \times \text{Organizational infrastructure} + -0.181 \times \text{Organizational structure} + 0.126 \times \text{Organizational leadership}$

This equation could be expressed as follows: hypothetically, if the value of organizational culture is increased by one unit, and the values of all other factors remain constant, the value of knowledge creation would increase by 0.345.

Moreover, in the previous table significant regression coefficients (** and *) ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$) uniquely contributed to the regression equations. To gain more in-depth results, I examined the variation (adjusted R^2) in all five knowledge management activities related to extent as explained by the set of influencing factors. I also examined the magnitude of the unique contribution of the significant measures with part correlation squared (sr_i^2). The results of this analysis are presented in Table 25.

Table 25: Variation Explained and Unique Contributions - Extent of Knowledge Management

	Variance explained (R^2)	sr_i^2 (ORGCUL)	sr_i^2 (ORGINF)
RESPONS	0.540		0.338
CREATION	0.394		0.187
STORAGE	0.097		0.068
TRANSFER	0.496	0.020	0.219
IMPLEM	0.449		0.217

Source: Own work

The explained variance indicates how well the set of influencing factors fit each knowledge management activity used to measure the extent of knowledge management in social work centers. In line with Muijs's assessment criteria (2011), management responsibility shows a strong fit ($> 50\%$), knowledge creation, knowledge transfer and knowledge implementation show moderate fits (31% to 50%), and knowledge storage shows a weak fit ($< 30\%$). The unique contributions of organizational infrastructure on all five constructs used to measure the extent of knowledge management in social work centers ranged from 6.8% to 33.8%. The unique contribution of organizational culture on knowledge transfer was only 2.0%.

Further analysis of the results obtained in the table above indicates that 49.6% of the variation in knowledge transfer is explained by the set of five influencing factors. Organizational culture ($sr_i^2 = 0.020$) and organizational infrastructure ($sr_i^2 = 0.219$) uniquely and significantly contribute to the prediction of knowledge transfer. The other two influencing factors do not provide any significant and unique contribution to the prediction of knowledge transfer. These results suggest that knowledge transfer in social work centers could be further improved by placing greater emphasis on elements of organizational culture and organizational infrastructure.

3.6.2 Multiple Linear Regression - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

The data in Table 26 show the results of multiple linear regression for variables used to measure the effectiveness of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

Table 26: Multiple Linear Regression - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

	ORGCUL	ORGINF	ORGSTR	ORGLEA	Constant
COLLAB	-0.066	0.138	0.059	0.211	2.469
COMMUN	-0.015	0.113	0.039	0.246	2.158
LEARN	-0.074	0.109	0.042	0.132	2.942
PERFORM	-0.020	0.073	0.023	0.150	2.741

***correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$*

**correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$*

Source: Own work

All activities related to the effectiveness of knowledge management had non-significant predictor measures. Nevertheless, the result of this analysis made it possible for me to describe the relationship between influencing factors (independent variables or predictors) and specific knowledge management activities (dependent or predicted variables) in the following equation:

Improved communication = 2.158 – 0.015 x Organizational culture + 0.113 x Organizational infrastructure + 0.039 x Organizational structure + 0.246 x Organizational learning

This equation could be expressed as follows: hypothetically, if the value of organizational infrastructure is increased by one unit, and the values of all other factors remain constant, the value of improved communication would increase by 0.113.

In order to gain more in-depth understanding of these relationships, I also examined the variation (adjusted R^2) in all four knowledge management activities related to effectiveness explained by the set of influencing factors (see Table 27).

Table 27: Variation Explained - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

	Variance explained (R^2)
COLLAB	0.054
COMMUN	0.055
LEARN	0.054
PERFORM	0.046

Source: Own work

Enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced performance show a weak fit (<30%). As suggested in the table above, 5.5% of variation in enhanced communication can be explained by the set of four influencing factors. Such results

do not provide concrete guidelines to social work centers on how to improve the existing effectiveness of their knowledge management activities.

3.7 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (hereinafter: CFA) provides a confirmatory test of our measurement theory. It tests how well the variables measure the associated constructs or how well the theoretical definition of the factors fits the actual data (Hair et al., 2010). Further data analysis was actually carried out with lavaan version 0.6-3 (Rosseel, 2012) of the programming environment R - version 3.5.2 (R Core Team, 2018), using the R Studio interface, and statistical packages IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows 24 (IBM Corp., 2016). A CFA was conducted since the theoretical models were already specified in the literature (Downes, 2014). I used CFA with the goal of ensuring that the designed model fits the data in a sufficient way.

In the existing literature, the appropriate cut-off point for a good fitting model is up for debate as an absolute figure is inadvisable. It is possible that RMSEA produces artificially large values when models have small degrees of freedom and a low sample size (Byrne, 2010, Hair et al., 2010; Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) as is the case in my research. Moreover, the CFI index is also quite sensitive to sample size (Downes, 2014) as it could potentially underestimate the fit for samples less than 200. I used maximum likelihood estimation with a full information maximum likelihood (FIML) for my missing data in the data set. I standardized the latent factors, allowing for a free estimation of all factor loadings. To further test the convergent validity of my constructs, I analyze the standardized factor loadings, to check if they are statistically significant and above the recommended 0.50 threshold (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998).

Later in the analysis, modification indices were applied similarly to the examples found in the literature such as Haamer and Borges-Andrade (2018). Those authors define this procedure as a post-hoc analysis that uses confirmatory factor analysis in exploratory mode. A model re-specification was also used in the research by Talavera-Velasco et al. (2018), where the authors suggest that items can be re-specified in the model if the content validity is not harmed. Similarly Hair et al. (2010) suggest that diagnostic information extracted from the confirmatory factor analysis may suggest changes to models in order to improve goodness of fit. In applying modification indices, I followed the aforementioned suggestions not to harm the theoretical integrity and content validity of my models and its constructs.

3.7.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis – Extent of Knowledge Management

In the first part of my analysis, I used 22 items to measure the five constructs included in my research (management responsibility, knowledge creation, knowledge storage and retrieval, knowledge transfer and knowledge implementation). The standardized loadings for

management responsibility are within the range from .61 to .82. The standardized loadings for knowledge creation are within the range from .84 to .86. The standardized loadings for knowledge storage and retrieval are within the range from .85 to .90. The standardized loadings for knowledge transfer are within the range from .60 to .86. The standardized loadings for knowledge implementation are within the range from .67 to .89. Therefore, in the iterative process of purifying the scale no items (measurement variables) were excluded from further analysis. In my version of the model, 22 items were used to measure five constructs.

Additionally, I calculate the composite reliability index (CRI) and average variance extracted (AVE) to test for composite (construct) reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). There is no universally accepted standard for appropriate values of CRI. Therefore, I opted to follow the suggestion of Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000), that researchers are typically satisfied with results above the 0.60 threshold⁸. I similarly followed the suggestion of Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000) regarding the cut off value for AVE (0.40)⁹. All my constructs were within the suggested CRI and AVE cut-off values found in the literature. For the purposes of evaluating model fit a number of fit indices exist (Škerlavaj, Song & Lee, 2010). The results of the CFA – expected five factor solution – achieved the following results (CFI = 0.89; chi-square = 390.650; RMSEA = 0.10; df = 189)¹⁰. The indicators were slightly below acceptable values.

3.7.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis – Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

In the second part of my analysis, I used 16 items to measure the four constructs included in my research (enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning and enhanced performance). The standardized loadings for enhanced collaboration are within the range from .54 to .69. The standardized loadings for enhanced communication are within the range from .10 to .69. The standardized loadings for enhanced learning are within the range from .31 to .63. The standardized loadings for enhanced performance are within the range from .16 to .65. The aforementioned standardized loadings raise concern for several items that were used to measure specific constructs. However, to gain additional insight into the small sample of respondents used to provide their opinion on the effectiveness of knowledge management, in the iterative process of purifying the scale no items (measurement variables) were excluded from further analysis. Therefore, in my version of the model, 16 items were used to measure four constructs.

⁸ CRI for my constructs is as follows: Management responsibility 0.89, Knowledge creation 0.84, Knowledge storage and retrieval 0.87, Knowledge transfer 0.81 and Knowledge implementation 0.91

⁹ AVE for constructs is as follows: Management responsibility 0.53, Knowledge creation 0.72, Knowledge storage and retrieval 0.77, Knowledge transfer 0.46 and Knowledge implementation 0.64

¹⁰ Within construct items' (i.e., items corresponding to the management responsibility scale with other items pertaining to the same scale) residuals were allowed to correlate. Without those modification indices, the results of the model fit are: CFI = 0.79; chi-square = 566.457; RMSEA = 0.14; df = 199.

Additionally, I calculate the composite reliability index (CRI) and average variance extracted (AVE) to test for composite (construct) reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). There is no universally accepted standard for appropriate values of CRI. Therefore, I opted to follow the suggestion of Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000), that researchers are typically satisfied with results above the 0.60 threshold¹¹. I similarly followed the suggestion of Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000) regarding the cut off value for AVE (0.40)¹². Several constructs were outside the suggested CRI and AVE cut-off values found in the literature, again indicating potential problems with the measurement scale used. For the purposes of evaluating model fit a number of fit indices exist (Škerlavaj et al., 2010). The results of the CFA – expected four factor solution – achieved the following results (CFI = 0.66; chi-square = 211.608; RMSEA = 0.22; df = 88)¹³. The indicators were below acceptable values. Nevertheless, the results gained from my respondents still provide first insights into the topic of knowledge management effectiveness in social work centers in Slovenia. However, for future research it is of paramount importance to discuss problems with the existing measurement scale that was used to measure the changes in soft measures that are potentially a consequence of knowledge management.

3.7.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment

In this part of my analysis, I used 19 items to measure the four constructs included in this part of my research (management support, incentives, knowledge implementation, and employee empowerment). The standardized loadings for management support are within the range from .63 to .76. The standardized loadings for incentives are within the range from .73 to .79. The standardized loadings for knowledge implementation are within the range from .75 to .91. The standardized loadings for employee empowerment are within the range from .60 to .87. Therefore, in the iterative process of purifying the scale no items (measurement variables) were excluded from further analysis. In my version of the model, 19 items were used to measure four constructs.

Additionally, I calculate the composite reliability index (CRI) and average variance extracted (AVE) to test for composite (construct) reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). There is no universally accepted standard for appropriate values of CRI. Therefore, I opted to follow the suggestion of Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000), that researchers are typically satisfied with results above the 0.60 threshold¹⁴. I similarly followed the suggestion of Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000) regarding the cut off value for AVE (0.40)¹⁵. All my

¹¹ CRI for my constructs is as follows: Improved collaboration 0.65, Improved communication 0.29, Improved learning 0.58 and Improved performance 0.47.

¹² AVE for constructs is as follows: Improved collaboration 0.40, Improved communication 0.25, Improved learning 0.17 and Improved performance 0.21.

¹³ Within construct items' (i.e., items corresponding to the enhanced learning scale with other items pertaining to the same scale) residuals were allowed to correlate. Without those modification indices, the results of the model fit are: CFI = 0.54; chi-square = 266.806; RMSEA = 0.25; df = 98.

¹⁴ CRI for my constructs is as follows: Management support 0.75, Incentives 0.88, Knowledge implementation 0.91 and Employee empowerment 0.90

¹⁵ AVE for constructs is as follows: Management support 0.50, Incentives 0.60, Knowledge Implementation 0.68, Employee Empowerment 0.61

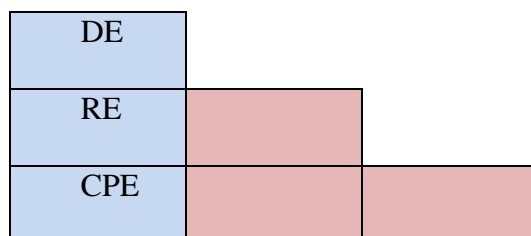
constructs were within the suggested CRI and AVE cut-off values found in the literature. For the purposes of evaluating model fit a number of fit indices exist (Škerlavaj et al., 2010). The results of the CFA – expected four factor solution – achieved the following results (CFI= 0.90; chi-square = 294.013; RMSEA = 0.12; df = 125)¹⁶. The CFI indicator displayed a good fit with the data, while the RMSEA indicator was below acceptable values.

3.8 Multiple Decrement Models – Case Study of Female Social Workers in Slovenia

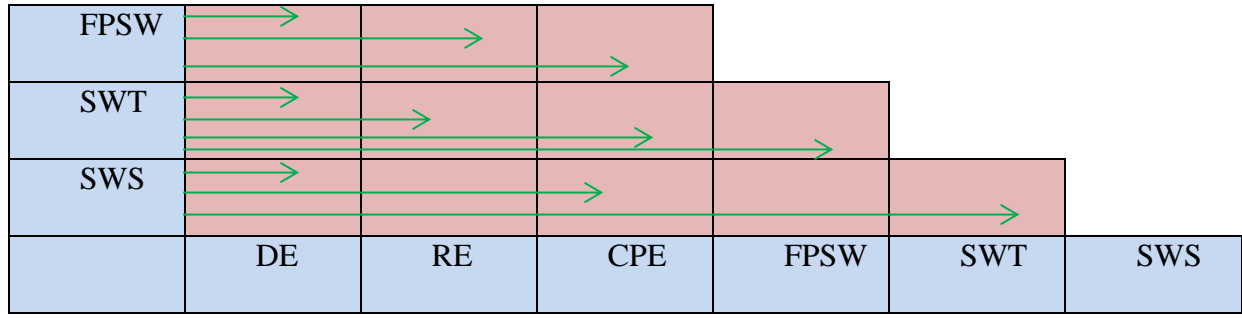
Multiple decrement models that represent a special case of multistate transition models were already developed by Bogataj et al. (2016), Bogataj et al. (2015) and Rogelj and Bogataj (2018). For successful forecasting of employment productivity states into which social workers can be organized, I will further develop the model for forecasting the entrance and exit to and from the social work profession. The basic model allows us to forecast the number of social workers entering and exiting the profession in each age cohort and derives the probabilities of transition at various ages on the national level, based on a demographic multiple decrement model (Deshmukh, 2012; Promislow, 2015). The model will enable long term projections of available social workers in different states of productivity. The model will also enable an understanding of the patterns of social workers that enter and exit the workforce and how different policies can influence the dynamics of the existing workforce of social workers at different age cohorts.

The increase in number of social workers due to novel policy tools and potential effects of knowledge management has not been included in the model yet. Social workers can move among various states such as social work student, social worker trainee, fully productive social worker, to exit by changing profession, by retirement or in the event of death (see Figure 7). Multiple decrement models are currently being used in disability insurance (Deshmukh, 2012). In my research, they will be extended as a tool for human resource management and for forecasting the entrance and exit of social workers. In multiple decrement models that have m different states for social workers, there are m + 1 states for transition from one state to another.

Figure 7: Transitions To and From Employment for Social Workers



¹⁶ Within construct items' (i.e., items corresponding to the knowledge implementation scale with other items pertaining to the same scale) residuals were allowed to correlate. Without those modification indices, the results of the model fit are: CFI = 0.82; chi-square = 442.181; RMSEA = 0.15; df = 146.



Legend: SWS – social work student; SWT – social worker trainee; FPSW – fully productive social worker; CPE - changed profession exit; RE – retirement exit; DE – death exit; significant transitions for policy and decision makers are marked with green arrows

Source: Colnar et al. (2019)

I denote the initial state where the individual is a social work student as state 0 and transition, which models social workers in state of type j , by the line of the graph from this child node to the state (node) j , $j = 1, 2, \dots, m$. The model should describe the probabilities of transition from state 0 to state $j \in SW$ (where SW is a set of different types of social workers) or, in general, from the child node to node j at various time points. All paths to j determine the dynamics of human resource management (state of type j) or different types of social worker exit (by changed profession, retirement or death). In a multiple decrement setup, transition between any two states, from i to j , $i > j = 1, 2, \dots, m$ is not possible (directed graph). Let us consider a social worker aged x denoted by (x) . I denote the future work period of the social worker that they will do in a current state (type of employment) $i \in SW$ by $T_i(x)$. Therefore, $x + T_i(x)$ will be the age when the social worker exits the current state i and enters a new state, $j \in SW$. The future work period in the category of type i , $T_i(x)$, is a random variable with probability distribution function.

$$G_i(t) = \Pr(T_i \leq t), t \geq 0$$

The function $G_i(t)$ represents the probability that the social worker will exit the profession due to different reasons, such as death, retirement or a change in profession (state type of j) within t years, for any fixed t . I assume that $G_i(t)$, the probability distribution of T_i is known. We also assume that $G_i(t)$ is continuous and has probability density $g_i(t) = G_i'(t)$. Data for $G_i(t)$ should be available from the national statistics office. As such, I describe:

$$g_i(t) dt = \Pr(t < T_i < t + dt, i \in SW)$$

where (2) describes the probability that the social worker will transfer from state of type i in the infinitesimal time interval from t to $t + dt$. Therefore, the probability that a social worker x years old in state of employment i will transfer into a state of employment j within t years is denoted by the ${}_t q_x(i, j)$. Consequently, there is a known relationship:

$${}_t q_x(i, j) = G(i, j; t)$$

$${}_t p_x(i) = 1 - G(i, j; t)$$

which denotes the probability that a x years old social worker will remain in his or her current state at least for t years.

The graph starts at the initial state $i = \text{SWS}$ (social work student). We can observe all possible paths from SWS through some of the identified child nodes $j \in \text{SW}$, which enable different exits from states. Namely such exits from the social workers' workforce include the possibility of employment in other professions, retirement or death.

Forecasting future distribution of social workers S according to the type of state based on current distribution of social workers among different types of states and matrix of transitions among different types of states for social workers x years old in multiple decrement model ($i \rightarrow j$; $i \in \text{SW}$, $j \in \text{SW}$) will be described by transition equations:

$$\begin{aligned}
 S_{x+1,t+1} &= S_{x,t} P_{x,t} = \\
 [S_x^{(0)} S_x^{(1)} S_x^{(2)} S_x^{(3)} S_x^{(4)} S_x^{(5)}]_t &\begin{bmatrix} p_x^{(0)} & q_x^{(0,1)} & q_x^{(0,2)} & q_x^{(0,3)} & q_x^{(0,4)} & q_x^{(0,5)} \\ 0 & p_x^{(1)} & q_x^{(1,2)} & q_x^{(1,3)} & q_x^{(1,4)} & q_x^{(1,5)} \\ 0 & 0 & p_x^{(2)} & q_x^{(2,3)} & q_x^{(2,4)} & q_x^{(2,5)} \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & p_x^{(3)} & q_x^{(3,4)} & q_x^{(3,5)} \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & p_x^{(4)} & q_x^{(4,5)} \end{bmatrix}_t \\
 &= [S_{x+1}^{(0)} S_{x+1}^{(1)} S_{x+1}^{(2)} S_{x+1}^{(3)} S_{x+1}^{(4)} S_{x+1}^{(5)}]_{t+1}
 \end{aligned}$$

Appropriately implementing knowledge management activities can influence the quality of human resource management and thus also the intensity of transitions. The details of the transitions will be modelled as a directed graph. By observing all possible paths from the initial state through transition types of states in different states (transition nodes in the graph), based on national demographic statistics, one can calculate the projected labor supply of different categories. Knowledge management solutions will be needed for such transitions that also remain subjects of further research (Colnar et al., 2019). My model will be further developed in the future, based on the theoretical foundations of Bogataj et al. (2015).

As mentioned in previous paragraphs of this dissertation, appropriately implementing knowledge management can influence the intensity of transitions between different states. Moreover, it can positively impact the perceived job satisfaction among individuals (Kianto et al., 2016), that consequently improves the motivation of individuals (North & Hornung, 2002) and reduces their turnover intentions (Muchinsky & Tuttle, 1979). Therefore, I present the hypothesized impact of knowledge management on the transitions using a sample of Slovenian social workers. As the population of social workers employed in social work centers is too small, I additionally focus on the whole sector of social work. My assumption is that the transitions will be similar in the social work sector as a whole and in individual social work centers. The number of employees in social work in Slovenia in 2017 was 19,373 (Slovenian Statistical Office, 2019), of which 1,250 are employed in social work centers

(Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2017). I present the age structure in 5-year age cohorts in Table 28:

Table 28: Employees in Social Work 2017

Ages	Total	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+
Social workers	19,373	107	937	1,596	2,157	2,443	2,826	3,050	3,447	2,298	492	20

Source: Slovenian Statistical Office, 2019

The transition matrix could be written based on demographic data and employment tables for different occupation groups for the year 2017, which were collected at the state level by the Slovenian Statistical Office (2019). As social work is predominantly a female dominated profession (McPhail, 2004), I focused on female social workers aged 45 years old. The structure of female social workers aged 45 years old who are distinguished due to their different category is represented by the vector S_x , being the sum of net transitions of cohort:

$$S_x = [S_x^{(0)} S_x^{(1)} S_x^{(2)} S_x^{(3)} S_x^{(4)} S_x^{(5)}] = [0 \ 0 \ 546 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0]$$

$$P_{45}^{2017} = \begin{bmatrix} p_{45}^{(0)} & q_{x45}^{(0,1)} & q_{45}^{(0,2)} & q_{45}^{(0,3)} & q_{45}^{(0,4)} & q_{45}^{(0,5)} \\ 0 & p_{45}^{(1)} & q_{x45}^{(1,2)} & q_{45}^{(1,3)} & q_{45}^{(1,4)} & q_{45}^{(1,5)} \\ 0 & 0 & p_{45}^{(2)} & q_{45}^{(2,3)} & q_{45}^{(2,4)} & q_{45}^{(2,5)} \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & p_{45}^{(3)} & q_{45}^{(3,4)} & q_{45}^{(3,5)} \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & p_{45}^{(4)} & q_{45}^{(4,5)} \end{bmatrix}_{2017}$$

$$= \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0.98 & 0 & 0.10 & 0 & 0.01 \\ 0 & 0 & 0.97 & 0.02 & 0 & 0.01 \\ 0 & 0 & 0.92 & 0.05 & 0.02 & 0.01 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0.97 & 0.02 & 0.01 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0.99 & 0.01 \end{bmatrix}$$

Given the allocation of female social workers by category and the studied cohort in the following year (when they are $x+1$ years old), we can calculate:

$$S_{46}^{2018} = S_{45}^{2017} P_{45}^{2017} = [S_{46}^{(0)} S_{46}^{(1)} S_{46}^{(2)} S_{46}^{(3)} S_{46}^{(4)} S_{46}^{(5)}]_{2018}$$

In table 29, I present the forecast of the availability of female social workers aged 45 in 2017 up to the studied year 2032, when they will be 60 years old. Additionally, in Table 29 I include the hypothesized improvements due to knowledge management activities implemented in social work organizations.

Table 29: Female Social Workers Aged 45 in 2017 to Aged 60 in 2032

ORIGINAL								IMPROVED					
Year	Age	SWS	SWT	FPSW	CPE	RE	DE	SWS	SWT	FPSW	CPE	RE	DE

2017	45	0	0	546.00	0	0	0	0	0	546.00	0	0	0
2018	46	0	0	502.32	27.30	10.92	5.46	0	0	524.16	10.92	5.46	5.46
2019	47	0	0	462.13	51.60	21.40	10.86	0	0	503.19	21.08	10.87	10.86
2020	48	0	0	425.16	73.16	31.46	16.22	0	0	483.07	30.51	16.21	16.22
2021	49	0	0	391.15	92.22	41.12	21.51	0	0	463.74	39.25	21.48	21.51
2022	50	0	0	359.86	109.01	50.37	26.76	0	0	445.19	47.35	26.69	26.76
2023	51	0	0	331.07	123.73	59.25	31.95	0	0	427.39	54.83	31.83	31.95
2024	52	0	0	304.58	136.57	67.75	37.09	0	0	410.29	61.74	36.88	37.09
2025	53	0	0	280.22	147.71	75.89	42.18	0	0	393.88	68.09	41.85	42.18
2026	54	0	0	257.80	157.29	83.69	47.22	0	0	378.12	73.93	46.73	47.22
2027	45	0	0	546.00	0	0	0	0	0	363.00	79.27	51.52	52.20
2028	46	0	0	502.32	27.30	10.92	5.46	0	0	348.48	84.15	56.22	57.15
2029	47	0	0	462.13	51.60	21.40	10.86	0	0	334.54	88.60	60.83	62.03
2030	48	0	0	425.16	73.16	31.46	16.22	0	0	321.16	92.63	65.34	66.87
2031	49	0	0	391.15	92.22	41.12	21.51	0	0	308.31	96.27	69.75	71.66
2032	50	0	0	359.86	109.01	50.37	26.76	0	0	295.97	99.55	74.06	76.41

Source: Slovenian Statistical Office (2019), own calculations

Table 30 provides a summary of the important hypothesized improvements due to knowledge management activities implemented in social work organizations.

Table 30: Difference in Female Social Workers Aged 45 in 2017 to Aged 60 in 2032

DIFFERENCE				
Year	Age	FPSW	CPE	RE
2017	45	0	0	0
2018	46	21.84	-16.38	-5.46
2019	47	41.06	-30.52	-10.53
2020	48	57.91	-42.65	-15.25
2021	49	72.59	-52.97	-19.64
2022	50	85.33	-61.66	-23.68
2023	51	96.32	-68.90	-27.42
2024	52	105.71	-74.83	-30.87
2025	53	113.66	-79.62	-34.04
2026	54	120.32	-83.36	-36.96
2027	45	125.82	-86.19	-39.64

2028	46	130.28	-88.20	-42.08
2029	47	133.79	-89.50	-44.30
2030	48	136.47	-90.16	-46.31
2031	49	138.40	-90.27	-48.14
2032	50	139.65	-89.89	-49.78

Source: Slovenian Statistical Office (2019), own calculations

3.9 Hierarchical Linear Regression – Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment

Hierarchical regression is a possibility to explore whether variables of interest explain a statistically significant amount of variance in the dependent variable after accounting for all other variables. This is typically a framework for model comparison. Within this framework, researchers are able to build several regression models by adding variables to a previous model at each step. Later models always include smaller models that were used in previous steps. Typically, the researcher intends to examine whether newly added variables show a significant improvement in R^2 (the proportion of explained variance in the dependent variable by the model) (Kim, 2016).

In my dissertation, I test the direct relationship between management support and incentives with knowledge implementation in social work in the framework of hypotheses H1 and H2. I also include the construct of employee empowerment as a moderating mechanism in the framework of hypotheses H3 and H4. To test my hypotheses, I used a series of hierarchical regression analysis with centered variables. In determining moderation effects, I follow the example of Dawson (2014). In my first model I include five control variables and management support as the independent variable. In addition to the control variables, the second regression model includes incentives as the independent variable. In model three, I entered a two-way interaction (management support X employee empowerment). Similarly, in model four, I entered a two-way interaction (incentives X employee empowerment). The results of all four models are presented in Table 31.

Table 31: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Knowledge Implementation – Models 1-4¹⁷

Variables	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3				Model 4			
	b	s.e.	β	t	b	s.e.	β	t	b	s.e.	β	t	b	s.e.	β	t
Organization size	-0.01	0.06	-0.01	-0.15	-0.03	0.07	-0.03	-0.42	-0.01	0.06	-0.01	-0.21	-0.04	0.07	-0.03	-0.54
Age	-0.05	0.07	-0.05	-0.74	-0.01	0.07	-0.01	-0.17	-0.06	0.07	-0.05	-0.83	-0.02	0.07	-0.02	-0.23

¹⁷ As gender is not a dichotomous variable, I also rerun a regression analysis without this control variable and achieve the following results:
Model 1: R^2 : 0.767 $F(df)$: 44.52(81) ΔR^2 : 0.767
Model 2: R^2 : 0.737 $F(df)$: 35.91(77) ΔR^2 : 0.737
Model 3: R^2 : 0.769 $F(df)$: 38.01(80) ΔR^2 : 0.002
Model 4: R^2 : 0.754 $F(df)$: 33.29(76) ΔR^2 : 0.017

Gender	0.01	0.12	0.01	0.11	-0.02	0.13	-0.01	-0.12	0.01	0.12	0.01	0.10	-0.04	0.13	-0.02	-0.30
Highest level of education	0.01	0.07	0.01	0.11	-0.05	0.08	-0.04	-0.71	0.01	0.07	0.01	0.16	-0.06	0.07	-0.05	-0.82
Average tenure	-0.02	0.03	-0.04	-0.62	-0.01	0.04	-0.02	-0.30	-0.02	0.03	-0.04	-0.59	-0.01	0.04	-0.02	-0.32
C_Management support	0.43	0.07	0.48	6.55**					0.45	0.07	0.49	6.38**				
C_Incentives					0.56	0.11	0.59	5.22**					0.56	0.11	0.58	5.31**
C_Employee empowerment	0.52	0.08	0.48	6.33**	0.33	0.12	0.31	2.67**	0.50	0.09	0.46	5.68**	0.33	0.12	0.30	2.73**
C_MSxC_EE									-0.04	0.06	-0.04	-0.72				
C_INCxC_EE													-0.14	0.06	-0.13	-2.31*
R ²	0.767				0.737				0.769				0.754			
F(df)	37.70(80)				30.39(76)				32.85(79)				28.79(75)			
ΔR ²	0.767				0.737				0.002				0.017			

*p < 0.05

**p < 0.01

Source: Colnar & Dimovski (2019)

In model 1, I found a positive and significant relationship of management support ($\beta = .48$; exact $p = .000$) with knowledge implementation in social work. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported. Through the hierarchical regression analysis, I found in model 2 a positive and significant relationship between incentives and knowledge implementation in social work ($\beta = .59$; exact $p = .000$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was also supported. Models 3 and 4, which include employee empowerment as a moderator of management support (Model 3) and incentives (Model 4) with knowledge implementation, show minimal added value in comparison with the direct effect models (ΔR^2 in comparison with Model 1 and Model 2).

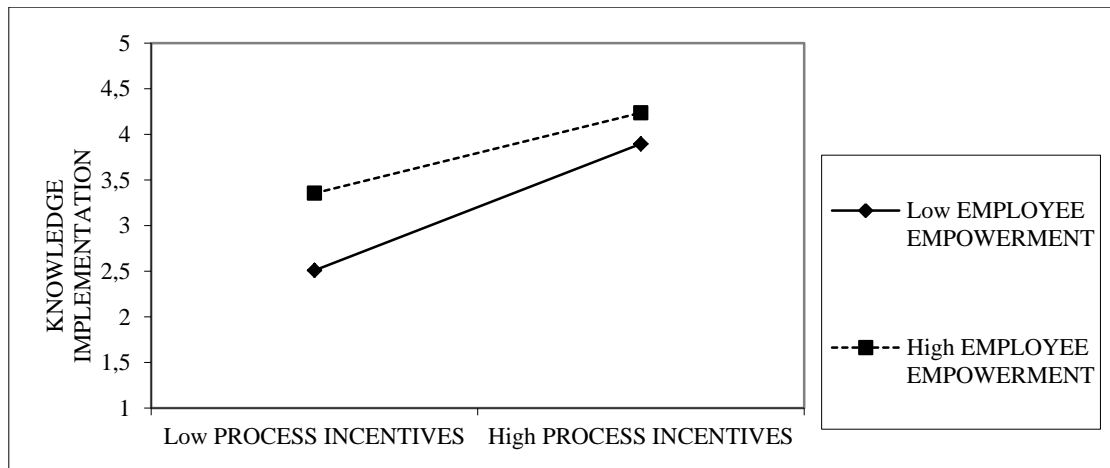
The results of the hierarchical regression analysis in model 3 do not show a significant relationship between the two-way interaction of management support and employee empowerment on knowledge implementation ($\beta = -.04$; exact $p = .476$)¹⁸. On the basis of my sample data I did not find enough evidence to support the interaction between management support and employee empowerment.¹⁹ Therefore, I reject hypothesis 3. My hierarchical regression analysis in model 4 shows a significant negative relationship between the two-way interaction of incentives and employee empowerment with knowledge implementation ($\beta = -.13$; exact $p = .023$). A negative interaction coefficient indicates that the effect of the combined action of two predictors is less than the sum of their individual effects. The

¹⁸ The p-value has failed to reach the recommended threshold. The absence of the interaction effect indicates that there is also no moderation between the observed variables. We cannot claim that an interaction of the size found is far enough from zero to assertively claim an interaction effect (at least not with a type I error of 0.05 and a reasonable type II error = $1 - \beta$). It is more reasonable for us to consider that management support and employee empowerment have individual, additive effect on knowledge implementation.

¹⁹ The lack of the interaction effect tells us that the simple slopes are not different from each other. In other words our lines are parallel. To avoid misleading the readers of our paper, we did not include the simple slopes analysis for the statistically non-significant interaction effect.

concrete interpretation is done best by visualizing it by a simple slope analysis. The analysis of the simple slope²⁰ that represents high levels of employee empowerment suggests it is significant (exact $p = 0.001$). The interaction between incentives and employee empowerment in influencing knowledge implementation is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Interaction Between Process Incentives and Employee Empowerment in Influencing Knowledge Implementation



Source: Colnar & Dimovski (2019)

We could see from Figure 8, that the highest levels of knowledge implementation are achieved when employee empowerment is high. Furthermore, I found that the level of incentives also influences knowledge implementation, both when employee empowerment is low and high. In both cases, higher levels of incentives influence the higher levels of knowledge implementation in practice. Hypothesis H4, predicted that employee empowerment is a moderator of the relationship between incentives and knowledge implementation, in a way, that the influence of incentives on knowledge implementation is stronger, when the level of employee empowerment is higher. My research results provide support for hypothesis H4 for low and high levels of process incentives. However, when the levels of incentives are higher, the contribution of employee empowerment to higher levels of knowledge implementation is smaller.

4 QUANTITATIVE DATA AND QUALITATIVE DATA FINDINGS

4.1 Quantitative Data and Quantitative Data Findings

²⁰ For the two way unstandardized simple slopes analysis we included: Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (independent variable, moderator, interaction and intercept / constant), Means and SDs of variables (Mean of independent variable, SD of independent variable, Mean of moderator and SD of moderator) and Simple Slopes Analysis (Variance coefficient of IV, variance coefficient of interaction, Covariance of coefficients of IV and interaction, Value of moderator at which to evaluate slope, sample size and number of control variables).

In this section, I present the main findings that emerged during the quantitative research. These include the extent of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia, the effectiveness of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia, and the influences of organizational factors on knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

4.1.1 Quantitative Data Findings - Extent of Knowledge Management in Social Work Centers

The measures to analyse my research question regarding the extent of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia were derived from specific items in the questionnaire. I used a five-point Likert scale range where responses 1 and 2 expressed a negative response, and 4 and 5 a positive response). The questionnaire provided the starting point for understanding the current state of the research themes in social work centers and preparation for collecting more in-depth information.

Seven items in the questionnaire were used to evaluate management responsibility. The first item focused on whether the social work organization has a specific manager who deals with knowledge management activities. The majority of respondents (53.1%) provided a negative answer. Despite the findings in the literature that suggest the positive effects of a manager responsible for knowledge management activities, (Aljuwaiber, 2016; Dehgani & Ramsin, 2015; Liebowitz & Frank, 2016; Navarro et al., 2010), most social work centers in Slovenia do not or are unable to employ a manager who deals specifically with knowledge management activities.

Three items in the questionnaire were used to evaluate the support and good practices of managers in organizations as they related to knowledge management and knowledge sharing. A majority of respondents (ranging from 45.8% to 57.7%) provided a positive response to these three items. The findings in the literature promote the critical role of support and positive examples of management personnel in achieving excellence in knowledge management and knowledge sharing in organizations.(Austin et al., 2008; Azmee et al., 2017; Holsapple & Joshi, 2000; Kamaruzzan et al., 2016; Lee, Kim & Kim, 2012). It appears this aspect of knowledge management is well covered in social work centers in Slovenia.

Two items in the questionnaire were used to evaluate the incentive structure. The majority of respondents (56.4% and 61.5%) indicated for both items an apparent lack of incentives in social work centers. The answers provided by respondents suggest that the existing incentive structure is not sufficient to motivate the positive behaviour of employees (Austin et al., 2008). However, these results were, at least partially, to be expected because of the inherent difficulties for organizations in the public sector to provide sufficient incentives (for the reasons outlined in previous sections). Such results also confirm the findings of Kaker (2009)

in which wide dissatisfaction with salary, working conditions, benefits, advancement, and rewards were reported.

One item in the questionnaire was used to evaluate how much managers in organizations actively communicate the potential benefits of knowledge management implementation in practice. The largest proportion of respondents (42.8%) indicated that managers did not actively and clearly communicate benefits and expectations related to knowledge management. These responses suggest that this aspect is less developed in social work centers than in other organizations, which is also indicated in the literature (Austin et al., 2008). The quantitative results regarding management responsibility provide additional insight into this area. The majority of findings indicate that this element tends to be less developed in social work centers in Slovenia (also compared to other examples in the literature). Furthermore, the data suggests interesting themes that could be the subject of further research, and the results of which might be used to improve the environment of social work centers in general.

Two items in the questionnaire were intended to measure knowledge creation. One item dealt with the creation of new ideas in the organization. The largest proportion of respondents (47.9%) provided positive responses, indicating that their organization is supportive in term of allowing employees to present new ideas. Therefore, it appears that this aspect is adequately developed in social work centers in Slovenia. Such findings are in line with existing literature that endorses the positive effects of new idea creation (Brown & Duguid, 2000; Chen & Hsieh, 2015).

One item in the questionnaire focused on the critical evaluation of new ideas. The largest proportion of respondents (44.7%) indicated that their organizations, in practice, do not regularly and critically evaluate proposed new ideas. These findings suggest that this aspect is underdeveloped in social work centers in Slovenia. In contrast, the literature suggests that it is necessary for organizations to critically evaluate information or ideas for future use (Bontis, 2011; Duffy, 2000; Karamitri, Talias & Bellali, 2015). The research findings regarding knowledge creation imply that it would be constructive to examine the reasons why social work centers fail to critically evaluate new ideas, although they are regularly suggested by employees.

Two items in the questionnaire were used to evaluate knowledge storage and retrieval. The first item measured whether organizations have standardized procedures for storing reference materials. The largest number of respondents (40.6%) answered this question positively, closely followed by 36.5% of respondents who answered the same question negatively. The second item focused on databases intended for storing and retrieving knowledge. Similar to the first question, 39.6% of respondents responded positively, closely followed by 33.3% of respondents that expressed a negative opinion.

The almost equally divided positive and negative answers from respondents, along with a significant number of respondents who remained neutral, could indicate a lack of in-depth

understanding about ICT systems in their organizations. Because of these results, it could not be established whether storing and retrieving knowledge is a well-developed practice in social work centers in Slovenia. Nevertheless, because the literature suggests that it is necessary for organizations to appropriately and continuously store knowledge that is available for later retrieval (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Baskerville & Dulipovici, 2006; Chou et al., 2007; Heisig, 2009; Massey & Montoya-Weiss, 2006), it would clearly be beneficial for social work centers to develop such systems. Furthermore, it is beneficial for organizations to use databases for storing knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Ouriques et al., 2019; Tapio Inkinen et al., 2015). The ambiguous results regarding knowledge storage and retrieval indicate the need for this topic to be further examined.

Five items in the questionnaire were used to evaluate knowledge transfer. Two items focused on readily available knowledge being transferred within organizations. The largest proportion of respondents (42.7% and 45.8%) agreed that readily available knowledge can be immediately transferred within their organizations. These findings indicate that social work centers in Slovenia have developed this aspect of knowledge management. Moreover, the literature supports the benefits of such systems in social work organizations (Dalkir, 2011; Dawson, 2001; Harrison & Hu, 2012; Horvath, 2001).

Three items in the questionnaire were used to evaluate whether organizations created an environment where employees could ask others for help and where it is clearly known who possesses what knowledge within the organization. A large majority of respondents answered very positively to all three items (ranging from 66.6% to 81.3%), suggested that social work centers in Slovenia have developed this aspect of their operations well. The literature indicates that there are positive effects when employees know they can count on others in their organization for help and also have a clearly defined picture of who possesses what knowledge in their organization (Alhamoudi, 2015; Babič et al., 2018; Grant & Dumay, 2015; Jashapara, 2011). These findings suggesting a strong collaborative culture, similar to what would be expected for social work organizations and their employees, is generally positive. Bjorkenheim (2007) indicates that social workers believe that they are generally ready to share what they know with others.

Six items in the questionnaire were used to measure the general level of knowledge implementation in social centers in Slovenia. The first item focused on knowledge implementation and its impact on the future operations of social work organizations. A majority of respondents (56.7%) indicated that their organization uses lessons learned in order to improve future functioning. This indicates that social work centers in Slovenia utilize this aspect of knowledge management, which is consistent with existing literature that suggests that it is important for organizations to implement their knowledge and that the end goal of knowledge management activities is the improvement of organization excellence (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Downes, 2014; Penrose, 2009).

Three items specifically aimed to evaluate whether respondents believe that their organizations actively use newly gained knowledge in their daily operations. All three questions received mostly negative responses (ranging from 36.2% to 49.0%), and a slightly lower number of neutral responses (ranging from 28.1% to 35.1%). This suggests that, in terms of actual implementation, knowledge management is less developed in Slovenian social work centers. The literature highlights the fact that knowledge is only useful when directly implemented in practice (Bierly et al., 2009; Choi et al., 2010). Paradoxically, the responses to these items contradict the responses to the previous item where respondents positively assessed how their organizations used lessons learned to improve future performance.

The last two items measured whether knowledge is tested prior to implementation in an attempt to exploit its full potential. The responses to these items were contradictory as the share of answers to the question about whether information in databases were regularly examined or tested were almost equally distributed (positive answers from respondents 37.3%, negative answers from respondents 34.4%). However, the largest proportion of respondents indicated that no specific employees were designated to perform such tests of knowledge (45.8%), thus indicating a lack of understanding of this particular aspect of knowledge management.

Because of the inconclusiveness of these results, I was unable to establish the overall level of knowledge that was actually implemented in social work centers in Slovenia. In general, the literature favours the prior testing of newly gained knowledge in order to gain in-depth understanding of its full potential (Bhatt, 2001). I conclude that there is a general lack of understanding regarding the actual implementation of knowledge in social work centers. Namely, respondents provided contradictory responses to general, fairly similar questions regarding these topics.

Overall, the responses to items related to the extent of knowledge management activities in general imply a possible gap in knowledge or in-depth understanding of the constructs being researched and their potential benefits when applied in practice. In conclusion, on the basis of responses to the research questionnaire, the extent of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenian can be considered low or at best moderate. Subsequently, several important topics for follow-up interviews were identified, and these could also be pursued in future studies in social work centers in Slovenia.

4.1.2 Quantitative Data Findings - Effectiveness of Knowledge Management in Social Work Centers

Three items in the research questionnaire were used to measure enhanced collaboration. One focused on whether the decision-making of managers improved as a result of knowledge management practices. The majority of respondents (64.2%) indicate that managerial decision making in social work centers indeed improved with the introduction of knowledge

management practices. This is in line with the existing literature (Carneiro, 2000; King, 2009).

One item focused on the enhanced decision-making of employees. Slightly more than half of the respondents (53.6%) indicated that similarly to managerial decision-making, the decision-making of employees also improved in social work centers after the introduction of knowledge management practices. This is also in line with the literature, which defines enhanced decision-making as one of the potential benefits of knowledge management implementation (Carneiro, 2000; King 2009).

One item focused on the impact of knowledge management on teamwork. A majority of respondents (67.8%) provided a positive answer, namely that teamwork in their organization had improved as a result of the introduction of knowledge management practices. The existing literature suggests that improved teamwork in social work centers is essential as it brings numerous benefits (Choi 2000; Chong & Choi, 2005; Eppler & Sukowski, 2000).

Two items were used to measure enhanced communication. One item focused on the possibility of making existing knowledge readily available to all members of the organization. The majority of respondents (53.6%) responded positively, agreeing that knowledge is readily available to all employees in their organizations. Such findings indicate that this aspect of knowledge management is well developed in Slovenian social work centers. Such findings are in line with the existing literature indicating that enhanced communication makes knowledge more readily available to more people in organizations (Alavi & Leidner, 1999; Anantatmula & Stankosky, 2008; Rodrigues et al., 2016).

One item was used to evaluate whether there is an awareness of information critical to achieving the organization's mission. A majority of respondents (60.7%) confirmed that after the introduction of knowledge management in social work centers there was an increased awareness regarding information deemed critical to achieving the organization's mission. These finding indicate that social work centers in Slovenia are following the proposals in the literature that suggest that internal communication, including all interested stakeholders, makes it more likely that the mission, values, and behaviour patterns of an organization will be shared by employees (Rodrigues et al., 2016). These findings are encouraging as Downes (2014) believes that enhanced communication enables organizations to focus more attention on the fulfilment of their mission.

I used seven items to evaluate enhanced learning in organizations. One item focused on whether managers became more innovative as a consequence of enhanced communication. The majority of respondents (60.7%) responded that they became more innovative communication improved. These findings are in line with related research from the literature (Argote, 1999; Carneiro, 2000; Jensen, 2014; Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018).

One item focused on whether employees become more innovative as a consequence of enhanced learning. A majority of respondents (60.7%) indicated that, similar to managers, employees in social work centers become more innovative after the introduction of knowledge management systems. These findings are in line with related research from the literature (Argote, 1999; Carneiro, 2000; Jensen, 2014; Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018).

One item was used to evaluate whether managers acquired more knowledge as a result of enhanced learning. A majority of respondents (57.2%) indicated that managers in Slovenian social work centers do acquire more knowledge as a result of enhanced learning. These findings are in line with related research in the literature (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; Dixon, 2017; North & Kumta, 2018).

One item was used to evaluate whether employees acquired more knowledge as a consequence of enhanced learning. A significant majority of respondents (67.8%) indicated that employees ended up acquiring more knowledge as a result of enhanced learning. These findings are in line with related research in the existing literature (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; Dixon, 2017; North & Kumta, 2018).

Two items were used to evaluate the level of experience and skills of employees in social work centers in Slovenia. The literature proposes that individuals acquire more experience and skills when knowledge management initiatives are introduced into organizations and learning improves. Again, a strong majority of respondents (71.5% and 75.0% respectively) confirmed the research in the literature (Argote, 2011; Carneiro, 2000; Senge, 1990). Finally, the literature suggests that the introduction of knowledge management improves learning in organizations (Choo 1998; Resatsch & Faisst, 2004). One item directly asked respondents if learning improved with the introduction of knowledge management. A large majority of respondents (81.5%) indicated that learning in their organizations had indeed improved after the introduction of knowledge management.

Four items were used to evaluate enhanced performance in social work centers in Slovenia. One item focused on whether processes in the organization improved after the introduction of knowledge management. The majority of respondents (66.7%) indicated that organizational processes had in fact improved. These findings are in line with research in the literature regarding organizational processes (Downes, 2014; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Westerlund & Rajala, 2010).

One item was used to explore the perception of respondents regarding whether the costs in their organization had been reduced following the implementation of knowledge management. The majority of respondents (64.3%) were unsure about the costs savings generated by knowledge management. Such findings are in line with research by Inkinen (2016) that suggested that knowledge management performance is difficult to measure in

financial terms because financial performance is dependent on many factors, reflecting the complexity of organizations.

One item was used to explore the opinion of respondents as to whether their organizations provides better quality services to their users following the introduction of knowledge management. Exactly three quarters of respondents confirmed that this is the case. These findings indicate that social work centers are making efforts to follow the methods suggested by Bloice and Burnett (2016) for delivering higher quality services to their users. One item was used to evaluate the perceptions of respondents as to whether their organizations function better in general after the introduction of knowledge management initiatives. The majority of respondents (64.3%) confirmed that this is the case. Such findings from social work centers are in line with the research in the literature (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; King, 2009; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Rost, 2011) that describes the positive effects of knowledge management on organizational performance.

4.1.3 Quantitative Data Findings - Influences on Knowledge Management

Two items were used to evaluate the commitment of respondents to their organizations' mission. One item focused on whether the primary concern of employees is to successfully endeavour to fulfil their organizations' mission. The vast majority of respondents (79.4%) gave a positive answer. These findings confirm that social workers feel a strong affiliation with their organizations' mission. Moreover, these findings are in line with research in the literature that emphasizes the importance of mission statements in modern organizations (Bart & Tabone, 1998) in their effort to fulfil strategic objectives (Mullane, 2002; Siciliano, 2008). Finally, the findings in the literature suggest that commitment to the organizational mission is essential as it allows public sector organizations to become more resilient as they work toward accomplishing their mission (McDonald, 2007; Weerawardena, McDonald & Sullivan-Mort, 2010). These findings could prove beneficial to social work centers in Slovenia.

One item was used to evaluate whether employees prioritize organizational wellbeing over individual wellbeing. The majority of respondents (57.7%) indicated that in their organizations employees do tend to prioritize organizational wellbeing over individual benefits. These findings are in line with the research in the existing literature (Yang & Pandey, 2009). In addition, the literature suggests that organizational commitment expresses the willingness of individuals to exert considerable effort to create benefits for the organization (Porter et al., 1974). This also holds true for social work centers.

Two items were used to further examine knowledge sharing and the organizational learning culture in social work centers in Slovenia. One item sought to gain insight on whether employees in social work organizations encouraged knowledge sharing and learning. The majority of respondents (61.4%) indicated that employees do in fact encourage knowledge

sharing and learning opportunities. These findings are in line with research in the literature that enumerates the many positive effects of knowledge sharing, including organizational success (Dess & Shaw, 2001; Kalling, 2003; Witherspoon et al., 2013), competitive advantage (Reychaw & Weisberg, 2009), more efficient and effective delivery of services (Merlo et al., 2006), and reducing the learning curve needed to acquire new skills (Hansen, 2002; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Moreover, these findings suggest that social work centers in Slovenia are following the suggestions from the existing literature regarding the organizational learning culture and its positive impacts on individual and organizational performance (Watkins & Marsick, 2003; Weinzimmer & Esken, 2017), the quality and quantity of learning, individual motivation, job satisfaction (Egan et al., 2004), and employee retention (Kontoghiorghe, 2001).

One item focused on whether mistakes are recognized as learning opportunities in the respondents' organizations. Slightly less than half of respondents (45.8%) agreed with the statement, while a relatively large proportion of respondents remained neutral (30.2%), suggesting that this could be a topic for future research. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents agreed, indicating that learning from mistakes is possible in social work centers in Slovenia. These findings are in line with recommendations from the research literature that suggest that learning from mistakes is desirable, and has a positive impact on improving organizational practices (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2017), endorsing organizational learning (Sitkin, 1992), and increasing the motivation of employees (Ellis & Davidi, 2005).

Four items were used to evaluate trust and collaboration as part of the organizational culture in social work centers in Slovenia. If we look at the four items as one set, the largest proportion or majority of respondents (ranges from 46.3% to 59.0%) provided positive answers regarding the level of trust and collaboration in their social work centers. These findings are in line with the research in the existing literature, which posits that trust enables more positive attitudes and increases the desire for employees to collaborate with each other (Alfes et al., 2012; Brown et al., 2014), enhances organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviours (Aryee et al., 2002), and creates opportunities for employees to voluntarily engage in knowledge sharing and collaboration (Rutte, Blaas-Franken & Martin, 2016). The findings also are in line with researchers' opinions that collaboration among employees has the potential to improve organizational performance (Campbell, 2016; Christensen & Lagreid, 2007; O'Leary & Bingham, 2009; Thomson & Perry, 2006).

The findings in this category did not indicate a lack of trust in social work centers that would cause employees to be more cautious (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001), to perceive a lack of recognition, to express a level of distrust toward their colleagues, and even feel their employment status might be jeopardized. To the contrary, the findings from this research suggest that employees' level of trust and collaboration in their organizations is positive. Interestingly, the lowest value of positive answers (46.3%) and the highest value of neutral

answers (29.5%) was obtained for the item related to a lack of trust in co-workers because of misusing knowledge or falsely claiming credit. This suggests a potential research topic to explore: namely, why is there suspicion that co-workers claim the knowledge of other employees.

One item was used to evaluate creativity and innovation in social work centers. A slight majority of respondents (55.2%) indicated that their organizations value employees who are creative, innovative, and able think ahead. These findings are in line with research in existing literature that suggest that creativity and innovation are critical elements in an organization's successful functioning (Serrat, 2017). This research further indicates that organizations should promote creativity and innovation as it positively impacts organizational performance, especially in terms of effectiveness and efficiency (Kim & Lee, 2009; Hartley, 2005; Osborne & Brown, 2013).

To conclude, responses to the influence of organizational culture on knowledge management suggest the possibility of a gap in the research. Understanding the influence of organizational culture on knowledge management is important as it can contribute toward improving the overall success of knowledge management in organizations.

One item evaluated the perceived adequacy of financial resources available for investment in knowledge sharing practices. The largest share (38.9%) of respondents believed that their organizations dedicate adequate resources to the promotion of knowledge sharing. Nevertheless, a significant share of respondents remained neutral (31.6%) or provided a negative answer (29.5%). For this reason, it is difficult to evaluate whether the responses can be used to confirm the statement, and reliably characterize the development of Slovenian social work centers in this area. Therefore, I cannot conclude whether a lack of resources represents a barrier to knowledge sharing (Riege, 2005) in social work centers in Slovenia. However, it must be emphasized that the research from the literature strongly suggests that appropriate resources are the starting point and condition of all successful knowledge management initiatives (Coleman, 1999; Schlegelmilch & Chini, 2003).

A second item was used to evaluate the adequacy of reward and recognition systems to motivate employees to share their knowledge with their co-workers. Only 16.0% of respondents agreed with the statement, indicating that social work centers have under-developed reward and recognition systems. Here, too, the literature emphasizes the importance of appropriate reward and recognition systems as they function as an essential motivator to increase knowledge sharing behaviours in organizations (Perry-Smith, 2006). Reward and recognition systems positively influence employee motivation (Gagne, 2009; Perry-Smith, 2006; Reinholt et al., 2011), and at the same time make it clear that organizations value the participation of their employees in knowledge sharing activities (Lombardi et al., 2017). A second item evaluated the clear communication of expectations and potential benefits of knowledge management activities. The largest share of respondents

(47.3%) agreed that clear communication existed in their organizations, while a significant share of respondents (28.4%) remained neutral. These findings are in line with the research in the existing literature, which endorses the necessity of clearly communicating potential benefits (Paroutis & Al-Saleh, 2009) of top management delivering strong messages (Cabrera et al., 2006), and reducing the anxiety that results from uncertainty (Ardichvilli, 2008).

A third item was used to gain insight on whether knowledge sharing is part of individual performance evaluation in organizations. The largest share of respondents (43.2%) indicated that knowledge sharing is not part of their organizations' employee performance evaluation system. A smaller proportion of respondents (31.6%) believed that their organization does include knowledge sharing in their evaluations of employee performance. The results indicate either that social work centers have not incorporated knowledge sharing into annual performance evaluations to a significant degree or that is unclear to employees that knowledge sharing is being evaluated by their organizations. Here, too, it should be noted that the research in the literature strongly promotes the integration of knowledge sharing both in annual performance evaluations of employees and in assessing future career opportunities (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001) as these practices increases knowledge sharing behaviours.

A fourth item was used to evaluate the knowledge retention strategies of organizations. Only a very small share of respondents (9.5%) indicated that their organization had a strategy or plan for knowledge retention when employees leave the organization. A significantly larger share of respondents (64.2%) expressed the opinion that their organizations had no plan for knowledge retention. These findings suggest that knowledge retention in social work centers is a severely underdeveloped area. In contrast, the existing literature identifies knowledge retention as being of the utmost importance for organizations, especially as they attempt to retain tacit knowledge (Wikstrom et al., 2018), critical knowledge (Liebowitz, 2009), and specifically the knowledge of colleagues who retire or leave the organization (Probst & Romhardt, 2010). Only in this way can organizations avoid potential knowledge gaps and a subsequent decline in organizational performance (Liebowitz, 2009).

A fifth item was used to evaluate employee access to education and training related to knowledge management. The majority of respondents (63.8%) indicated that there are no education or training activities related to knowledge management offered by their organizations. These findings indicate that education and training related to knowledge management is underdeveloped in social work centers in Slovenia. Brudeney and Meijs (2014) posit that social workers lack knowledge related to managerial and organizational subjects (Toleson Knee, 2014), and are often unable to obtain the additional knowledge that is needed.

In 2014, the MPA admitted that in the Slovenian public sector, both managers and employees lacked sufficient managerial skills, and that the acquisition and development of such skills are not carried out in a comprehensive and systematic manner. Many researchers have pointed to

education and training as one of the most critical success factors in knowledge management initiatives (Argote et al., 2003; Valmohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015; Von Krogh, 1998), and emphasize the need for employee training both inside and outside the organization to acquire necessary new knowledge and skills (Jaw & Liu, 2003; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

One item was used to explore existing ICT systems and whether they suited the needs of employees. 32.6% of respondents indicated that the current ICT system in their organization is suited to their needs, 32.6% respondents were neutral, and 34.7% of respondents did not agree with the statement. From these results, I conclude that social work centers have less developed ICT than the level recommended in the literature. The research literature suggests that ICT can be of great assistance to employees, especially in the area of knowledge management (Olubunmi Omotayo, 2015), provided that appropriate training and education enables employees to use the technology to more easily accomplish their daily tasks. The mixed results in the questionnaire were not unexpected because of the ongoing reorganization of social work centers in Slovenia that included the introduction of the Krpan information system which is reported to have created many challenges and initial obstacles.

A second item was used to evaluate whether ICT systems have an impact on the work of employees in social work centers. A large majority of respondents (76.8%) believed that ICT did have an impact on their work. These findings are in line with the research of Torkzadeh and Doll (1999). However, as the question of impact on work was so broad, it was not possible to know whether respondents viewed the impact to be positive or negative.

A third item was used to evaluate whether ICT provides support for knowledge sharing. 39.3% of respondents provided a positive answer, 36.2% of respondents remained neutral, and 24.5% of respondents did not believe that the ICT system in their organizations supports knowledge sharing. These results indicate that ICT supports knowledge sharing to a lesser degree than is desirable. Alavi and Leidner (2001) explained the potential benefits of ICT in their research. 45.3% of respondents indicated that technical support for ICT in their organization is appropriate. The answers of the respondents indicate that the management of Slovenian social work centers, in line with propositions in the literature, is aware of the importance of appropriate technical support (Liu & Szabo, 2009; Tezci, 2011; Yildirim, 2007), and understands that neglecting this element could represent a serious challenge or barrier to performance (Pelgrum, 2001). The largest share of respondents (41.0%) indicated that they are unsure whether employees avoid using ICT due to their lack of knowledge and experience. Therefore, the results are inconclusive as to whether employees in social work centers in Slovenia have a lack of knowledge or experience as regards the use of ICT.

In future studies, it would be advisable to acquire a wider understand of why employees of social work centers in Slovenia have under-developed ICT knowledge, skills, and experience. Increasing overall ITC literacy would be beneficial as these skills are extremely important in

today's environment (Melville et al., 2004) and can contribute to solving problems in the workplace (Mao et al., 2016).

The vast majority of respondents (71.6%) indicated that their organizations allows their employees to informally collaborate and share their knowledge and experience. These findings are in line with the research in existing literature that promotes the benefits of knowledge sharing (Al-Saifi et al., 2016), and its positive impact on the work environment resulting from higher levels of trust (Sveiby & Simon, 2002). The research also notes that informal collaboration among employees increases the possibility of sharing experiences (Nya-Ling Tan, 2015) and promotes team work (Van den Bink, 2003).

The largest share of respondents (45.3%) indicated that their organizations do not encourage social networks. This indicates that social networks in social work centers are less-developed in this regard. The findings in the literature suggest that social work centers should more proactively promote the use of social networks as they have a positive influence on the amount of organizational resources (Birley, 1985; Lin, 1982), encourage creation and the pursuit of lasting competitive advantages (Gulati et al., 2000), can more clearly define knowledge flows within organizations (Chan & Liebowitz, 2006; Liebowitz, 2005), and increase the level of knowledge sharing (Pahor et al., 2008).

Items that explored the topic of the influence of organizational infrastructure on knowledge management offered several possibilities for future research. As was previously established in this dissertation, the influence of organizational infrastructure is especially important as it positively influences the overall extent and effectiveness of knowledge management.

A large majority of respondents (68.0%) indicated that their organizations encourage knowledge sharing in practice. These results are in line with the research in the literature suggesting that organizations need to provide active encouragement and support for their employees in order for knowledge sharing to occur (Holsapple & Joshi, 2000; Roda et al., 2003; Razmerita, Kirchner & Nielsen, 2016), (Zhang & Yan Jiang, 2015). Knowledge sharing is an important facilitator of effective knowledge management (Park et al., 2004) and also has a positive impact on the performance and well-being of individual employees (Cabrera et al., 2006; Kulkarni, Ravindran & Freeze, 2006).

The first item in this category was used to evaluate whether employees feels empowered by their organizations. Slightly over a majority of respondents (54.2%) indicated that their organizations do in fact empower employees. These results are in line with the research in the literature that promotes the positive impact of employee empowerment on successful operations, productivity, growth (Hunjra et al., 2011), organizational performance, employee satisfaction, and quality of services (Ukil, 2016).

The second item was used to evaluate of the importance of hierarchy, consisting of power and status, in respondents' organizations. The largest share of respondents (45.2%) indicated that hierarchy, status, and power are important in the social work centers where they worked, followed by a smaller proportion of respondents (30.1%) who expressed uncertainty. These results signal the need for additional research on this topic as the existing literature indicates that this is an important area that impacts the functioning of organizations (Clegg et al., 2006). Too much emphasis on hierarchy, status, and control can be detrimental to knowledge management initiatives as it potentially diminishes opportunities for employees to benefit from the knowledge, skills, and expertise of their colleagues (Bunderson & Reagans, 2011).

In the next item, 34.0% of respondents agreed that communication and knowledge in their organizations typically flows in the top-down direction, 38.3% respondents remained neutral, and 27.7% of respondents disagreed with the statement. The results indicate that bottom-up approaches to communication and knowledge flows in social work centers are less developed. The existing literature suggests that it is desirable to have both top-down and bottom-up approaches to communication (Kluge et al., 2001), and that developing both directions of knowledge flows is important as it allows managers to combine the short and long-term orientation of the organization and its goals (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2004; Probst and Raisch, 2005). The recognition that restricted one-directional flows are a key problem for knowledge management in organizations may encourage social work centers to more proactively engage in promoting bottom-up approaches to communication and knowledge flows.

Items on the questionnaire addressing the topic of influence of organizational infrastructure on knowledge management offered several possibilities for further exploration and improvements. However, as discussed in previous sections of my dissertation, the influence of organizational structure is not considered that important an influence on knowledge management. These findings are in some ways contradictory to the ongoing reorganization process of social work centers in Slovenia that in the first phase particularly emphasized the importance of changing the existing organizational structure.

There was also an item that focused on whether respondents' organizations had a formal knowledge management strategy aligned with the strategic vision of the organization. This item required that respondents first declare that their organizations engage in some form of activities related to knowledge management. 38 respondents answered this question: 42.1% of the respondents agreed with the statement, and 31.6% of respondents expressed uncertainty. The ambiguous results point to another possible research topic that could be explored to gain a deeper understanding of how respondents perceive their organizations engagement in knowledge management activities. Edwards (1997) proposes that public sector organizations would also benefit from defining and implementing a formal knowledge management strategy, implying that this could be beneficial for social work centers as well.

Three items were used to evaluate the level of management support and their commitment to communicating the benefits of knowledge sharing and learning opportunities, as well as management's efforts to develop an efficient knowledge sharing system for organizations. The largest shares of respondents (ranging from 43.5% to a majority of 52.2%) believed that managers in their organizations were trying to positively affect these outcomes. However, a relatively large proportion of respondents (ranging from 23.9% to 29.3%) were uncertain. The findings confirm that this aspect of knowledge management is well developed in social work centers in Slovenia. These results are in line with the existing literature that suggest that positive signals from management (Blackler, 1995; Caplan et al., 1984; Lin & Wu, 2004; Nonaka & Konno, 1998) contribute to the overall success of knowledge management initiatives (Riege, 2007), and enhance levels of knowledge sharing (Dave & Koskela, 2009; Soliman & Spooner, 2000) and organizational learning (London & Smither, 1999; Sambrook & Stewart, 2000). Furthermore, the results reflect the conclusion of other researchers who promote the positive effect of a supportive climate (van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004) on an organization's ability to share knowledge (Ali et al., 2002; Larsen & Folgero, 1993) and promote learning opportunities (Keeling et al., 1998; Ng et al., 2006). The results also recall authors Al-Busaidi et al. (2010), Akbulut-Bailey (2011) and Lin (2006) who suggested that top management support is beneficial for organizations attempting to implement an effective knowledge management system.

One item was used to evaluate whether respondents believe that managers in their organization involve employees in the decision-making process. The largest share of respondents (39.1%) believe that managers do include employees in the decision-making process. However, 28.3% of respondents remained neutral, and 32.6% of respondents disagreed with the statement, thus pointing to a possible subject for future research. Nevertheless, the results suggest that most organizations encourage employee participation in decision-making at least to some extent. However, such participation may be less than ideal. Therefore, the results are at least partially in line with the existing literature that suggest that employee participation in decision-making increases job satisfaction (Kim, 2002; Van der Westhuizen et al., 2012; Wright & Kim, 2004), job enrichment (Greenberg, 1975), and employee empowerment (Kim, 2002; Wright & Kim, 2004).

One item was used to evaluate whether managers empower their employees. The largest proportion of respondents (42.9%) agreed that in practice managers in their organizations make use of techniques that empower employees. A significant proportion of employees either remained neutral (27.5%) or disagreed with the statement (29.6%). Therefore, the question of employee empowerment in social work centers also points to an interesting area for potential research and one that would benefit from additional insight. As it stands, the results of the questionnaire suggest that some employees feel empowered in their work place, however to a lesser extent than is ideal. Nevertheless, these results are in line with research in the literature that endorses the positive effects of empowerment on the level of performance (Lee et al., 2006), job satisfaction (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016; Kim, 2002; Lee et al., 2006;

Wright & Kim, 2004), organizational commitment (Kim & Fernandez, 2017), and job involvement (Guthrie, 2001; Lee et al., 2006; Wright & Kim, 2004).

One item was used to evaluate the importance of titles, status, and formality in respondents' organizations. The largest share of respondents (40.2%) believes that titles, status, and formality were important in social work centers. A significant proportion of respondents (34.8%) were uncertain. The results suggest that, as the existing literature suggests, some level of hierarchy exists in every organization (Bunderson and Reagans, 2011; Morand, 2010), and that titles, status and formality as an indicator of hierarchy are also present in social work centers in Slovenia. Understanding the exact role that hierarchy plays in organizations is important as an overly rigid structure can act as a potential barrier to knowledge sharing (Bunderson & Reagans, 2011), which might be the case in social work centers in Slovenia.

One item in the questionnaire was used to evaluate whether managers in Slovenian social work centers have too heavy a workload, which prevents them from focusing on finding solutions to improve management processes within their organizations. 47.9% of respondents indicated that social work managers are overburdened with their daily tasks. The results could indicate that in practice organizations tend to follow the "just-do-it" mentality mentioned by Letts et al. (1999). Furthermore, especially in the case of knowledge management, which is the main topic of this dissertation, it is possible that managers could perceive time spent on such topics as taking away time from their primary (daily) tasks (Tyler, 2005). Similarly, it could be possible, as suggested by Galbaly (2001) in Tyler (2005), that the primary focus of public sector organizations is merely to survive in the current turbulent environment.

4.2 Qualitative Data and Qualitative Data Findings

In this section, I present the main findings that emerged from the qualitative research. These include findings about the influence of organizational structure on knowledge management, the influence of ICT on knowledge management, the extent and effectiveness of knowledge management, the influence of organizational culture on knowledge management, and knowledge management terminology in social work.

4.2.1 Influence of Organizational Structure on Knowledge Management

4.2.1.1 Hierarchy and Knowledge Management

Hierarchy can be defined by status and power (Mannix & Sauer, 2006), and has important implications for all organizations (Clegg et al., 2006). Moreover, it affects social interactions within organizations (Blader & Chen, 2012; Cheng, Tracy & Henrich, 2010). Those that are lower in the organizational hierarchy are less likely to proactively engage in the sharing of their perspectives and insights. Previous research indicates that too great an emphasis on

centralization, bureaucracy, administration, and hierarchy can negatively influence knowledge management initiatives (Alhamoudi, 2015; Amayah, 2013). The results of my questionnaire indicate that 45.2% of respondents believe that hierarchy, status, and power are significant in the social work centers where they work. In addition, 40.2% of respondents indicated that titles, status, and formality are also significant.

For this reason, I decided to gather qualitative information regarding whether hierarchy is indeed as important as it is perceived to be, and why and how it is expressed in social work organizations in Slovenia. Six interviewees confirmed that hierarchy is currently extremely significant in the functioning of social work centers. Interviewee A stressed that management at the regional and local organizational units is perceived as a hierarchical structure and that this is an important factor: *“The management at headquarters and at local organizational units is perceived as being a hierarchical structure (which is an important factor).”* Interviewee B explained that hierarchy is important because social work is heavily defined by laws and legislation: *“Hierarchy is important, especially as our operations are heavily defined by various laws.”*

Interviewee D further clarified that hierarchy is important because it enables social workers to do their job properly: *“Hierarchy is important, especially after the reorganization [of the Slovenian social work sector] because we are now merged into one social work center with three units. It is important so that everyone can do their job.”* Interviewee E added that hierarchy is particularly important in decision-making processes and in ascertaining responsibility for the consequences of decisions: *“In our unit, hierarchy is important, especially in terms of final decision-making. It is also important that it is known who makes the final decisions and who takes responsibility for them. In these two areas, hierarchy is particularly important.”* Interviewee H added that hierarchy is important when determining the organization of work and the allocation of personnel: *“To some extent, hierarchy is important, especially in the sense of controlling the organization and the course of work, the assignments of employees to their areas of work, and the organization of cases that they have to handle. Hierarchy is very important from this point of view.”*

Interviewee I touched on some of the topics already discussed in previous interviews such as work processes (Interviewee D), responsibility (Interviewee E), and allocation of work (Interviewee H). Two interviewees believe that hierarchy is not important. Interviewee C stated that humanity is the most important aspect of social work and that social workers should simply be allowed to do their jobs: *“No, hierarchy is not important. In the first place comes humanity.”* Interviewee G argued that centralization has produced poor results in the past: *“It can be seen that centralization did not bring anything good.”* Interviewee F was uncertain about the importance of hierarchy.

4.2.1.2 Decentralization, Flexibility and Knowledge Management

Sharrat and Usoro (2003) discuss the negative impact of excessive hierarchy. To counteract it, they propose that organizations with a flexible and decentralized structure that encourage and promote knowledge related activities are typically more successful in knowledge management. Therefore, in this part of my analysis, I focused on gathering qualitative assessments from interviewees regarding how decentralization and flexibility could be introduced into the public sector.

Seven interviewees believe that decentralization and flexibility would be desirable in the social work centers where they work. Interviewee B believes that both concepts are desirable, but that it has to be acknowledged that the legislative framework limits their introduction into the social work sector: *“Both decentralization and flexibility are desirable but the organizational structure must adapt to current conditions. Currently, our management structure is quite hierarchical and centralized. More concretely, in the social work sector, it would be better to have smaller institutions that are able to function with less hierarchy but we are limited by legislation.”* Interviewee C emphasized that it is especially important to provide solutions that are beneficial to users of social services: *“For social work, decentralization and flexibility are very important. My manager is supportive of all activities that could be potentially beneficial to our users.”*

Interviewee E and G argued that centralization has proved to produce poor results in the past, and believe that social work centers should introduce decentralized and flexible structures and practices. Interviewee E stated: *“Decentralization and flexibility are important in the public sector. I do not know what is currently being done in terms of moving toward even more centralization, but it is not good. The situation has become even worse.”* Interviewee G stated: *“My perception regarding decentralization is positive. It has been proven that centralization does not produce adequate results.”* Interviewee F did not provide specific answers on the subjects of decentralization and flexibility. Interviewee I claimed that flexibility is one of the most important characteristics of social work in general: *“It would be necessary [to be more flexible]. Flexibility is a characteristic of social work, which is in general a very dynamic field.”*

Interviewee A was sceptical about decentralization and flexibility, noting that the majority of social work colleagues are satisfied with existing routines: *“As the majority of employees are women, they are afraid of having to work in [flexible] shifts. Routine is a very suitable option for them.”* Interviewee D did not express specific opinions about flexibility, only noting that organizational structure had been more flexible prior to the reorganization but not offering a specific opinion on what would be the most desirable structure for social work centers.

4.2.1.3 Employee Involvement in the Decision Making Process and Knowledge Management

Organizations typically seek ways for employees to participate in job-related decisions (Harley et al., 2000; Scott et al., 2003). Levels of job satisfaction and employee empowerment increase (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2012; Wright & Kim, 2004) when employees perceive that they are able to participate in job-related decisions. Consequently, when employees are more involved in the decision-making process, the quality of services may increase (Vandenberg et al., 1999), which could be especially beneficial for social work centers. Based on the results of the first phase of my research, I was unable to draw final conclusions as to whether employees are significantly involved in the decision-making process in the social work center where they work. 39.1% of respondents agreed with the statement that addressed this topic, 28.3% were unsure, and 32.6% respondents disagreed. Because of the inconclusive results, this represented a potentially fruitful topic of discussion during qualitative interviews.

Eight interviewees provided additional insights into the subject of employee participation in decision-making process, stating the general belief that today employees tend to be involved in the decision-making process. Another interviewee stated that employees are taken into account during the decision-making process. Two interviewees stated the specific ways (and how much) employees are involved in decision-making depends on the level of their proactivity. Interviewee A stated: *"[Employees] get involved in the process. All proactive employees can express their opinions and propose initiatives."* Interviewee B stated: *"Employees are currently involved in the decision-making process. Some employees are more proactive than others. But I have to make an effort to involve everyone, especially to get the opinions of employees who tend to be more introverted."* Interviewee H stated: *"Everyone who wants to be involved has that option."*

Interviewee D stated that such behaviour is promoted because individual employees have the most knowledge related to their specific tasks and also about potential gaps in their own knowledge: *"I strongly encourage employees to get involved. They know the most about their field of expertise, including aspects that are currently lacking."* It was confirmed by the majority of interviewees that employees in social work centers do have the possibility of putting forward ideas and initiatives. Interviewee C stated: *"Employees always have the possibility to make suggestions related to their work, users, and other organizational aspects."* Interviewee E stated: *"I take into account the suggestions and wishes of my employees."*

Interviewee I raised a valid point, stating that employees are especially involved in decisions related to their own in social work organizations work whereas organizational decisions remain in the domain of (top) managers. *"If we are talking about decisions that are related to our professional work on the level of the social work center, then employees are involved in the decision-making process. They are not involved in personnel or financial issues. Generally, they are only involved when their own work is at issue."* Two interviewees emphasized an important feature of social work, namely that many tasks in social work are

predefined (usually by legislation), and therefore employees are often unable to propose meaningful changes. Interviewee F stated: *“As far as day-to-day activities go, they are more or less predefined, and there is not much of a discussion here because activities are regulated.”* Interviewee H stated: *“It is hard to say that [employees] could be more involved [in decision-making process] because of the nature of our work where there is not a lot of freedom of choice. We have certain authority and tasks that are defined by the law and others task that are defined in our so-called catalogue of tasks.”*

4.2.1.4 Communication Patterns and Top-down Communication and Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management

Communication plays an important role in maintaining a balance between employees and organizational objectives, and can significantly contribute to organizational success (Agarwal & Garg, 2012). Two-way communication (top-down and bottom-up) is integral to effective knowledge management. However, communication across different levels of the organizational hierarchy is challenging (Kluge et al., 2001). Riege (2005) argues that limiting communication and knowledge in a certain direction, typically the top-down direction, is one of the principle issues that prevents the success of knowledge management initiatives in organizations. As noted above, the results of the quantitative analysis were inconclusive. 27.7% of respondents disagreed that communication and knowledge sharing is typically limited to the top-down direction. However, 38.3% of respondents were uncertain, and 34.0% of respondents agreed with the assertion that communication and knowledge sharing were mostly top-down. Therefore, I believed it was important to continue to explore during the qualitative interviews whether communication and knowledge sharing is indeed so heavily top-down and, if that is in fact the situation, the possible reasons for it.

All nine interviewees emphasized that in their organizations communication is both top-down and bottom-up. Nevertheless, Interviewee D believes that communication is mostly top-down: *“I acknowledge that less travels from employees to managers. When I assumed a management position, I noticed that fewer employees come to me [with information].”* Regarding basic communication patterns, all nine interviewees stated that the situation in their social work center was generally good. Regarding knowledge sharing patterns, their answers were somewhat less clear, and potentially illuminated the fact that knowledge sharing may be underutilized in Slovenian social work centers. Interviewee B expressed the opinion that knowledge sharing tends to be in a two-way direction: *“The communication takes place. However, we are also defined by the fact that we function within the public sector where certain tasks have to be hierarchical and where even the management receives instructions from another public sector institution.”* Interviewee C again discussed the perceived importance of constant information flows. *“I have a sense that all levels of communication exist (top-down, bottom-up, and between employees).”* Based on these answers, I believe that knowledge sharing in that specific social work center is not limited to the top-down direction.

Interviewee D explained previous efforts to engage in knowledge transfer and admitted that currently this aspect of knowledge management may be somewhat neglected. However, Interviewee D also acknowledged the desire to implement more of these types of activities if possible: *“At the beginning, I tried to conduct meetings so everyone who had attended training sessions would prepare an abstract and share it with others, but it did not go well. First of all, it was an additional task for the employees and also had an impact on others (the whole organization stopped working for 30 minutes). Moreover, the topic is possibly not important for all of them and they are stuck with too many cases. Therefore, knowledge transfer in practice is somewhat lacking.”* Interviewee G suggested that a lot of knowledge sharing occurs informally in social work centers, during unofficial meetings such as lunch breaks: *“Nevertheless, when there is a concrete problem, I think it is the employees themselves who are the most competent in terms of proposing an effective solution. So I think it is good that we talk to each other when we sit together in the morning or have lunch together.”*

Interviewee H explained how knowledge sharing practices function and believes that this aspect of knowledge management is well-developed. Based on these responses, I concluded that the majority of knowledge sharing practices are not limited to formal meetings but often occur informally: *“When someone on my team attends a training session, we almost always, or at least once that month, discuss topics of training sessions. This system currently works and we would engage in more such activities if we had more time. I see it as a good method of knowledge transfer.”* Interviewees A, E, F, and I did not specifically discuss the topic of knowledge sharing as it related to top-down communication and therefore I cannot comment on the practices in their social work centers.

4.2.1.5 Personnel Issues

In Intihar (2017), Kuzmanič Korva states that it was established by MLFSAEO in 2008 that social work centers suffer from ongoing personnel shortages. MLFSAEO made a commitment in writing to employ 30% of the personnel needed in the coming five years. They never fulfilled this promise because of the 2008 global economic crisis and other changes that aggravated the situation in the public sector in Slovenia. The number of social workers actually decreased during this period. I decided, on the basis of these developments and my own knowledge of the field of social work and non-academic references, to attempt to gain insights from interviewees working in the field about their perception of the sufficiency of the number of social workers currently employed in social work centers in Slovenia. If the interviewees reported a shortage of personnel, I would attempt to explore qualitatively how this shortage affects their daily routines.

All of the nine interviewees agreed that there is a shortage of personnel in social work centers in Slovenia. The interviewees raised several important issues related to the shortage of a skilled social workers. Their answers made it clear that the situation is acute and affects all

aspects of their work. Interviewee A stated: *“There is a significant shortage of personnel. It influences all of our activities. We work based on priorities and are essentially fighting to put fires out.”* Interviewee B stated: *“I am of the opinion that we do not have enough personnel to do our work and tasks at the highest possible level. We work based on priorities, addressing what are the most pressing issues, fighting to put fires out.”* Interviewee F stated: *“We are putting out fires.”* Interview I stated: *“Personnel shortage definitely exists. It is true: we are indeed fighting fires.”*

Two interviewees also mentioned that they have to define priorities in order to decide how to go about their work. Interviewee E put it in this way. *“We are forced to choose priorities. The population is growing, and the number of tasks we have to do is always increasing. The profession is evolving, and professional knowledge changing. Things are changing in general. We need to follow and implement changes, but we are not able to do so.”* The responses from all interviewees made clear the many ways that their daily activities are affected by the shortage of personnel. Especially noteworthy was the perception that there is simply not enough time to do everything, which results in a feeling of constant overload. Interviewee C stated: *“We feel the overload and the consequences of the excessive workload.”* Interviewee F stated: *“Employees are constantly exposed to stress, burnout. If they manage to finish their work, they often need to go on sick leave.”* Interview I stated: *“Individual employees are experiencing burnout and becoming apathetic.”*

These kinds of conditions are often accompanied by a decreased desire to work. Interviewee D stated: *“It is hard to work under such circumstances, especially over the long-term, because it drains your energy. If it happened once or twice a year we could manage it, but this our day-to-day reality.”* Interviewee H pointed out that the situation is especially worrisome because there is no solution on the horizon: *“It’s been this way for long time now. I do not see how we can solve the problem as every single new employee is like a drop in the ocean.”*

4.2.1.6 Quality of Services for Social Work Users

After establishing that social work centers have a chronic shortage of skilled employees, which was partially expected, I decided to try and gain an understanding of how this shortage affects the users of social services. Specifically, I wanted to know whether the quality of services suffers as a result of the personnel shortage. In a field as complex as social work, the quality of services should be the most important goal of national policy and decision-makers.

The general conclusion I drew from my interviews is that most interviewees believe that users of social work services are already experiencing the personnel shortage because it has translated into a deterioration in the quality of service. Some believe that users are not currently in a significantly worse situation, but all believe that in the long-term it is inevitable that social work centers will be forced to function under deteriorating conditions. Certain

interviewees expressed valid concerns that they were not able to be present “in the field” and “closer to the people” Interviewee A stated: *“Social workers who should go ‘into the field’ and be ‘closer to the people’ are unable to do so.”* Interviewee B stated: *“We often run out of staff who can serve users and have more in-depth consultations with them (be more out ‘in the field’ and ‘closer to the people’).”* “Closer to the people” was one of the main slogans of the recent reorganization. Interviewee B wondered whether the reorganization would add sufficient value because employees are still unable to devote enough time and effort to their obligations: *“It often happens that we can not generate added value by spending more time and effort on individual users and looking at their cases from a broader perspective.”*

Many interviewees emphasized that social work in general is a demanding profession and deals with many negative situations. Interviewee D stated: *“In social work you hardly ever get compliments or positive feedback from users because they more or less think that we are partially to blame for their existing situation.”* Interviewee G stated: *“Our priority is always our users. The problem is that it is sometimes beyond our power to help them, which is bad, because there are moments when we feel devastated because a user rejects the need for change and just continues to drown.”* Interviewee H stated: *“As an institution, we are not like a school, for example, where everyone comes with a positive mindset. It is not like that in social work. We are usually the last solution in our society and we deal with all kinds of people, the ones who are first or last, it doesn’t matter [all have complex challenges]”.* Interviewee I stated: *“We are dealing with complex issues, double diagnoses, addictions, psychiatric problems. You cannot just solve those problems quickly: you need a lot of time.”*

Nevertheless, interviewees expressed an interest in coming up with possible solutions to mitigate the negative impact of the personnel shortage. Interviewee E stated: *“We do our best so that our users will not feel the lack of personnel.”* Interview F stated: *“We do our best for our users.”* Although I had interesting discussions with interviewees C and G, I was unable to draw any conclusions based on their answers regarding the quality of services currently provided to users as a result of the prevailing personnel shortages.

4.2.1.7 Additional Employees and Knowledge Management

To conclude the topic of organizational structure and knowledge management, I wanted to explore the relationship between knowledge management and social work centers in the hypothetical situation where social work centers actually had a sufficient number of employees. I was particularly interested in understanding if the way interviewees perceived knowledge managements would change if we added the underlying assumption of an adequate amount of personnel.

Seven interviewees indicated that if there were adequate personnel available, it is possible that the attitude towards management and knowledge management would change. Currently, the greatest scepticism about knowledge management arises from the lack of time social workers have to do their jobs. Interviewee A stated: *“All employees have the potential to*

learn or train, to gain new knowledge, to learn together when there is potential and interest, but, due to overwork and extensive everyday activities, there is simply not enough time to do this.” Interviewee D stated: *“Today, time is the problem. If there is not enough personnel, there is not enough time for all of these activities.”* Interviewee G stated: *“Yes, if we had more time, we could examine this aspect more closely.”* Interviewee H stated: *“To put it simply, if you are able to include something into your schedule, it is doable.”* To summarize the opinions of these interviewees, it is impossible to engage in potentially interesting topics such as knowledge management because of the lack of time and personnel. Interviewee A indicated that currently social work centers are generally positively inclined toward management topics and are already making certain efforts toward becoming learning organizations: *“We will have to develop management as it is absolutely necessary due to the nature and content of our work. I would say that my vision is of a learning organization and that we put a lot of effort into moving in that direction.”*

Interviewee B discussed the potential of these fields in enabling the professional and personal growth of employees, which would be beneficial for the organization as a whole. However, basic social work tasks will always take priority and organizations will have to function properly in that sense before they can engage in other activities such as knowledge management: *“Although knowledge management would only be pursued when the basic tasks and the most pressing issues are already covered.”* Interviewee D argued that with more time and additional employees, they would be able to engage more in knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer activities: *“With more personnel, we could also arrange knowledge transfer within and between units so that all employees would have the necessary knowledge.”* Interviewee I discussed the characteristics of individual managers as important in determining the organization’s perspective on new ideas: *“Certainly it could get better. Part of real management is dependent on leadership, how flexible it, how much managers are willing to share responsibilities, the level of democracy as opposed to authority.”*

The opinions that were expressed by Interviewee C are also relevant. Interviewee C believes that today there is a significant gap between theory and practice, and that more emphasis should be placed on knowledge in practice: *“Knowledge management should emphasize knowledge in practice, not so much in theory.”* Interviewee E remained unsure whether such topics were potentially interesting for social workers, suggesting that social workers have a hard time identifying with knowledge management concepts, and also proposed that these questions should be addressed: *“I am not sure if the attitude toward management would change. In social work, we managers find it hard to even identify with the title manager. We have a very specific mindset. Terminology would have to change. The term manager is an odd expression: we, our employees, and others in our profession, perceive management as something from other professional fields (economy, business, money).”* Interviewee F did not express opinions regarding the topic of knowledge management and personnel shortages so is not included in this part of the analysis.

4.2.2 Influence of Information-communication Technology on Knowledge Management

4.2.2.1 Satisfaction with ICT Systems

ICT systems should provide support during all stages of the knowledge management process (Martelo-Landroguez & Cegarra-Navarro, 2014; Palacios-Marques et al., 2015). Moreover, with appropriate employee training and education, ICT systems can make many of the organizational tasks that involve dealing with knowledge more efficient (Soto-Acosta & Cegarra-Navarro, 2016). Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal (2014) suggest that effective knowledge management practices are at least partially dependent on the effectiveness of ICT systems in organizations. Nevertheless, employees often have difficulties with such technologies and this can have a negative effect on knowledge management initiatives. In the quantitative phase of my research, 32.6% of respondents agreed with the statement that the ICT system in their organization is appropriate for the needs of employees, and 34.7% of respondents disagreed. I decided to attempt to gain additional insight on the topic of ICT systems in Slovenian social work centers, exploring both the level of satisfaction with existing systems and the biggest obstacles to ICT in practice.

These follow-up interviews suggest that ICT remains a pressing issue in social work centers in Slovenia. The majority of interviewees believe that systems are currently not well adapted to the demands and requirements of social work. Interviewees provided many suggestions related to a range of features that are not suitable in their current form. Unfortunately, a great deal of work would be necessary to adapt ICT systems to the needs of employees in social work centers. Yet such adaptations would be a necessary prerequisite for the future implementation of knowledge management initiatives. Technology is an important facilitator for knowledge management, and it is of paramount importance that social workers perceive it positively.

Interviewees A and C noted that any time delays resulting from ICT systems are extremely undesirable. Interviewee A stated: *“A primary goal should be to not prolong our work.”* Interview C stated: *“Krpan takes too much time,”* and it needs to be better adapted to the social work sector. Interviewee A added: *“There was no collaboration between us, the end-users, and the software developers in order to make the program better adapted to social work.”* Interviewee C stated: *“It should be more adapted to social work. It is not the same in all administrative units.”* Interviewee H stated: *“Personally, I think the biggest problem was that the solutions were completely unusable for the things that we actually do in our profession.”* Interviewee I stated: *“No, we are not happy with existing solutions. Social work is not administrative work. You cannot frame social work in an information system and try to quantify it, but that is exactly the way information systems are created today.”* Interviewee A concluded: *“Information systems and databases are great but they must be a hundred percent functional.”*

Concerns were also raised about the lack of support given to employees from ICT departments. Interviewee B stated: *“We would want a bit more support, but again this has to do with personnel shortages.”* Interviewee D stated: *“We are lacking support from the ICT department and we regularly notify MLFSAEO about the problem.”* Some of the interviewees expressed the concern that older-generation social workers are more likely to have difficulties with the introduction of ICT solutions in social work. Interviewee C stated: *“The younger generation is very literate with this stuff but older workers sometimes have trouble catching on.”* Interviewee E stated: *“This is the future. Even if some people, especially older employees, are even scared of scanning, it is the best step toward working with less paperwork.”*

Interviewee G identified the lack of connection between different databases as being one of the most significant current problems: *“What we don’t have is good connections between different databases. Without that, we have to input data into every single database.”* Interviewee F stated that before social work centers consider ICT solutions, the more pressing issues related to shortages of personnel and time must be confronted: *“The main problem is elsewhere, not in the [ICT] programs, but in the shortage of personnel and the lack of time.”* Interviewee D indicated a satisfaction with current ICT solutions: *“I am partially satisfied with the technological solutions. You cannot do anything without a computer today because the work takes so much longer.”* Interviewee E also expressed a certain level of satisfaction, stating that the situation has improved: *“I would say that software solutions have been upgraded over the past several years. The improvements are visible, especially when compared to our previous work situation.”*

4.2.2.2 Employee Familiarity with Information Communication Technology Systems and Avoidance of Usage

As indicated in the previously mentioned research project by Williams et al. (2000) of a sample of teachers, it is essential that individuals in the workplace do not approach ICT systems with the feeling that they need to be technical experts in order to make use of their many advantages. Employees usually report low confidence, resistance to change, and the lack of effective training in solving technical problems as the most common barriers preventing the productive use of ICT solutions (Becta, 2004). Williams et al. (2000) also suggest that in general the teachers in their study would have liked to make use of ICT systems in their daily routines but their lack of familiarity and technical skills proved detrimental to these efforts. The computer skills of employees are also essential for knowledge management because they enable organizations to introduce ICT solutions that improve the effectiveness of organizational knowledge flows (Melville et al., 2004). In the previous section featuring excerpts from the qualitative interviews that dealt with ICT, it was mentioned that older employees in particular tend to encounter problems when ICT solutions are introduced into the social work setting. Likewise, in the quantitative analysis, a significant

proportion of respondents (41.1%) were uncertain whether they agreed with the statement that employees do not like to use ICT because of a deficit in knowledge, and 27.4% of respondents agreed with the statement. Therefore, I decided to further explore this subject in the qualitative interviews, asking interviewees to evaluate their co-workers' knowledge and skills in this area and if they believe that some employees avoid using ICT systems because of a deficit in skills.

After discussing this theme with the nine interviewees, I concluded that many challenges remain in relation to ICT solutions. Based on the responses of the majority of interviewees, it became clear that the general knowledge of ICT among employees in social work centers is not adequate. Several interviewees stated the opinion that their co-workers have a deficit in knowledge and that this is particularly the case with older co-workers. Interviewee A stated: *"Of course, there is also some fear, maybe even a deficit of knowledge (for example when we introduced email), and some employees still have problems scanning documents or attaching files. These problems are especially visible with older employees."* Interviewee B stated: *"There is a fear of change and I would say at least a partial shortfall in knowledge in this area."* Interviewee C stated: *"Younger generations have these skills (some have grown up with computers and applications) while it is obvious that the older employees lack this knowledge."* Interviewee G stated: *"Some more, others less. There is a difference between age groups. The older employees find it much more difficult to figure out a new system. There is more resistance and a greater fear of change."* Interview H stated: *"I will be very subjective. Knowledge in general in this area is extremely poor. I hear people ask 'what does this machine do for us' as if it is their first time in front of a screen."*

Moreover, many social workers perceive technology as a tool of surveillance that could have detrimental effects on their jobs. Interviewee A stated: *"Definitely they see it as a surveillance tool. They are afraid that people are trying to quantify their work and figure out how much work is done by each employee."* Interview B stated: *"When you introduce a solution that makes it perfectly clear what each employee is doing, how many cases he or she managed to solve, then of course people sees it as a method for surveillance."* Interviewee C stated: *"Me, personally, I see it as a surveillance tool. A lot of attention is given to details. However, I do not know if it even matters that social workers are closely monitored."* Interviewee H stated: *"It is a tool of surveillance. That is a fact. That is the reality. The new program Krpan is definitely a surveillance tool."* Several interviewees also emphasized that in general employees fear change in the social work sector. Interviewee D stated: *"I would not say surveillance but there is certainly fear. We are not completely competent. Even I am not at the peak level yet I know this stuff is necessary."* Interviewee E stated: *"There is a fear of change."*

Some interviewees expressed the opinion that certain elements of ICT are not suitable for the kind of tasks performed in social work centers. Interviewee A stated: *"This is disastrous for social work. Certain elements of working with people cannot be defined as a standard or*

norm.” Interviewee G stated. *“We still need to acknowledge the problem that the user is now visible on the screen. We are relatively attached to paperwork.”* Interviewee I stated: *“Social work did not used to be so connected to information systems. Colleagues that are retiring say that they did real social work 30 years ago and now we are just administrative workers inputting data into systems.”* There were also calls for more training and support for employees. Interviewee B stated: *“For the necessary stuff, employees receive training organized by MLFSAEO. I believe that it would be beneficial if such training was not solely focused on the social work field but also included courses in Word and Excel.”* Interviewee F stated: *“In my opinion, there should be one support person from this field employed full-time per region.”* However, Interviewee D acknowledged that many employees were able to rapidly acquire the newly required knowledge, which indicates that favourable outcomes are also possible: *“We managed to relatively quickly gain the new knowledge and skills needed for ICT systems.”*

Interviewee I believes that the existing level of knowledge in this area is sufficient: *“We have enough knowledge to work with the system, the younger generations more than enough.”* Similarly, although Interviewee E felt positive about the potential benefits of ICT, and believed that social workers will be able to learn, he stated that the process will take some time: *“Knowledge, yes, younger employees have good knowledge, enough knowledge. In two years, the system will be upgraded. It will exist in practice but there are already significant problems with the existing system. I do not expect instant solutions. It will take time.”* Interviewee G indicated possible benefits: *“I do see Krpan as being an asset once everything will be uploaded and clear. It will be good for communicating with our colleagues as it will be evident from the system when, what, and who did something on a case, and it will be easier for the person getting the case to understand what happened.”*

4.2.2.3 Attitudes towards the Krpan information system

The goal of the Krpan project was to introduce to the Slovenian public sector an advanced ICT solution that would be flexible, easily upgradeable, and specifically adapted to the needs of public servants. The defined purpose of the system was to support the management of documentary materials installed on the central infrastructure of the MPA, and provide central online information technology solutions (Ministry of Public Administration, 2019). As social work centers are part of the public sector, they also became users of the Krpan system. During the qualitative phase of my research, many interviewees mentioned the new information system before I even addressed the topic. The answers in the previous section dealing with ICT suggested that this is a pressing issue for many social workers. Therefore, I decided to ask the interviewee to elaborate on their first experiences with the new Krpan information system, to offer their insights, and to discuss possible challenges related to its successful implementation and usage in practice.

Eight interviewees expressed the belief that Krpan will be part of the long-term solution to improve the operations of social work centers in Slovenia. If negative comments and legitimate concerns dominated previous discussions about ICT systems, there was a greater sense of optimism regarding Krpan. Nevertheless, the new information system has been under the spotlight for a number of reasons and will certainly need to be improved. First, as previously mentioned by interviewees, it is perceived by many employees as a method of control or surveillance in social work, and this perception has a negative impact on the satisfaction and motivation of social workers. Interviewee G stated: *“In a way, it is a surveillance tool, but at the same time it is also helpful to us as we did not have this kind of stuff before.”* Interviewee I stated: *“We see it as a tool of surveillance – every single employee at our social work center does.”*

Several interviewees indicated that the Krpan system would need to be adapted more specifically to the tasks, requirements, and context of social work. Interviewee B stated: *“It would be extremely desirable if Krpan was more adapted to us, to the specific requirements and procedures of social work centers and their operations.”* Interviewee C stated: *“I have heard from many others that Krpan is not well adapted to social work. It is not okay. I am certain that it doesn’t have specific modifications for social work.”* Interviewee E stated: *“Krpan is not completely adapted to the needs of social work.”* Interviewee F stated: *“The system is not fully adapted.”* Interviewee G stated: *“The problem is that it is not fully developed. The work of social work centers is broad and complex, and many aspects of Krpan are not adapted to social work.”*

Connecting Krpan to the various different information systems and databases that are currently used in social work would also be essential. Interviewee F stated: *“In my opinion, it would have been better if they introduced it when it was fully connected to other databases.”* Only when all social work databases are connected and the duplication of tasks is eliminated will it be possible to focus on the positive aspects of Krpan.

Several interviewees mentioned the reduction of paperwork as one of the potential benefits of Krpan. Interviewee A stated: *“In the future, we will not have that much paper left. A lot of documents will be digitalized and you will not have to write everything down on paper. All the information about users will be available in one place. That is interesting to me.”* Interviewee E mentioned potential time savings: *“I do believe that the time savings will be significant, maybe not at the beginning but certainly later.”* Interviewee H referred to the inevitable digitalization of social work: *“Honestly, the era of written documents is over. We have to find a way to digitalize our work. We cannot have closets full of documents because we are living in a different era now.”*

4.2.3 Extent of Knowledge Management

4.2.3.1 Definition of Knowledge Management

Based on the low or at best moderate mean values of the constructs used to measure the extent of knowledge management in the quantitative phase of my research, I concluded that knowledge management remains underutilized in social work centers in Slovenia. In order to gain a better understanding of why this is the case, I asked my interviewees to name knowledge management activities in the social work centers where they work. As there were no right or wrong definitions, I was particularly interested in analysing the main categories they mentioned because these could represent potentially important topics for further exploration. Once the interviews were concluded, I would be better equipped to understand what knowledge management means to the interviewees and would discover if there was any common ground with the topics covered in my doctoral dissertation.

Based on the responses of the nine interviewees, I believe that there is significant common ground in this area. The categories of management responsibility, knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, and knowledge sharing were mentioned by several interviewees. Knowledge storage and retrieval and the actual implementation of knowledge management were mostly not mentioned by the interviewees.

The development of a knowledge system was mentioned by several interviewees. Interviewee A stated: *"[The idea] is to establish systems of creating knowledge, acquiring knowledge, and transferring knowledge in social work centers, to develop a system of activities and key individuals who are responsible for the creation and transfer of knowledge."* Interviewee B defined such a system as: *"a set of processes that are related both to the individual and the whole organization (the processes, the whole system). It is essential that all elements of the system of the organization – financial, human resources, personal, professional, and private aspects – are included: a complete and whole system that influences both individuals and the organization as a whole."* Some interviewees discussed the designation of key managers who would be responsible for knowledge management. Interviewee C described it like this: *"A person or a team that is responsible for the acquisition of knowledge, competences, and skills, and the inclusion of all employees, so that knowledge is transferred to everyone in the organization, implemented in practice, and we discover the positive aspects of it, examples of good practice, and include them in the work of the whole team. Who is directly responsible now varies from organization to organization. With us it is the manager [of personal growth]"*. Interviewee D described the need: *"to provide employees with the opportunity to attend many different kinds of training courses. Each manager must assess how much money can go into training and what can be achieved with this money so that employees will develop."* Interviewee E mentioned the need to properly recognize and reward employees for participating in knowledge-related activities, stating: *"Older employees have a lot of knowledge to share. But even if they are prepared to do so, what's in it for them? It's hard to motivate them. We are currently not able to pay them to organize training sessions."*

In my opinion, too much emphasis is placed on the training of employees (interviewees D, E, and F). Based on the interpretation of the responses from all the interviewees, I believe that this is the most important aspect related to knowledge management in the perception of employees.

4.2.3.2 Formal vs. Informal Knowledge Management Activities

In general, public sector organizations suffer from a shortage of skilled employees and financial resources. Consequently, the majority of public sector organizations do not engage in formal knowledge management activities. However, Downes (2014) points out that public sector organizations typically integrate informal knowledge management practices into their daily routine. In the quantitative part of my research, only 9.7% of respondents indicated that their organization engages in formal knowledge management activities, and 22.6% respondents stated that their organization engages in informal knowledge management activities. The vast majority of respondents (67.7%) indicated that their organization does not engage in any knowledge management activities at all. Therefore, it is safe to presume that knowledge management is an underutilized practice in social work centers in Slovenia. During the qualitative phase of my research, my aim was to understand the reasons that social work centers do not engage in knowledge management activities, or to discover that, contrary to the quantitative research findings, more social work centers actually do engage at least informally in certain knowledge management activities.

Answers from the nine interviewees provide a different picture than the results of the quantitative analysis. All interviewees indicated that their social work center engages at least informally in activities related to knowledge management. Many of them stated that their social work center has a formal plan for training employees on an annual basis. Interviewee A stated: *“We are engaged in knowledge management. Each year we make a plan or program for training during the coming year.”* Interviewee B stated: *“Formally, we have an annual training plan that is defined based on the needs of our employees.”* Interviewee E stated: *“We are definitely engaged. Formally, we have a training plan and annual conversations with employees, and we are also informally engaged.”* Interviewee I stated: *“We are formally and informally engaged. The formal part is the training plan. There is someone in our organization who attends training sessions and then communicates the knowledge acquired to other employees. There are meetings during which knowledge is transferred. Reports and materials are printed and distributed. We organize training sessions among ourselves and have groups where people are invited to give presentations.”*

I would argue that, consistent with previous research, social work centers place too much emphasis on the training aspect of knowledge management activities, although it is positive that there is high regard for training and that it is seen as a way of continuously investing in

and developing employees. Many interviewees highlighted the transfer of knowledge among employees, which seems to be an aspect of knowledge management that is functioning properly in social work centers in Slovenia. Interviewee A stated: *“We define all the ways knowledge transfer occurs among co-workers. We have done this before.”* Interviewee B stated: *“Knowledge management is definitely present informally. It includes content transferred between manager and employees, and among employees.”* Interviewee D stated: *“We exchange knowledge informally (if we work in similar areas). We communicate and send materials. These relationships are good.”* Finally, Interviewee F stated: *“Knowledge is transferred among employees.”*

Interviewee A emphasized the organization of internal learning groups while other interviewees indicated that knowledge-related activities also occur in meetings. Interviewee A stated: *“What is new are professional (internal) groups – such as learning groups. Every time they meet, a report is written that is transferred to local managers and employees so that knowledge is shared. It is also stored somewhere and becomes part of a knowledge database.”* Moreover, several interviewees (A and I) reported that they are active in the handling of the knowledge database, which is usually either a physical or online library of materials gathered in training sessions and other materials relevant for social work (this was also mentioned in other segments of the interviews).

Interviewees B, C, D, E, F, G, and I made statements affirming that their social work centers engage in informal knowledge management activities. Interviewee C stated: *“We are engaged more informally. We still have to educate. Our goal is to move forward. There is new legislation and new forms of practice.”* Interviewee F stated: *“We go and have lunch together where we also discuss work.”* Interviewee G stated: *“In a way, we are both formally and informally engaged.”* The interviewees mentioned several additional aspects related to knowledge management. Interviewee C stated: *“We have to gain knowledge, to build, upgrade, and implement it in practice.”* Interviewee E stated: *“I think it definitely adds value if we invest in knowledge. It definitely makes sense to invest in employees.”* Interviewee G stated: *“You have to look at the current situation and to adapt to changes, which are typically changes in legislation.”* Interviewee E stated that these activities have an impact on employee satisfaction: *“The quality of our work and the satisfaction of our employees is higher.”*

Although interviewees mentioned several positive aspects related to knowledge management activities already pursued in social work centers in Slovenia, they also discussed the challenges. Interviewee B acknowledged that Slovenian social work centers are at a very rudimentary level in terms of knowledge management: *“I would say that knowledge management is at a very basic level, especially if we compare ourselves with private sector organizations and start-ups that are heavily involved in these activities.”* Interviewee D characterized social centers in Slovenia as being weak in this area and evaluated knowledge management activities in practice as low or moderate (not unlike the findings in the quantitative analysis): *“We are weak in this area. We have room for improvement, but time is*

the problem. I would say that there is low or moderate level of knowledge management in practice.” Interviewee G believes that more training opportunities would be desirable: “We would be pleased if more training could be organized regionally because travel to the capital increases our costs. Then we would be able to include more employees in training sessions.” Interviewee H added that a lot of activities are dependent on the judgement of managers: “Plans are often made on the formal level. Whether it is acknowledged or not, what happens is often dependent on the judgement of our manager.”

Interviewee I expressed the opinion that differences in perception are often the result of terminology, adding that social work centers in general are limited because they are part of the public sector: *“I would say that the terminology is different. For me, knowledge management is usually an organizational structure in a successful company where there is a strong human resource office responsible for training, education, support, and which also helps to reduce the workload related to other activities.”* In conclusion, these positive examples of informal knowledge management activities in social work centers provide a good argument for the introduction of additional knowledge management activities in the future.

4.2.3.4 Perception of the Duration of Time Social Work Organizations Have Been Engaged in Knowledge Management

In the quantitative phase of my research, only 25 respondents provided a specific answer regarding the length of time knowledge management activities had been present in their organizations. Nine of the interviewees in the qualitative phase of my research indicated that their organizations had been practicing knowledge management for more than 20 years, which, in terms of the overall development of the field of knowledge management, seems highly unlikely. Therefore, with the goal of coming to more accurate conclusions, I decided to ask interviewees how long they think that their organizations have been engaged in knowledge management activities. As all of the interviewees had been employed in their organizations for at least five years, they have a sufficient overview of knowledge-related activities in their organization and the development over an extended period of time.

Similar to the quantitative analysis, eight of my interviewees said that they believed some form of knowledge management activities has been present in their organizations for many years. They mentioned several aspects of operations that were indeed related to knowledge management, including training programs and planning. Interviewee A stated: *“We have been practicing [some forms of knowledge management and knowledge creation] throughout these years. There are always some plans and training programs.”* Interviewee C stated: *“We have been creating and sharing knowledge since the arrival of the previous manager.”* Interview E noted the use of knowledge transfer, stating: *“In terms of knowledge management, knowledge transfer has been practiced since the very beginning of this social work center.”*

It is also evident from the responses of interviewees that knowledge management in Slovenian social centers currently takes place principally on the informal level. Interviewee D stated: *“Informal forms [of knowledge management] have been present since I was employed in this social work center. Knowledge is distributed when there is a need for it.”* Interviewee B believes that the prevalence of knowledge management depends on the management of individual social work centers: *“Of course, how much emphasis is placed on knowledge sharing depends on the desire and direction of individual managers.”* Interviewee I believes the prevalence of knowledge management is also dependent on financial resources: *“Today there is never enough money and what we have we use in a very short period of time.”* Interviewee H stated: *“I don’t know how present [knowledge management activities] are in practice.”* Interviewee E suggested that knowledge management may be present but is referred to with different terminology: *“It was never called knowledge management. That term is new to me.”* Interviewee G stated: *“We had it before but not to this extent. Lately [knowledge management] has become much more important.”* Interviewee H stated: *“Lately, it is more present, or certainly the recommendations and demands of management who direct the phenomenon. This has occurred in the last ten years or so. We did not have it before.”* Based on these and the responses of other interviewees, I believe that knowledge management activities will expand beyond the already mentioned informal activities, and that social workers will be able continue to discuss ways these methods could be implemented in order to reap additional benefits.

4.2.3.5 Previous Experience and Education of Managers Engaged in Knowledge Management

As discussed in previous sections, several interviewees argued that the presence of knowledge management activities is the direct result of the perspective and direction of top managers in a specific social work center. The interviewees indicated that top managers can influence the availability of training opportunities, the general perspective toward knowledge management, the extent to which it is utilized in practice, and the funds available for it. I decided to attempt to gain the insights of interviewees as to whether the previous experience and education of top managers was an influential factor in determining the extent and use of knowledge management. I expected that managers with a background outside of social work might be more inclined to accept and implement knowledge management activities in their social work center than those with a background exclusively in social work.

The majority of respondents affirmed that the previous experience and education of managers has an influence on the implementation of knowledge management activities. Interviewee A started: *“It definitely has an influence. A lot depends on managers, what their previous work experience is, what environment they worked in before.”* Interviewee B stated: *“The personal background of the manager is definitely a factor.”* Interviewee D stated: *“I think it matters. As a social worker, I lacked training opportunities (in my previous experience), and because I didn’t have them, I try to provide them to my employees.”*

Interviewee H responded: *“Very influential. Of course, it also depends on personal characteristics and preferences. I definitely think that the background of the manager has a significant influence.”* Interviewee I stated: *“The experiences of the manager are influential. We also have internal managers and I think it is an advantage if they come from within the organization (as a social worker) so they experienced the work process as an active member. Experience is the best guide when implementing innovations and improvements.”* Most of the respondents placed more emphasis on experience than they did on education.

Opinions differed as to whether social work managers should come from a social work background or another profession. Here, interviewees also emphasized the importance of a manager’s personal characteristics. Interviewee A stated: *“[It is good] if he or she has a positive attitude toward change and development.”* Interviewee E stated: *“It depends on the personal characteristics of individual managers, how ready they are to look for solutions, what their vision is, whether they have a strong desire for power, control, surveillance. If they do, then they will have problems accepting [knowledge management].”* Interviewee C discussed mentality: *“Mentality is key, searching for solutions. Not that much depends on experience and education.”* Interviewee A, B, and G discussed the overall attitude toward change. Interviewee B stated: *“Again, I would say a lot depends on individual managers, not their education, but what their attitude toward change is.”* Interviewee G stated: *“First of all, it is important to be able to accept change because in social work change is constant.”* It was felt that characteristics of managers exerted a key influence on the level of knowledge management and the quality of management in general in social work centers. Given the diverse range of opinions about whether managers in social work centers should come from a social work background or not, this represents another interesting topic for further research.

4.2.3.6 Management Responsibility for Knowledge Management

Research suggests that, in order for organizations to achieve goals related to knowledge management, there must be managers directly responsible for directing and monitoring knowledge management activities (Dehgani & Ramsin, 2015). The results of the quantitative analysis showed that slightly over half of respondents (53.1%) believe that their organizations do not currently have a manager specifically responsible for knowledge management activities. Such findings were not unexpected. Downes (2014) suggests in his research that having a manager specifically responsible for knowledge management is not financially sustainable in the public sector because of chronic personnel shortages. In this case, the aim of the follow-up interviews was to understand why such managers were not generally present in the social work sector and to explore whether social work centers have the role of knowledge manager informally covered by one of the general managers or employees.

Three interviewees indicated that their social work centers have a specific manager responsible for knowledge management activities. Interviewee A stated: *“Yes, we have a*

specific manager responsible for knowledge. To be precise, I am the manager responsible for knowledge.” Interviewee E stated: *“We have a specific manager responsible for knowledge management. I assumed that position.”* Interviewee F stated: *“Essentially I am the manager [responsible for knowledge management].”* However, in contrast, three other interviewees indicated that they do not have a specific manager responsible for knowledge management activities. Interviewee B stated: *“We do not have a specific manager responsible for knowledge management. Again I would emphasize the shortage in personnel.”* Interviewee C stated: *“There is no specific individual employee responsible [for knowledge management]. The best approximation would be our manager and local manager (each in their own way), and other employees who try to bring something new into our work.”* Interviewee H stated: *“Not really. We have a colleague responsible for the library (knowledge database) and we send the materials to this person to be stored. But that is only one part of [knowledge management]. Otherwise, no, there is no one specifically assigned to that.”* The answers of two interviewees could be interpreted to mean that there is a manager partially responsible for knowledge management in their social work center. Interviewee D stated: *“Part of my duties as a manager is to deal with activities related to knowledge management.”* Interviewee I stated: *“Some aspects are covered by the manager and internal leaders. Other than that, specific areas are assigned to specific employees.”* Interviewee G stated that they work as a team in his/her social work center: *“We work as a team, even in the case of annual training plans. We look at these things as a team, and employees suggests where it would be necessary for us to go.”*

The variety in these answers indicates that much depends on top managers in social work centers, and particularly on their personal perspective on how to manage their organizations. Interviewees that gave a positive answer provided additional explanations for differences among social work centers. Interviewee A stated: *“I had to soften up the local managers on this topic. There is a lot of variation, a lot of different approaches, among different managers.”* Interviewee E stated that managers, including himself, generally take into account the opinions of the employees: *“I take into account the suggestions and wishes of my employees so they can also be involved in the decision-making process. I acknowledge them as much as possible, but I have no illusions.”* To the contrary, several interviewees indicated the absence of managers specifically responsible for knowledge management, and stressed that managers must organize work according to the priorities of the organization, and such a position would only be possible if other priorities were brought under control. Interviewee B: *“We tackle issues according to priorities. Urgent tasks have priority over other tasks, and currently knowledge management is less urgent.”* Interviewee C stated the closest approximation to such a position would be the top manager (though not specifically a knowledge manager): *“There is no specific individual employee responsible for knowledge management. The best approximation would be our manager and local manager.”* Interviewee H added that it would be beneficial to have a human resource manager on the regional level, although this position would also not be exclusively related to knowledge management.

Interviewee D made the suggestion of designating a manager who was partially assigned to knowledge management tasks, noting that currently most topics in this category have to do with training. Similarly, interviewee I stated that they have employees assigned to cover certain aspects of knowledge management, but currently there was little emphasis placed on knowledge management in general. In contrast, interviewee G explained that he/she engages in teamwork and, with teamwork mostly having to do with training opportunities. As in other research sections of this doctoral dissertation, interviewees from social work centers in Slovenia placed a significant amount of emphasis on training in their discussion of knowledge management.

4.2.3.7 Communication of Expectations and Benefits Related to Knowledge Management

Communication is integral to the success of knowledge management initiatives due to the positive impact it can have on all knowledge-related activities in organizations (Moffett et al., 2003; Van den Hooff & de Ridder, 2004). Moreover, management communication is extremely important as it helps to make employees feel committed to activities undertaken in their organizations (Ng et al., 2006), and can also increase the meaning with which they perceive their own work (Soupata, 2005). Nevertheless, the results of the quantitative part of the research indicated that 42.8% of respondents believe that managers are not clearly and actively communicating expectations and benefits related to knowledge management to employees. Only 30.2% of respondents believed that communication is active and clear enough. Therefore, in the qualitative phase of the research, I decided to try and understand how interviewees perceive the communication element of knowledge management, and whether there may have been confusion among questionnaire respondents resulting from the fact that knowledge management is a relatively new concept in social work.

Contrary to the findings in the questionnaire, four interviewees believe that communication from managers regarding knowledge management is clear and active. Interviewee A stated: *“I clearly and actively present all knowledge management activities and the benefits related to them.”* Interviewee C stated: *“The manager forwards information, supports us, and encourages us to attend training sessions.”* Interviewee E stated: *“I use the flow of information to actively communicate the benefits of knowledge management activities. Communication is clear.”* Interviewee I stated: *“Everything [related to knowledge management] is communicated to employees and all innovations are presented in meetings.”* Moreover, interviewee C specified that more emphasis has been dedicated to this aspect of operations since the reorganization of social centers in Slovenia: *“Especially since the reorganization, we have been talking about knowledge and knowledge management.”*

Two interviewees expressed reservations. Interviewee D stated: *“With some employees, communication is adequate. For others there are problems as a result of burnout, sick leave, long-term absences, operational difficulties, a lot of replacement among employees,*

personnel changing. There is always an introductory period for new employees. Communication gets lost. There is a lot of necessary work with new employees then someone else leaves. The situation becomes hectic and we sometimes forgot to share information with our employees.” Interviewee H stated: “[Information about knowledge management] is not routinely presented. It is more lacking than not.” Interviewee D explained that this aspect is neglected due to the extensive daily workload, a problem which was made evident in previous responses. Interviewee H argued that there is not enough support from management in general: “*Sometimes when we say that we need to learn something, we get the answer that we already know how to do that. Thus we get no support that would expand our knowledge or allow us to acquire more in-depth understanding.*”

Three other interviewees agreed that the communication element of knowledge management is only partially covered in social work centers in Slovenia. Interviewee B explained that communication is partially carried out in annual reports, but again the emphasis is mostly on training and knowledge rather than on knowledge management in general. Similarly, interviewee F stated that communication is clear but only covers the training offered by organizations. Interviewee G believes that employees are aware of expectations and benefits, and that this is a consequence of the previous work done by managers.

4.2.4 Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

4.2.4.1 Overall Effectiveness of Knowledge Management

Knowledge is considered an intangible strategic asset and, because of this, it can be very difficult to measure (Bharadway et al., 2015). However, the effectiveness of knowledge management can be evaluated by changes in soft measures such as enhanced communication, enhanced collaboration, enhanced employee skills, enhanced decision-making, and enhanced productivity (Anantatmula, 2007). In the questionnaire, nine respondents indicated that their social work centers engage in formal knowledge management activities, and 21 respondents indicated that their organizations engage in informal knowledge management. Therefore, the results of overall perceptions of knowledge management effectiveness in Slovenian social work centers were based on only 30 respondents in the quantitative phase. I attempted to evaluate the overall effectiveness of knowledge management in social work centers using four constructs: enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and increased performance. Because the respondents had the impression that their organizations engaged in knowledge management, their answers might have produced artificially high mean values for the measured constructs. And yet, in practice, all four measured constructs had moderate mean values, ranging from 3.43 to 3.63. To gain additional clarifications as to why knowledge management is perceived as only moderately effective, I decided to ask interviewees in the qualitative phase of the research to describe in general (avoiding numerical assessments) how they see the effectiveness of knowledge management in their social work centers.

The answers from interviewees indicated similar impressions of the effectiveness of knowledge management as the results from the questionnaire. Three interviewees believe that the existing knowledge management system of their organization is effective. Interviewee C stated: *“I would say it is effective. I am very satisfied.”* Interviewee E stated: *“I would say that our knowledge management functions very well.”* Interviewee I stated: *“The existing knowledge management system in our social work center is effective and it shows in the satisfaction of our employees.”*

Five interviewees believe that the knowledge management systems in their organizations are moderately effective and introduced the possibility of potential improvements. As indicated by interviewee A, improvements are always possible, and employees and managers continuously work on knowledge management activities but often lack sufficient time. This was also indicated in previous sections of the research. Interviewee A stated: *“Improvements are always possible. We are planning knowledge management activities but we could be more successful and effective in our efforts.”* Interviewee B acknowledged that knowledge management helps social workers in their work, but also referred to conditions, such as shortages of personnel and financial resources, that have a negative impact on the effectiveness of knowledge management. Nevertheless, interviewee B expressed the opinion that knowledge management has a visible effect on work outcomes: *“Knowledge management certainly helps us with our work (numerically I would give it a solid 3 out of 5). There are also circumstances that limit us (shortages of personnel, financial resources, etc.), but what we do manage to do in terms of knowledge management activities has a positive impact and is visible in work outcomes.”* Interviewee D believes that there is currently a solid foundation in knowledge management, but it would be more effective carried out in groups: *“In my opinion, it would be more effective within groups, namely that all employees in social work centers learn about these things.”* Likewise, interviewee H believes that knowledge management activities are effective on a basic level and have become more visible since the reorganization, but the effort continues to suffer because of the insufficient time available to employees: *“On a basic level, the system is established and the model is effective. Maybe now, after the reorganization, something more is happening. Our social work center is now bigger and has more employees, and more opportunities to do internal activities. We are able to invite people from different social work centers and can share knowledge in this way. This has a positive influence on knowledge management effectiveness. We still suffer from a shortage of time, which means we are not always able to get together and share knowledge.”*

Interviewee F stated that social workers regularly discuss changes but do not necessarily focus on the topic of knowledge management. In contrast, interviewee G believes that the constant changes in legislation are detrimental to knowledge management efforts as social work centers are left unequipped with the knowledge they need to function smoothly: *“A big disadvantage is that legislation frequently changes and interpretations can change in the period of two to three months when you start working on something. That is a big problem.”*

4.2.4.2 Influence of Knowledge Management on Enhanced Collaboration, Enhanced Communication, Enhanced Learning and Enhanced Performance

As indicated in the previous section, Anantatmula (2007) suggests that knowledge management effectiveness can be evaluated by changes in soft measures. I decided to ask interviewees whether they think knowledge management activities have the potential to enhance collaboration, communication, learning, and performance, and if they would especially emphasize one of these four constructs.

All nine interviewees mentioned at least one construct as having a particularly important influence on the future operations of their social work center. Five interviewees believe that all four constructs are important. Interviewee A stated: *“All four constructs are important. We should work on and improve all of them.”* Interviewee B stated: *“[Knowledge management] definitely influences all four constructs. The more knowledge individuals have, the more they are aware of personal relationships and can solve conflicts and tense situations in a different way.”* Interviewee E stated: *“Outcomes are discernible in all four areas and can be measured.”* Interviewee F stated: *“All four constructs are related. You cannot have one without the others.”* Interviewee I stated: *“All four construct are important in order for our organization to remain competitive and for our operations to be transparent.”*

Once again, interviewee A pointed out the negative impact of time and personnel shortages: *“We would like to do more, to actively work on this, but we simply cannot because of shortages in personnel. We always find a way with money. There is money available to finance extra projects, but employees have difficulties attending workshops because they simply don’t have the time.”* Interviewee B believes that knowledge management has the most impact on learning: *“It definitely influences all four constructs, but it probably has the most influence on learning.”* Interviewee E explained that knowledge management directly impacts employees and indirectly impacts users: *“Knowledge management directly influences employees, enabling us to grow personally and professionally, and indirectly influences users, and we have to be aware of this.”*

In contrast to Interviewee B, Interviewee I emphasized the impact of knowledge management on collaboration and communication: *“Communication, collaboration, the feeling that you are heard, this is a foundation for satisfaction.”* Interviewee D also spoke positively of these constructs: *“Communication and collaboration definitely provide a good foundation for moving forward, if employees cooperate among themselves, and among units, if they communicate well and share their knowledge, then knowledge hoarding will not occur, and they will openly ask questions when confronted with a dilemma.”* Interviewee G also emphasized the positive impact of collaboration, explaining that it is important for learning on many levels. Interviewee particularly focused on team learning: *“It is very important for institutions to collaborate, share knowledge, and strengthen their ties. That is essential for things to function properly. Also learning between institutions, at the organizational level,*

and at the individual level. Learning at the team level and teamwork is what defines us and what is most important to me. It is even more important than learning at the individual level.”

4.2.4.3 Financial Results of Knowledge Management

Researchers Akgun et al. (2007) propose that the financial effect of knowledge management is relatively indirect. Some researchers declare that it is difficult to measure the financial results of knowledge-related resources (AGIMO, 2004). In the questionnaire, only one item addressed the financial effect of knowledge management. Respondents were asked to give their opinion about whether costs had been reduced as a result of the introduction of knowledge management. The majority of respondents (64.3%) were unsure, and 28.6% disagreed with the statement. Therefore, in the qualitative phase, I decided to explore how interviewees perceived the financial aspect of knowledge management, and if they believe that financial outcomes are an important effect of knowledge management.

After analysing the answers from nine interviewees, I concluded that the general attitude is that the financial results of knowledge management are important, although certainly not its most important aspect. Interviewee A stated the opinion that financial resources should be made available for knowledge management because it is essential to invest in employees: *“There is no harm in spending money on training. Knowledge must be treated as a priority. Investing in human capital should be the focus, investing in employees.”* Interviewee B highlighted that, at least in the medium-term, the return on knowledge management investments should be at least positive-zero: *“At least in the medium-term, the organization must generate enough returns to justify investments in knowledge management.”*

In contrast, Interviewee C believes that the search for new solutions for users should be more important than financial considerations: *“Certainly, we should never expect a financial impact in social work. It is important that we search for new solutions for our users, and be one step ahead of the legislation.”* Similarly, interviewee D believes that the financial element is not crucial, but the problems of lack of time and personnel are more detrimental to such efforts: *“Finances are not the crucial problem, at least not at our social work center. We can manage with what we have. The bigger problem is time.”* Interviewee E believes that it is not all about the finances but that it is important to have choices: *“Financial considerations are not the necessary condition when making a decision about knowledge management. It is more about having the choice.”* Interviewee F raised the valid concern that currently social work centers in Slovenia cannot focus on knowledge management issues because they face so many other challenges related to their daily activities: *“When you are hungry, you do not think about going on vacation.”* Moreover, Interviewee F argued that improvements in the soft measures mentioned above would be extremely welcome, and that social work centers could also explore the possibility of attaining funds from different sources such as the European Union: *“It would be extremely welcome if we could achieve improvements in the four constructs (enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and*

enhanced performance). I think it is necessary that we start dedicating funds to training, and that we also start looking for funds elsewhere – for example, from the European Union – which we could also use to pay for more personnel.”

Interviewee G believes that the financial element cannot be considered negligible as some social centers are now in a situation where they try to achieve savings by reducing their heating bills: *“Financial aspect, hmm. We are trying to achieve savings from heating expenses, 500€ that could then be spent on training courses. Of course, any financial benefit would be welcome.”* Interviewee H claimed that financial benefits could come in the form of various improvements that would result in savings in both time and money: *“The whole thing could be relatively simple. If we would invest more in the structure of the way we do things and also in employees, we would eventually see that we can do our tasks in a shorter period of time, that they could be done at a higher quality, and that users would not come back again and again with the same problem. This is automatically a saving in terms of both time and money. I am not talking about tomorrow. But five to ten years would be reasonable.”* Interviewees I and F emphasized improvements in the soft measures and believe that the financial aspect is not that important: *“We would be satisfied with improvements in the four constructs you mentioned, the so-called soft measures. The financial aspect is not that important. We have what we have.”*

4.2.5 Influence of Organizational Culture on Knowledge Management

4.2.5.1 Social Network of Employees

Social networks are important to individuals because of four main elements: information, support, credibility, and governance (Birley et al., 1991). Moreover, social network analysis can also be used as a tool for gaining insight into knowledge flows within an organization (Chan & Liebowitz, 2006; Liebowitz, 2005). Networks allow information, ideas, and knowledge to spread through an organization via interpersonal contacts (Pahor, et al., 2008). Consequently, social networks in an organization have considerable impact on knowledge management, and managers should become more aware of them and use them to promote knowledge-related activities throughout their organizations. The results of the quantitative analysis of my research indicated that only 25.3% of respondents believe that their organization promotes social networks among employees. Due to the many positive effects of social networks, I decided to try and gain more insight into the negative answers in the questionnaire, and explore in the qualitative phase of my research what elements might contribute to this situation. It may also be possible that the term social network is misunderstood, interpreted exclusively as social network websites such as Facebook and Twitter.

In contrast to the quantitative results, all nine interviewees reported that relations between employees in their social work centers are good. Moreover, six interviewees reported that

employees engage in many informal gatherings and activities such as trips or simply morning coffee. Interviewee C stated: *“In the end, we want to feel good within our collective. We have morning exercise for five minutes instead of coffee. We get along great. Especially the small things that each individual employee brings to the unit and that connect us.”* Interviewee D stated: *“Overall relationships are good. Units share information (for example, employees who are working on something together). Smaller units have their morning coffee together and share information.”* Interviewee E stated: *“We are connected. We go on trips together, hiking for example. We promote health at our workplace and other programs to strengthen ties. When you sense some tension, you have to react before a conflict arises. I am very sensitive when it comes to relationships and nonverbal communication.”* Interviewee F stated: *“We are very connected. It is important that there are no conflicts in a small unit. I do not allow a situation where someone doesn’t fit in. We also have informal gatherings. Once a year we have a trip together, everyone attends, even those who have already retired.”* Interviewee G stated: *“We are very connected. We also hang out after work, going to the cinema, dinner, concerts. In a way, this can be understood as a form of professional support.”* Interviewee I stated: *“We get together in the morning to drink tea. It’s about hanging out, exchanging information, discussing actual cases, brainstorming, and it has the effect of connecting us.”*

However, several interviewees believe that almost every organization has individual employees who do not fit in. Interviewee C stated: *“There will always be someone who does not fit in.”* Interviewee D stated: *“There are individual employees who are specific, that do not fit in, and that can be detrimental to the overall connectedness in the organization and to collaboration because their personalities are so different. In each unit, there is always someone like that whom I would replace at any given opportunity.”* Interviewee I stated: *“One employee does not fit in, has a specific work approach.”* It was remarked that the situation differs from one social work center to another. Interviewee C stated: *“There are differences between social work centers. The situation is better in some than in others.”* It was also pointed out there are differences between departments within the same social work center. Interviewee B stated: *“The size of the organization is a factor as well as the employee’s department. It is logical that those working in the same area are more connected. In a sense, what is lacking is collaboration between different departments. External units are especially problematic because they are physically separated and there is less collaboration.”* Interviewee D stated: *“Employees of smaller units have their morning coffee during which they share information. The nature of their work is similar.”* Interviewee H stated: *“Definitely employees relationships are different between different work units.”*

4.2.5.2 Typical Training of Employees

According to Valmohammadi and Ahmadi (2015), training and education are one of the seven critical factors of knowledge management success. Moreover, managers are generally aware of the importance of training their employees as it leads to professional growth and

contributes to enhanced performance (Hafeez & Akbar, 2015). Therefore, many organizations strive to provide their employees with both internal and external training opportunities so that they will acquire and build on relevant knowledge and skills (Jaw & Liu, 2003; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The results from the quantitative phase of my research confirmed that social work centers in Slovenia dedicate a great deal of energy to training. The vast majority of respondents (67.3%) agreed that their organizations promote opportunities for employees to attend training courses beneficial for their work. Similarly, the topic of training was mentioned several times by interviewees during the qualitative phase. I encouraged interviewees to provide a description of typical training courses that employees in their social work center attend.

The interviewees provided a range of opinions. Here I summarize the key points mentioned by each interviewee. Interviewee A believes that training is important and beneficial as it broadens the knowledge of employees: *“We do a lot of work in our social work center to develop training. It is and will continue to be necessary to broaden the knowledge of our employees.”* Interviewee A emphasized that usually younger employees are more motivated to attend training courses than their older colleagues. In this regard, Interviewee A mentioned that it is sometimes difficult for employees to attend training courses because of the work overload: *“Older employees who are in the last decade before retirement do not have a strong desire to attend training sessions. With younger colleagues there is a much greater desire. But it can also happen that social workers cannot attend training sessions because they have too much work.”* Interviewee B clarified that training is mostly dependent on the financial capabilities of individual social work centers but believes that training is necessary for all employees: *“Training is provided for all of our employees to the extent we have financial resources. But we are very limited. In practice, this means that each employee attends one or two training courses that require a fee and take the whole day, and a couple of other training sessions that are free of charge but cover potential deficits in [knowledge].”* Interviewee B also explained that employees differ in their level of motivation to attend training courses: *“A lot also depends on the interest of the individual employee. But necessary training, dealing with the most urgent themes, is always made available to employees.”*

Interviewee C believes that opportunities for training have become more limited since the reorganization of social work centers and noted that there is a discrepancy between what is written in the legislation and what actually occurs in practice: *“After the reorganization, we were limited by the new guidelines. We joined with other social work centers and there is only one budget for the whole region. There is one paid and one free training session per year, which differs significantly from the existing legislation that anticipates ten days of training per year.”* Interviewee C believes that many employees are dissatisfied as a result: *“Employees are dissatisfied because of this.”* Interviewee D explained that the majority of training falls in the general framework of social work: *“Basically related to the framework of social work.”* According to Interviewee E, training is viewed as an ongoing activity with the aim of offering diverse educational opportunities for employees to further professional and

personal growth: *“Training is continuous, sometimes longer-term, sometimes one-day sessions, or a couple of hours. There is practical training such as help with home care and safe driving courses. We use local community experts for training. For example, the center for promoting health organizes workshops. Very diverse, professional and personal growth, solving conflicts, communication, different areas of social work (custody, foster care, transfers).”* Interviewee E emphasized the effort to follow current trends emerging in their professional environment: *“We follow trends. We select training based on trends in the environment (this is important) and also based on the needs of employees to learn how to collaborate with other public institutions.”*

Interviewee F is critical of the level of training for employees, explaining that severe deficits in personnel and finances limit training opportunities, and proposed a change in legislation that would increase the availability of training: *“We need a change in legislation in Slovenia. We cannot afford to train employees even if it is required by the legislation. Due to continuous changes in the field, we want employees to be able to receive as much training as possible. Our operations suffer from severe shortages of personnel and finances.”* Interviewee G expressed concern that MLFSAEO is actually reducing available funds for training instead of providing more: *“We try within the scope of our possibilities. The financial support of MLFSAEO is problematic in this regard. Instead of giving us additional funding to cover our costs (including training), they are reducing it.”* However, social work employees still attend training tailored to their individual needs, which are primarily related to their narrow specialization: *“We send employees to the training courses that they need. Employees receive training related to their specializations.”* In a similar vein, Interviewee H argued that the training offered is primarily related to employees’ specializations and that approval for training is largely decided by the manager: *“Typically the content of training is related to the employee’s narrow specialization. A lot is dependent on whether my manager listens or not, if he or she agrees that something counts as professional training.”* Moreover, Interviewee I also stressed that employees acquire professional content that is mostly related to their specializations: *“We attend training at the Chamber of Social Work, the Community of Social Work Centers. It is mostly related to professional matters, also how to deal with stress and take care of yourself. You attend sessions related to your specialization within social work.”*

4.2.5.3 Training Opportunities Outside the Frame of Social Work

As discussed in previous sections, training is an especially important theme in social work centers in Slovenia. However, as also indicated in previous sections, the majority of opportunities for training social workers is currently related to employees’ narrow specializations. Similarly, the results of the quantitative analysis show that the vast majority of respondents (63.8%) believes that their organizations do not provide training related to knowledge management activities. For this reason, I decided to obtain additional insight on potential training opportunities offered outside the general frame of social work. I was

especially interested in topics related to knowledge management and if interviewees believe such training would be beneficial for them.

The general conclusion is that wider training in knowledge management would be welcome, but that it was extremely unlikely that this kind of training could take place given the current condition of social work centers. Interviewee A indicated that social work centers are doing what they can to broaden the knowledge of employees given current conditions, and that this is a necessary effort: *"It is necessary to increase and broaden the knowledge of employees. We invite many different employees to attend training session about communication, teamwork, public relations, and rhetoric, skills that are also useful outside of our profession."* Interviewee B emphasized that gaining knowledge from fields outside of social work is dependent on the interest and motivation of individual employees, but stressed that the priority of training will always be on knowledge and skills directly related to social work: *"A lot depends on the interest of individual employees. The priority is training that is related to their specialization, the social work profession, subjects that influence their work, such as changes in legislation, and areas that are the most pressing in their work."* Interviewee G agreed that the majority of training currently relates to social work: *"We go to training that is related to our field of work. Other subjects are occasionally presented, but they are not the priority. The priority is almost always related to changes in legislation."*

Interviewee B left open the possibility of training in topics related to knowledge management but only if more funds were made available: *"If it makes sense and if there are funds available, I would be open for something else, a broader perspective, themes that are still related to our work but not necessarily specifically to our specialization."* Interviewee C (joined by Interviewees F and I) agreed that the majority of training is currently related to social work, but stated that topics that could promote the personal growth of employees would also be welcome and even necessary: *"There is a lot of training related to our work and some also in the field of personal growth, and that's fine. Training for personal growth is important even if it does not seem to be at first glance. Social workers need to be strong, have clear judgement, to work on themselves, and to always achieve new things"* However, Interviewee C also pointed out the limited funding (as did interviewees G and I): *"Wider knowledge would be necessary for social workers but we are limited by time, personnel, and funding."*

Interviewee D stated that topics related to management and organization are already partially covered, but believes that the current lectures that cover such topics are generally of poor quality: *"It would also be beneficial for us to acquire additional knowledge about how leadership and management functions, a sort of 'school for directors'. It is not such a problem for this to be arranged, but the existing lecturers in this so-called 'school for directors' are a problem. When you see their program on paper it looks fine, but when they actually deliver their lecture, it fails. There are approximately three good lecturers out of ten."* Interviewee E (along with interviewee F) believes that it is important to obtain a broad

spectrum of knowledge but noted that the only funding available for knowledge management training would have to come from the existing budget for training: *“It is important that social workers acquire other knowledge. A good social worker also needs to have knowledge of the law and other in-depth knowledge. But any resources allocated to knowledge management courses would have to come from the existing training budget.”* Interviewee F (along with interviewee I) believes that the shortage of personnel is a key factor that is detrimental to efforts to increase the knowledge and skills of employees: *“I wish we had enough personnel that would make it possible for all employees to get the training to which they are entitled by our legislation.”*

Interviewee G stated that currently most training that deals with topics related to management and organization are available only to employees who hold management positions: *“Mainly training in other fields (hypothetically speaking legal subjects, management, public communication, delegation) is exclusively for management and only to the extent that we are able to attend.”* Interviewee I believes that there is no better investment an organization can make than into its employees: *“When you work on yourself, you are expanding your perceptions, your way of thinking and your knowledge. You connect with other people, grow a wider network, counteract burnout, and that is the best investment in a social worker.”*

4.2.5.4 Financial Resources Available for the Operations of Social Work Centers

Lettieri, Borga, and Savoldelli (2004) established that public sector organizations often suffer from shortages of funding and personnel. At the same time, the general public still expects to receive high quality services. In answers to previous questions, several interviewees mentioned budget limitations as one of the main factors limiting the operations of social work centers in Slovenia. I specifically asked each of the interviewees whether they believe their social work center has sufficient financial resources available and to elaborate further on how the existing budget impacts the operations of their organizations.

Five respondents believe that there are insufficient financial resources available for the adequate functioning of their social work centers. Interviewee B stated: *“In general, there are not enough financial resources.”* Interviewee F stated: *“We are lacking in the financial area.”* Interviewee G stated: *“There is not enough money.”* Interviewee I stated: *“No, there is not enough money for everything.”* Interviewee B added that social work centers can be somewhat flexible with material costs as they search for creative solutions to counteract financial deficits: *“We have the most flexibility with material costs (water, electricity, training, almost everything).”* Interviewee G explained that the budget is so tight that social work centers are often dependent on whether employees go on sick leave because otherwise they are not able to cover the costs of their salaries: *“In a way, the worst thing is if nobody takes sick leave because then we do not have enough money [to cover salaries].”* Interviewee G stated that MLFSAEO provides less resources to cover material costs each year despite the

fact that these costs rise on a yearly basis: *“MLFSAEO does not provide enough funds for material costs. Each year we have less funds to finance our salaries.”*

Interviewee H at first hesitated to provide an assessment of the financial situation but later admitted that they are trying to save on toilet paper: *“I have no idea in reality I know almost nothing about this. But considering our output, we do not have enough financial resources. We have to save on things like toilet paper.”* Interviewee I regretted the resulting limitations on training opportunities: *“As social workers, we are unable to attend anything except training programs offering new knowledge in our specific specialization.”* Two interviewees believe that the situation is adequate in terms of available financial resources. Interviewee D stated: *“There are sufficient financial resources.”* Interviewee E stated: *“We can do a lot with the finances we have available to us.”* Nevertheless, Interviewee D acknowledged that the situation varies in different social work centers: *“The situation is not the same in all social work centers.”* There were two interviewees who provided only partial responses on the financial aspect of operations and therefore were not included in the analysis.

4.2.5.5 Funding Intended for Knowledge Management in Social Work Centers

After establishing that financial resources in social work centers in Slovenia are limited, I decided to try and gain additional insight into whether at least some financial resources in social work centers were directed toward activities related to knowledge management.

Because the majority of respondents and interviewees indicated that there are insufficient financial resources for social work and training in general, it was difficult to gather additional information regarding resources available specifically for knowledge management activities, and more or less expected that funding for such activities is not available. Interviewee A believes that allocating funds for training opportunities should not be seen as a waste of money, but also stated that it is unclear if social work centers currently have funds allocated specifically to knowledge management training: *“Spending money on training is never a waste. It should be addressed as a priority. I would rather organize a training course than buy a new desk.”* Interviewee B explained that some costs (such as electricity and water) will always have priority: *“It has to be understood that certain expenses, such as electricity and water bills, are more important than those related to knowledge management. Such costs will always be more important when allocating funds.”* Moreover, Interviewee B believes that currently no funding is allocated to knowledge management but also stated that if additional funding became available such topics would be interesting enough to potentially receive funding: *“At the moment, we do not specifically allocate any funding to knowledge management. In principle, knowledge management would fall in the category of training (if a subject is indirectly related to knowledge management, then of course it would not be). It would be great if we had a bigger budget for training. Then we could allocate some resources to knowledge management training.”*

Interviewee E, like Interviewee B, suggested that if any funds were available for knowledge management, they would most likely be in the existing budget allocated to employee training: *“If there are any funds for knowledge management, they could only be found in the existing budget of funds intended for training.”* Interviewee I stated that currently they do not have any funds allocated to knowledge management but believes that budgeting funds for training in management topics would be beneficial to social work: *“There are no funds for knowledge management. It would be beneficial to allocate some of the training funds to management topics.”* Answers to the question from five interviewees were unclear or partial and therefore were not included in the analysis.

4.2.5.6 Incentives, Rewards and Recognition for Employees

Incentives are important in any type of organization (Austin et al., 2008). Similarly, in the field of knowledge management, it would be beneficial if managers created mechanisms for internal and external rewards given to employees who engage in knowledge management activities. Public sector organizations are hindered as far as incentives are concerned due to their limited budgets and public expectations that they prudently manage their resources. As a result, social work organizations are often unable to offer appropriate incentives to employees due to both legislative and political obstacles. Answers in the quantitative phase to items that covered the topics of rewarding employees for suggesting new ideas and sharing knowledge were generally negative. 56.4% and 61.5% of respondents expressed the opinion that incentives for these two activities are not present in their organizations. Similarly, 59.6% stated that their organizations do not motivate employees by rewarding knowledge management or knowledge sharing behaviour. To gain further understanding on this subject, I asked interviewees during the qualitative phase about the incentive systems in their organizations. I also wanted to gain insight about what changes interviewees thought could be made to existing incentive structures in their social work centers.

My general conclusion from the interviews is that the incentive structures that currently prevail in social work centers in Slovenia could be significantly improved. Eight interviewees (with the exception of Interviewee D) believe that employee reward systems in the public sector, and more specifically in social work centers, are not satisfactory. Interviewee A stated: *“We are very limited in terms of incentive systems in the public sector.”* Interviewee B stated: *“Providing incentives in the public sector is extremely difficult.”* Interviewee C stated: *“A nice word of praise now and again, but I do not see any financial incentives. The financial part of the incentive system was abolished in 2008.”* Interviewee E stated: *“The incentive structure is not what I wish it were.”* Interviewee F stated: *“There are really no options to reward employees, especially not financially now that there is no longer a bonus system for work performance.”* Interviewee G stated: *“It is sad but we have very few possibilities.”* Interviewee H stated that there was virtually no possibility of *“[getting] something extra beside your salary.”* Interviewee I stated: *“There are no incentives. Financial rewards do not exist.”*

Interviewees A, B, and D discussed the system whereby employees have the possibility to be promoted every three years to a higher salary class or job title, expressing the opinion that such a reward system is too far deferred in the future to have much meaningful impact. Interviewee A stated: *“The possibility for rewards comes with the annual employee evaluations and possible promotion every three years. That is one possible incentive – higher salary class, job titles – but it is too far in the future. Promotions should be possible on a yearly basis.”* Interviewee B stated: *“Employees are evaluated annually and this influences the opportunity for promotion every three years. Rewards are relatively inflexible and the system does not have much effect because it is so far deferred in the future.”* Interviewee D stated: *“Employees have the possibility to be promoted every three years to a higher salary class and they can also get promotion via job titles. For that, they need the points that they get from attending training courses.”*

Several interviewees mentioned that social work centers in Slovenia are doing their best to find other ways of rewarding their employees with a particular emphasis on enabling them to attend training courses. Interviewee A stated: *“There are also other ways of rewarding employees. Additional training sessions they are able to attend, additional content that they are able to learn.”* Interviewee B stated: *“We send them to additional seminars and training as a reward.”* Interviewee C stated: *“For me non-financial incentives are also important to make me feel accepted, that I am being praised for doing a good job. Even when you are not doing that well, an encouraging word can do a lot of good.”* Interviewee D stated: *“I see training as a kind of reward. I try to equally distribute training opportunities to employees.”* Interviewee E stated: *“We also reward employees with training although it is unfortunately not always possible financially.”* Interviewee F stated: *“What is sad is that we are in a situation where employees are given the possibility of attending training sessions as a reward when this is something they are actually entitled to according to our legislation.”* Interviewees B and F suggested that employees need more concrete forms of incentives. Interviewee B stated: *“In general, [the incentive system] is quite limited. Employees would need to receive some sort of reward for doing their job well.”* Interviewee F stated: *“Of course, we would wish to be pay, for example, their college fees (something that was possible in the past). But today that is no longer possible.”*

Interviewees C, E, F, G, and H confirmed that there are no financial incentives for employees with the exception of the rare case when they are paid for working overtime. Interviewee C stated: *“Financial incentives were ended in 2008. The bonus for work performance has not been brought back.”* Interviewee E stated: *“We do reward employees with training but unfortunately financial rewards are not possible. Anytime it is possible to assign overtime, I do so if there are available funds. In case of replacements, I suggest to the regional manager that employees are financially rewarded.”* Interviewee F stated: *“There are really no options to reward our employees, especially not financially when there is no longer a bonus for performance.”* Interviewee G stated: *“One option is offered when there is sick leave and*

other employees assume the responsibilities of the one on sick leave and we can pay part of the money that is left for additional hours, for overtime, which of course they actually work. Financial incentives in general are very weak, very poor.” Interviewee H stated: “Overtime is exclusively paid for increased workload and this only in very few situations, for example when some new legislation is passed. Otherwise there are virtually no financial rewards, no bonus for performance. That was ended years ago. It used to be possible to get a higher percentage but no longer.” Interviewee I stated: “There are no incentives. Financial rewards do not exist except when we were dealing with a shortfall and we get approval to pay overtime. Other than that, there are no financial stimulations. We can only reward an employee with some additional free hours, but they do not really benefit from that because they cannot even use all of their vacation days.”

4.2.5.7 Importance of Both Financial and Non-financial Incentives

Today the incentive structure of most modern organizations is comprised of two major categories, financial and non-financial (Armstrong & Murlis, 2005; Milkovich & Newman, 2008). In recent years, there has been increasing pressure on organizations to reduce or at least control costs, which has resulted in a greater emphasis on and usage of non-financial incentives (Wah, 2000). Such trends were also indicated by the respondents to the questionnaire in the quantitative phase of my research. Because the majority of interviewees also indicated the lack of financial incentives, I decided to try and gain a greater understanding of how important both financial and non-financial incentives are to them and whether they believe there should be a balance between both components in social work centers in Slovenia.

My general conclusion is that the majority of interviewees believe that both types of incentives are important and would ideally strive for a balance between the two. Interviewee A believes that both financial and non-financial incentives are necessary, and wonders if non-financial incentives are perhaps even more important: *“It has to be both, financial and non-financial (though non-financial has prevailed in recent years). As time goes on, employees begin to feel that they deserve financial rewards. We cannot work forever merely on ethical and moral drive. Public appraisal and the attitude of users are both extremely important, even more than the financial aspect. It is important to know that the people you work for are satisfied and that they respond with a good attitude, with praise.”* Nevertheless, Interviewee A also noted that the measurement of performance is a challenge in social work: *“Measuring performance is hard in social work.”*

Interviewee B argued that both kinds of incentives are important and that a balance between both is present in the social work center where he/she works: *“A balance between financial and non-financial incentives is present (in overtime pay and training). Financial and non-financial incentives are both important.”* Nevertheless, Interviewee B emphasized that financial effects are more short-term: *“Financial incentives have a short term effect.*

Financial incentives are especially important in the public sector today because it is generally acknowledged that we have wage levelling. In practice, it often happens that employees who are more capable are rewarded by having to do the work of those who are less capable.” Interviewee C believes that there is not a good balance between the financial and non-financial incentives, and that financial incentives in particular are very few: “Employees would want a better balance between financial and non-financial incentives. Everyone goes to work at least in part to earn money and there is not enough of it. We need more financial resources to survive.” Moreover, Interviewee C argued that it has become clear that the younger generation of social workers will not put more effort into their work if they do not get paid for it: “The younger generation in particular expects to be financially rewarded and say that they will not do more than they get paid for.”

Interviewee D also supported the idea that a balance between financial and non-financial incentives is important: *“It is important to balance both elements.”* Interviewee E agreed that both aspects are needed and added that the use of praise deepens personal relationships between people: *“We need both: financial and non-financial incentives. We also need praise and good personal relationships. Praise is important for building personal relationships.”* Interviewee G explained methods of providing employees with non-financial recognition, especially at external events: *“I make a lot of effort with non-financial incentives. I attend municipal meetings, present our programs, am always open to opportunities to present our programs and our work. On such occasions, I always publicly emphasize the high quality of my employees’ work. We also talk about this within our team. We acknowledge specific things and I thank my employees for their willingness to work.”* Interviewee G also brought up the reorganization process and mentioned that it left employees feeling disappointed: *“There are moments when their morale falls. Morale was very bad for a month after the reorganization. Employees asked themselves why they even bother.”*

Interviewee I stated that it would be ideal to have the possibility to offer financial incentives, but that the non-financial aspect can also suffice: *“I think that there should also be financial incentives. At the end of the day, we are all working for money after all. In any case, social workers invest enormous efforts so that their fieldwork is properly done.”* Interviewee I concluded that the incentive structure in Slovenian social work centers is no longer suitable: *“The incentive structure does not work anymore.”* Two interviewees provided answers on this subject that were partial or incomplete and were therefore not included in the analysis.

4.2.5.8 Changes After the Reorganization Process

MLFSAEO (2019) put out a statement that a modern, professional, and effective system of social care is necessary to adequately respond to the increasingly demanding and complex needs of users of social services. In order to better respond to these needs, there was recently a reorganization of social work centers in Slovenia with the goal of eliminating its weaknesses and shortcomings. The primary goal of the proposed solutions was to benefit users by

providing them with higher-quality services. The 62 social work centers that existed prior to the reorganization were merged into 16 larger social work centers. MLFSAEO created this new structure because it was believed that it would allow more time for fieldwork and would allow social workers to have closer relationships with their users. I realized from the answers of my respondents that this is an important topic of discussion for them as the reorganization was mentioned several times. Therefore, I decided to gain additional insight about their opinions regarding the reorganization process as a whole. I was particularly interested if they believed that the reorganization caused changes in interpersonal relationships, if the level of trust had decreased, and if knowledge hoarding had become an issue. I was also curious if the interviewees felt that the changes resulting from the reorganization potentially endangered their jobs. The results from the quantitative phase indicated that the majority of employees (58.9%) did not feel that knowledge sharing put their job position in danger. Similarly, 54.2% of respondents did not believe that they hoard knowledge because they feared their organizations did not appreciate them and their knowledge. The largest proportion of respondents (46.3%) stated that they do not distrust their employers or feel they will take advantage of their knowledge.

Nevertheless, responses during the qualitative phase confirmed the general impression that social workers are not happy with the consequences of the reorganization. The most common initial reason for their dissatisfaction was the fear and uncertainty generated by the reorganization, emotions that, after the reorganization, quickly transformed into disappointment. Interviewee A stated: *"In general, I agree that at the beginning there was a lot of fear. Today we are more or less just disappointed."* Interviewee B stated: *"The main emotions were fear and uncertainty about what the reorganization would bring. Now that six months have passed since the reorganization, there is just a sense of disappointment."* Interviewee C stated: *"It went from anger to disappointment and then to apathy. People are fed up now. We are just swinging at windmills."* Interviewee E stated: *"The same for us. It started with fear and then went to disappointment (the transition was quite fast) when it became evident where the reorganization was going."*

Some of the interviewees reported that the situation in social work centers has become worse since the reorganization. Interviewee B stated: *"The situation has changed since the reorganization, unfortunately for the worse."* Interviewee E stated: *"I would say it's worse."* The interviewees stressed that what was lacking in the reorganization was anything related to the actual substance of social work. Interviewee B stated: *"The way it was planned, we expected that we would be able to put more effort into changes in the substance of what we do. But in practice none of that came about. The slogan 'closer to the people' never came true in practice and I have my doubts it ever will."* Interviewee C stated: *"Where is the reorganization of the substance of our work? The reorganization was only concerned with organizational aspects. They haven't touched actual content. I think that something more should be done."* Interviewee G stated: *"We needed changes in our field related to substance. I supported that idea all along, that we did indeed need to be closer to our users."*

Many interviewees mentioned that at the beginning of the reorganization there was considerable fear and uncertainty regarding their employment status. Interviewee A stated: *“During the reorganization, the union got additional power because employees were concerned about their job safety and joined the union. The changes caused fear. What would happen to us? But people are not aware how little power managers actually have, even though they are the stronger ones in the relationship.”* Interviewee B stated: *“Maybe at the beginning employees were scared for their jobs but there were no significant changes.”* Interviewee E stated: *“Of course, at the beginning there was some uncertainty regarding job safety. By the end, we lost a few employees. The reorganization was implemented in a way that the employees did not deserve. The human factor was lost.”* Interviewee I stated: *“There was fear about employment status during the reorganization.”*

Interviewee A stated that social workers also had high expectations for the reorganization, believing that they would be able to respond more efficiently to the pressing needs of their users: *“Our expectations were high. We thought that the reorganization would bring a lot of benefits due to informatization, that there would be less bureaucracy, that we would have more time within the work day to actually dedicate to our mission, working with people, that it would be easier and faster to respond to the needs of the environment, that we would be able to connect with each other on the regional level with the aim of developing programs and services, to exchange examples of good practice and improve them. We went into the reorganization process with those beliefs.”* Interviewee A added that during the reorganization employees began to compare themselves with each other for the first time, and a certain level of secrecy began to emerge: *“What happened during the first few months was that every employee had more bosses. The job positions remained the same. There was some transfer of personnel, but salaries and contracts did not change. Based on the changes there were, employees began to compare their situations with each other which had never happened before (i.e. salary class, number of vacation days, type of contract). As a result, the practice of hoarding knowledge became more common after the reorganization.”* Interviewee A also observed that older workers tended to perceive themselves as self-sufficient, and also mentioned that the union gained power during this period because of the concerns of employees about their employment status: *“There was also the self-sufficiency effect, especially with older employees (a common phenomenon in social work). When you invest all your knowledge in something for 20 years, attend training courses, you become more closed off. With the reorganization, the union gained power as employees were concerned about their job safety and joined the union.”*

Interviewee E emphasized that managers had to put in a lot of work and energy to neutralize all of the negative consequences of the reorganization: *“I had to spend a lot of energy and expertise neutralizing the situation.”* Contrary to the others interviewees, Interviewee F believes that in general there was little fear related to the changes and no feelings of uncertainty: *“I wouldn’t say there was any uncertainty regarding employment status. Up-to-*

date information was distributed. There was no real fear of the changes.” Like Interviewee A, Interviewee G noted that during and after the reorganization employees began to compare themselves with employees in other social work centers: *“The problem is that now we have an overview of other units, who does what, when it is said that we have enough personnel. Now you can see the databases. You can see how much other social work centers do, why they are still within the standards. Then you start comparing and you see that certain people have a lot more tasks than others and then you get in a bad mood.”*

Interviewee H believes that due to the lack of time and overwork in general, many social work employees are considering whether it would be better for them to change their profession: *“People were not that concerned about keeping their job. They were concerned about whether they would be able to handle the workload, about whether they should change their job and go to another profession. The feeling that employees cannot do their work is even more present in the past few months.”* Interviewee I argued that social work centers are now dealing with more bureaucracy and hierarchy, and that there is a sharper distinction between the so-called “professional” and “financial/business” elements in social work centers: *“More bureaucracy, more hierarchy after the reorganization. Before managers were both ‘professional’ and the ‘financial’ managers, it didn’t matter what kind of education they had.”*

4.2.6 Knowledge Management Terminology in Social Work

4.2.6.1 Terminology and Understanding of (Knowledge) Management

In general, there is a shortage of substantive discussion on knowledge management in social work literature (Edge, 2005). I believe that this gap may contribute to the lack of common terminology to talk about knowledge management in the social work context. In my interviews, I explored how interviewees thought social workers in general understand topics related to management and knowledge management. Specifically, I asked interviewees whether they believe social workers understand terms such as employee empowerment, knowledge transfer, knowledge implementation, and social networks.

Interviewees A, B, and E suggested that social work employees generally understand terms and topics related to management and knowledge management. Interviewee A stated: *“Employees understand terms such as tacit knowledge and employee empowerment.”* Interviewee B stated: *“Employees are familiar with the concepts of social networks, employee empowerment, and other things. However, it is also possible that they are familiar with these concept under other terms, probably the terminology used in social work.”* Interviewee E stated: *“Employees understand these topics though generally as they relate to social work.”*

However, the average social worker’s perception of management is negative as they view management as being primarily related to multinational companies, economic and financial

matter, and management structures. Interviewee A stated: *“We are allergic to management in social work. Management is viewed as something bad, connected to economic and financial structures. That is the general perception.”* Interviewee B stated: *“Management, in its essence, is something foreign to employees. They see it as an element from the economic side of things, something related only to management structures. Also there is a negative perception towards management as being primarily concerned with money.”* Interviewee C stated: *“Because of the shortage of personnel, we often perceive employees from other professions as extra and unnecessary.”* Interviewee E stated: *“Management is viewed as being connected to the economic side of things. If they do not take enough interest, employees have the feeling that these are two fields that do not belong together. I would once again emphasize that even we managers do not identify as managers. But the knowledge we need in our role is similar [to the knowledge all managers need].”* Interviewee I stated: *“The idea of a multinational company is a good approximation of how the average social worker understands management.”*

Certain interviewees believe, to the contrary, that in social work the understanding of the terms and topics related to management and knowledge management is generally weak. Interviewee F stated: *“I think that employees do not understand terms related to management. I personally do not understand them.”* Interviewee H stated: *“These concepts have a weird feeling about them. Even our relationship toward them is a bit weird.”* Interviewee I stated: *“The general understanding of [management] terminology is rather weak.”* Interviewees G and H believe that management is in any case present in their everyday work. Interviewee G stated: *“In a way, I cannot see social work without management. It is not possible.”* Interviewee H stated: *“Maybe we wonder what knowledge management is in social work,. What do they want from us? If we explained to employees that this is about attending training courses and sharing your knowledge with your co-workers, they would realize that they are already doing that.”* Interviewee C believes that the shortage of personnel is responsible for the generally negative perception of management: *“Shortage of personnel is maybe the reason we cannot focus on the good aspects of management. Everyone sees things from their own perspective, how much more they can handle in their work, how heavy their workload is. Maybe this makes it hard to see other things and other potentials. So we look at employees who are not exactly social workers and we think: what do we need them for?”*

Interviewee D believes that the perception toward management is generally good in his/her social work center: *“I would say that, with us, we do not believe the general perception of management (as having only to do with economic questions, management structure, money) is true.”* Interviewee E pointed out that often social work managers do not even identify themselves as managers and added that in general social workers do not see a relationship between the two fields: *“I would again emphasize that even we as managers do not identify as managers, but the knowledge we need as managers is similar.”* Finally, interviewee G

explained that in the environment of social work they often refer to social management: *“Social workers talk about social management.”*

4.2.6.1 Could Previous Training Change the Perception of Social Workers Towards Knowledge Management and Management

As emphasized by Chung-Jen and Jing-Wen (2009), employee training has the potential to affect knowledge management capacity. I decided to ask the interviewees if they believed that the perception of social workers toward management would change if they received additional training. The training would be especially focused on explaining how many knowledge management activities are already being informally practiced.

The general conclusion is that the majority of interviewees believe that positive change is possible. Interviewee A explained that a positive change in attitude is possible using explanations that the employees are already familiar with, but that managers cannot do everything: *“Drawing on previous explanations, employees’ perceptions and attitudes could change. But I cannot delegate everything from the top down. We need to ask more of our employees, for example, to name a specific working group, to work on various topics. But employees will say they are overworked even when we are talking about important things that could influence our future success.”* Similarly, Interviewee B claimed that general perceptions of management and knowledge management could be changed with training and explanation: *“Definitely the broader sense of management and knowledge management would be perceived differently with training and explanation.”* Interviewee B believes that social workers already engage in activities related to management and knowledge management, but that they are labelled with different terms: *“[Knowledge] management issues related to social work centers would be perceived differently if we could make employees understand that we already informally engage in many of these activities, but we call them by other names, and they are not as highly structured as in your research.”* Moreover, Interviewee B states that it is a challenge to explain these matters to employees in a way that they do not perceive them as just another extra task that will burden them even more: *“Employees definitely perceive all of this as additional tasks and just more work. Some employees also see it as something that has nothing to do with them.”*

Interviewee C believes that is possible to make meaningful connections between the fields of social work and management, but that it depends on whether individual employees are personally interested in the topic: *“I think it is possible to connect the fields of social work and management but it depends on whether individual employees accept this connection.”* Nevertheless, Interviewee C believes that we would have to realize that some employees will be opposed to the subject from the outset, because they believe that social work needs more social workers, not experts from outside professions: *“I see that [knowledge management] could contribute but it also depends on how others see it. Some will start with the opinion that there is a shortage of personnel and that we need social workers, not people*

and expertise from other professions.” Interviewee E also believes that explanation and training could have a positive influence and claims that interdisciplinarity is necessary because additional knowledge is always beneficial for employees: “It is possible that [previous training and explanation] would have a positive influence. I think that interdisciplinarity is important, that knowledge is intertwined, that employees could understand things in a different way. Any additional knowledge represents an added value for an individual employee.” However, Interviewee E also believes that it depends on individual employees and their level of proactivity: “[New knowledge] is welcomed by those who have an interest and are proactive.”

Interviewee F clarified that in their social work center, employees expect the manager to manage knowledge and to enable professional growth: *“Employees expect that you, as a manager, will also manage knowledge. Employees expect from managers that they will facilitate and enable professional growth.”* Interviewee G believes that a change in perception is possible: *“Perceptions could change.”* However, Interviewee G adds that employees currently do not specifically talk about management and knowledge management practices, despite the fact that they engage with them in practice: *“During our training sessions, we do not talk specifically about management. We mostly talk about existing legislation and how it limits us. Often we are not even aware that we are actually talking about management but are just using other terms. Some do not understand it in this way and do not identify it as management.”*

Interviewee H emphasizes that it would be necessary to reach some common ground in terms of terminology as he/she does not see the current terminology as appropriate for social work: *“Maybe we will have to introduce more acceptable terms [for knowledge management]. I am not sure if it will be accepted in the form presented here regardless of how you explain it to employees.”* According to interviewee I, prior training and explanation would help and it is possible to implement more knowledge management in social work because social workers are in general quite flexible about new ideas: *“[Training and explanations] would help. The initial reaction would be: ‘aha, I know what this is’. This things can change when you are dealing with someone employed in social work. Social work is very dynamic. Individuals employed in social work have a wide spectrum of knowledge. The work demands it and you cannot function without it. People are very flexible.”*

4.2.7 Concluding Thought

During the conclusion of the qualitative phase, interviewees were given the opportunity to add their own final thoughts. At this point in the interviews, I especially wanted to focus on possible suggestions for improvements in connecting the fields of social work and knowledge management.

Interviewee A proposed that knowledge management in social work should become more structured and be given more concrete meaning so that employees would be able to internalize it and consciously work on it: *“Knowledge management in social work should become more structured and be given more meaning so that employees can internalize it and consciously work on it. They should understand that it would bring returns in the future and that they would become more successful and efficient.”* Interviewee B added that social workers should gradually be made more aware of the importance of management and knowledge management: *“I think we should be more aware of the importance of management and knowledge. In a way, it is already present in practice. It is developing and it is something that social work centers are already working on, although perhaps not systematically and deliberately enough.”* Interviewee F hoped that if the findings reveal that more knowledge is necessary in social work, it would allow social workers more access to training opportunities: *“If the findings were that we needed more knowledge, there would potentially be more opportunities for training.”* Interviewee H suggested that it would be beneficial if social work students would have the possibility to explore these themes during their university study: *“As far as my concluding ideas, I think we could do a lot more on the primary level, at the faculty of social work. This is a topic that is underdeveloped. There is not enough emphasis on the wider aspects of social work at the faculty.”*

5 OVERALL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Challenges Revealed in Quantitative and Qualitative Phases

By combining the research findings from the quantitative and qualitative phases, I was able to identify the most pressing challenges in social work centers in Slovenia. I summarize them in Table 32.

Table 32: Challenges in Social Work Centers in Slovenia as Revealed by Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results

Challenge in Social Work Center
Hierarchy
Incentive structure
Lack of financial resources
Reorganization not achieving desired goals
Shortage of skilled workforce
Deficit in quality of services
Underutilized knowledge management
Lack of time
Work overload

Current ICT solutions
Krpan information system
Moderately effective knowledge management
Training too narrowly focused on social work

Source: Own work

5.2 Needs Revealed in Quantitative and Qualitative Phases

By combining the research findings from the quantitative and qualitative phases, I was also to identify certain needs or wishes common to social work centers that might improve their future operations. I present them in Table 33.

Table 33: Needs in Social Work Centers in Slovenia as Revealed by Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results

Need in Social Work Centers
Decentralization and flexibility
Adapted terminology for knowledge management
Modifications to Krpan system
Clear and active communication by management
Improved collaboration and communication
Financial impact of knowledge management
More training opportunities

Source: Own work

5.3 Positive Aspects Revealed in Quantitative and Qualitative Phases

By combining the research findings from the quantitative and qualitative phases, I was able to identify specific aspects of the operations of social work centers that are currently functioning adequately. These aspects are presented in Table 34:

Table 34: Well Functioning Aspects in Social Work Centers in Slovenia as Revealed by Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results

Well Functioning Aspects in Social Work Centers
Employees involved in decision-making processes
Two-way communication patterns
Informal engagement in knowledge management
Collective involvement in social networks

Source: Own work

5.4 Discussion

In the first part of the doctoral dissertation, I focused on the research question: to what extent is knowledge management used in social work centers in Slovenia. I examined the extent of knowledge management using five criteria: management responsibility and four stages of the knowledge management process (knowledge creation, knowledge storage and retrieval,

knowledge transfer, and knowledge implementation). Using a questionnaire, I collected data from 98 respondents employed in social work centers in Slovenia. The results show that in practice management responsibility for knowledge management activities in Slovenian social work centers is moderate at best. Similarly, activity levels of three stages of the knowledge management process (knowledge creation, knowledge storage and retrieval, and knowledge implementation) are also moderate at best. Only the knowledge transfer aspect seems to have higher levels of activities in practice, which might be explained by the presence of a strong and collaborative culture among social workers. These findings suggest that social work centers could benefit from the further enhancement and promotion of knowledge management.

In the second part of the doctoral dissertation, I focused on the research question: how effective is knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia. I examined the effectiveness of knowledge management using the following four criteria: enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced performance. I collected data from 30 managers and employees at social work centers in Slovenia. The results show that the effectiveness of knowledge management is moderate in practice. In addition to this, the responses in general followed many of the propositions found in the literature regarding potential improvements that might result from knowledge management practices. However, a significant number of interviewees had neutral (or ambiguous) responses to certain questions, indicating possible areas for further research. The number of respondents (63) who stated in the questionnaire that their organizations do not engage in knowledge management practices suggest that knowledge management is insufficiently used in practice and follow-up studies will be needed to understand the possible reasons for this state of affairs.

In the third part of the doctoral dissertation, I focused on organizational factors that influence knowledge management. The correlations involving organizational culture and the nine measures of knowledge management activities show only a strong and significant association with knowledge transfer. Moderate and low significant correlations were found between organizational culture and seven measures of knowledge management activities: namely, management responsibility, knowledge creation, knowledge storage, knowledge implementation, enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, and enhanced performance. The correlation with enhanced learning was non-significant. The coefficients between organizational culture and seven of the knowledge management activities were negative. However, it should be noted that organizational culture significantly and uniquely contributed (2.0%) to the prediction of knowledge transfer. Such findings suggest that more emphasis on the organizational culture could benefit social work centers in improving the extent of knowledge transfer in their organizations.

Overall, the strong and positive relationship between organizational culture and knowledge transfer was expected, given that social workers in general devote a great deal of effort and

emphasis on creating a collaborative working environment where they can build meaningful relationships with their colleagues and users, and information and knowledge are regularly shared. Although organizational culture is moderately and significantly related to management responsibility, knowledge creation, knowledge storage, enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, and enhanced performance, negative coefficients suggest that an improvement in organizational culture (if all other factors remained constant) would actually decrease the extent and effectiveness of these activities. To summarize, the findings indicate that organizational culture influences knowledge management practices, but that the influence is not necessarily positive.

In addition, correlations related to organizational infrastructure and the nine measures of knowledge management activities revealed a strong and significant association with management responsibility, knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, knowledge implementation, enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced performance. A moderate and significant correlation was found between organizational infrastructure and knowledge storage. The coefficients between organizational culture and all nine of the knowledge management activities were positive. Moreover, organizational infrastructure significantly and uniquely contributed to the prediction of management responsibility (33.8%), knowledge creation (18.7%), knowledge storage (6.7%), knowledge transfer (21.9%), and knowledge implementation (21.7%). The results suggest that organizational infrastructure could be a potential catalyst in improving the overall extent of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia.

Strong and positive relationships between organizational infrastructure and all five constructs of the extent of knowledge management were to be predicted as managerial, technological, and social infrastructure could be understood as the three important pillars of developing the successful functioning of the majority of activities in organizations. As organizational infrastructure is in general strongly and significantly connected to all nine measures of knowledge management activities, these positive coefficients suggest that improvements in organizational culture (if all other factors remained constant) would ultimately increase the extent and effectiveness of all activities related to knowledge management. To conclude, the results indicate that organizational infrastructure has the strongest influence on knowledge management practices and that the influence is positive for all nine proposed knowledge management activities.

Moreover, moderate and significant correlations were found between organizational structure and management responsibility, knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, knowledge implementation, enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, and enhanced learning. A modest and significant correlation was found between organizational structure and knowledge storage. The correlation with enhanced performance was non-significant. Only one coefficient, that between organizational structure and knowledge management activities, was negative. Furthermore, organizational structure did not make a significant and unique

contribution to any of the knowledge management activities. Thus, changes to the organizational structure in social work centers are unlikely to have a substantial effect on enhancing the extent or effectiveness of knowledge management activities. Overall, organizational structure in general moderately and significantly affected measures of knowledge management activities. However, the relatively small positive coefficients suggest that improvements in organizational structure (if all other factors remained constant) would have only a low or almost negligible effect on activities related to knowledge management. Such findings are particularly interesting when set beside the existing reorganization of social work centers, which was strongly oriented toward changing organizational structure.

The correlations related to organizational leadership and the nine measures of knowledge management activities revealed a strong and significant association with management responsibility, knowledge transfer, knowledge implementation, enhanced communication, and enhanced performance. Moderate and significant correlations were found between organizational leadership and knowledge creation and enhanced collaboration. The correlations with knowledge storage and improved learning were non-significant. Organizational leadership did not make a significant and unique contribution to any knowledge management activities. As a consequence, changes in organizational leadership in social work centers are unlikely to have any meaningful effect on improving the extent or effectiveness of knowledge management activities. Overall, organizational leadership strongly and significantly influences measures of knowledge management activities. However, the relatively small positive coefficients suggest that improvements in organizational leadership (if all other factors remained constant) would have only a minimal effect on activities related to knowledge management.

Nowadays, there is an imperative to seek sustainable development in all dimensions, including the social dimension (Belchior Rocha, 2018). Moreover, as Missimer, Robert and Broman (2017) emphasize, in a socially sustainable society individuals do not have to tackle any structural obstacles related to many aspects of their functioning, including health and social services. In addition to this, social workers already recognize social sustainability, as it deals with individual health and wellbeing, nutrition, shelter, education and cultural needs (Brennan, 2010). Sustainability themes also have multiple implications for social work in general, such as social resilience to future economic and ecological shocks (Blake, 2009).

Considering that the case study of Slovenian female social workers actually shows that the existing patterns of entrance and exit of social workers will decrease the availability of social workers despite the increasing need for staffing, it is of paramount importance to endorse efforts that acknowledge the importance of understanding workforce entrance and exit in the social work profession on a national level in order to provide the required number of well-trained social workers who will provide wellbeing for a growing number of service users in an aging society. Efforts to maintain or improve the availability of social workers should focus also on the quality of knowledge management activities, as this can contribute towards

maintaining fully productive social workers and mitigate any intention among them to change their profession or retire early. As is evident from table 29, I argue that in the event of successful knowledge management implementation, more female social workers would remain fully productive for a longer period, and they would be less motivated to change their profession due to various reasons, while also staying longer as active participants on the labor market (Colnar et al., 2019).

Part of my study examines the role employee empowerment and its moderating effect on the direct relationship between management support and incentives with knowledge implementation in social work. Notably, management support had a positive and significant influence on knowledge implementation (Hypothesis 1). Additionally, incentives also had a positive and significant relationship with knowledge implementation (Hypothesis 2). The moderating effect of employee empowerment on the relationship between management support and knowledge implementation was non-significant (Hypothesis 3). Meanwhile, the relationship between incentives and knowledge implementation was further moderated by employee empowerment (Hypothesis 4), however, the interaction term was negative. Specifically, the highest levels of knowledge implementation occur when employee empowerment is high (Colnar & Dimovski, 2019).

The combined results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis revealed that hierarchy is strongly present in social work centers in Slovenia and is viewed to be an important factor in their functioning. As clarified by six interviewees, hierarchy is important because social work tends to be heavily defined by laws and legislation. Hierarchy influences the ability of social workers to properly do their job, and to make decisions and assume responsibility when organizing work and allocating personnel. As indicated in previous research, excessive hierarchy can have a detrimental effect on desired outcomes related to knowledge management initiatives (Amayah, 2013; Alhamoudi, 2015). Therefore, I would argue that hierarchy could be seen as one of the principle barriers preventing knowledge management from being more widely utilized in Slovenian social work centers. For this reason, social work centers should engage in efforts and actions that would decrease the potential negative effects of excessive hierarchy on the potential of knowledge management activities.

Another important observation from the qualitative phase of study is that the majority of interviewees indicate that decentralization and flexibility represents a desirable direction in social work. My research findings suggest that decentralization and flexibility would have several potential benefits for the functioning of social work centers. Namely, it would introduce solutions beneficial to the users of social services, and it offers a viable alternative to the previously unsuccessful attempts at centralization. It could also potentially reduce the onerous levels of bureaucracy, giving more power and responsibilities to employees. Decentralization might almost be viewed as a necessity for social work, which is very flexible by nature. However, as social work centers operate in the context of the public sector, it is necessary to be aware of possible restrictions that emerge from current and future

legislative framework. Nevertheless, I argue that pursuing the potential positive effects of decentralization and flexibility would be desirable for social work centers in Slovenia. If such models could be introduced, we would be following the guidelines of Sharrat and Usoro (2003) who argue that organizations with flexible and decentralized organizational structures that support knowledge-related activities produce better results in knowledge management.

The results of the follow-up interviews showed that employees are generally involved in the decision-making process. Such results were contrary to the results of the quantitative phase in which respondents were almost equally divided in being in agreement or disagreement with (or unsure about) the related statement. There were some discernible differences in the levels of proactivity of individuals, and the flow of information is not the same in every social work center. However, I believe that in general the ideas and initiatives of employees have at least the possibility of being taken into account. An important challenge regarding this aspect in social work is related to the high number of tasks that are predefined by legislation, which makes it difficult for employees to initiate change. Therefore, I argue that social work centers should continue with examples of good practice in this area because it has been shown in previous research that the involvement of employees in decision-making processes has several benefits for individual employees and for the organization as a whole. Perhaps the most important benefit indicated in the research is that the quality of social services may increase as a result of the higher involvement of employees in decision-making process, (Vandenberg et al., 1999).

All nine interviewees indicated that communication patterns in their organization are both top-down and bottom-up. Such results contradict the initial findings from the quantitative analysis in which respondents were almost equally divided between positive, negative, and neutral responses to the related statement. However, when I discussed the topic of knowledge sharing behaviour, the results indicated that the majority of these kind of activities occur informally. As explained by one interviewee, there is an established system of mentorship, which is not written in any document and is therefore not mandatory. One interviewee discussed the ongoing information flow that is available to all employees. Again, such flows of information are due to the system that specific managers have incorporated rather than being written or mandatory. Two interviewees provided the most concrete explanations regarding such activities. One discussed knowledge sharing behaviours that can be described as unofficial and occur voluntarily. Much credit must go to managers who promote this way of functioning. The other interviewee claimed that the majority of knowledge sharing or knowledge transfer activities takes place in meetings and are more formal. However, I argue that knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer occurs more informally in general and the primary aim of such informal activities is not specifically related to knowledge transfer. One interviewee acknowledged that they tried to implement systems of knowledge transfer in the past, but it had been unworkable because of time constraints and extensive workload. Similarly, other interviewees viewed time constraints and extensive workload as one of the most negative factors affecting knowledge management and other activities. As evident from

the research of Bjorkenheim (2007), time constraints also cause problems in the social work sector in other national contexts such as Finland. In Bjorkenheim's research, over half of the respondents reported that there is not enough time to apply newly gained knowledge in practice as they are generally overburdened with their daily tasks. Similarly, Beddoe (2011) argues that time is one of the (objective) barriers that contribute to a situation in which a great deal of knowledge in social work organizations remains hidden.

To conclude this section, I would once again emphasize the opinion of Riege (2005): namely, that it is problematic if organizations rely too heavily on one direction (typically top-down) in their communication patterns and knowledge flows. Therefore, I believe that social work centers must continuously strive toward cultivating two-way communication patterns and knowledge sharing behaviours as this could ultimately contribute to the success of knowledge management activities.

Based on non-academic references and my own intuition, I examined the topic of the shortage of skilled social workers in social work centers in Slovenia. All of the interviewees were of the opinion that there are not enough social workers employed in their organizations. Moreover, they indicated several problems that result from this condition. They are concerned about their long-term ability to keep putting out fires under constant time pressures. To function properly in their current work environment, they must define work priorities. In terms of their daily activities, the interviewees indicated that they are confronted by a heavy workload that often results in the burnout of individual employees, and that all employees have to struggle to remain motivated in the long-term. Moreover, extensive bureaucracy and the challenges of completing basic tasks, such as responding to emails, hinder their ability to deliver the best possible services to their users. In my opinion, such results should compel national policy and decision-makers to consider ways of solving this ongoing problem. But as one interviewee indicated, this is a very complex and demanding problem and it is not clear what its solution might be.

In part because of the lack of personnel, the majority of interviewees believed that users are already now experiencing a shortfall in the quality of provided services, and this situation will worsen in the future. The interviewees pointed to several challenges that need to be addressed. Namely, in accordance with the slogan of the reorganization process ("closer to the people"), it would be necessary to allocate social workers who can work in closer proximity to their users, that is actually work in the field. Currently, social workers believe that it is hard to provide added value to their users. Moreover, they believe that their profession in general is difficult because it serves people who are dealing with complex situations in their lives. Interviewees noted that, in addition to their already difficult work conditions, a lot of negativity is present because of the complex challenges faced by their users. Interviewees frequently reiterated that they are doing the best possible job under the circumstances. Not unlike my previous conclusion, such findings should be a source of

concern for the responsible national policy and decision-makers as they confront problems in the social work sector.

Given both the quantitative and qualitative results, I came to the conclusion that knowledge management is underdeveloped and underutilized in practice in social work centers. Therefore, I decided to also attempt to gain insight into how interviewees conceive of potential changes that knowledge management could introduce if they were sufficient personnel. As mentioned by several respondents and interviewees, the most pressing issues in their work today are lack of time and work overload. A general conclusion drawn from the nine interviews is that the field of knowledge management was potentially interesting for social work centers in Slovenia. As was evident in the case of Finnish social workers, social workers have a strong desire to learn more about current research topics because it enables them to come up with new ideas that they can apply in their daily practice (Bjorkenheim, 2007). Moreover, in the case of Slovenia, humanitarian and non-governmental organizations have already suggested that the resolution to problems in public services today requires broader knowledge from a range of different fields (Social Protection Institute, 2017).

In Finland, the promotion of collaboration between research, education, and practice proved to be beneficial as it resulted in the delivery of improved services within the context of what is identified as knowledge-based good practice. This example offers a potential future path for Slovenia. However, several important challenges must be fully acknowledged and addressed before trying to promote more knowledge management activities in Slovenian social work centers. Social work centers must reach the point where they are able to perform their basic functions, and have the need and desire to engage in knowledge management in order to make further improvements. As expressed in one of the interviews, more could be done in the area of knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing. I would add that social work centers should also not neglect the important activities of knowledge creation and knowledge implementation.

Consistent with the opinion of one interviewee, I believe it would be beneficial to inform social workers about this topic in an effort to persuade them to include knowledge management in their daily tasks as well as their weekly and monthly plans. In spite of the many potential benefits of knowledge management and the generally positive attitude of interviewees, it is important to realize that not every social worker feels comfortable with the introduction of more “quantocentric” approaches and cultures. As explained by one interviewee, the terminology should be adapted to find more common ground with social workers. Similarly, as one interviewee remarked, more emphasis should be put on knowledge in practice because there remains a considerable gap between theory and practice.

Given the fact that we live in a time of constant change and progress in ICT, it must also be noted that the social work sector lags behind in this area. The sector has gradually moved toward implementing ICT solutions in their daily work but a number of challenges remain.

These challenges will need to be confronted prior to the implementation of knowledge management activities in social work centers. If the picture was not made clear on the basis of the quantitative results alone, additional insight was gained during the interviews which revealed that social workers are not satisfied with the current solutions being introduced in their field. Specifically, they regret the fact that solutions are generally not adapted to fit the needs of social work. It is not unusual, moreover, that the introduction of new ICT systems causes time delays during the early days of implementation.

Interviewees reported that they would welcome support from employees that are already skilled in ICT. As the number of older social workers in Slovenian social work centers is not negligible, it is concerning that these employees typically experience many problems understanding and using ICT systems in their work. An additional challenge is the fact that there are many different databases in Slovenian social work centers and they have not been connected. As a result, a great deal of work (data input) is duplicated. Such pressing issues require immediate action regardless of whether the field of knowledge management is pursued or not.

Based on the responses to the level of satisfaction with existing ICT solutions as well as on the quantitative part of the analysis that focused on whether employees tend to avoid using ICT due to a deficit in knowledge, I expected that responses to the question of whether social workers have adequate knowledge and whether they are reluctant to engage in using such solutions due to a lack of knowledge would present similar to barriers and challenges as those identified in the literature. Namely, Becta (2004) defined these barriers as a lack of confidence, resistance to change, and insufficient training in ICT problem solving. Similarly, Williams et al. (2000) found that the teachers in their sample, also public sector employees, would have liked to use ICT solutions in their workplace but were unable to do so because of their lack of technical skills and knowledge. Such a deficit in knowledge can be detrimental to a range organizational activities and initiatives (Melville et al., 2004). In the opinion of Iyengar et al. (2015), organizations should increase their efforts and investments in ICT systems, in increasing the ICT skills and training of employees, and in the usage of ICT applications because ICT is constantly gaining in importance as it becomes relatively cheaper and impacts more and more organizations.

Several topics brought up by interviewees point to numerous areas that might be of concern to national policy and decision-makers if they wish to effectively implement ICT in social work centers. In particular, interviewees observed a significant deficit in knowledge and skills related to this topic. The absence of such knowledge and skills in older employees was particularly emphasized. The generally negative attitude towards ICT solutions can also be explained by the fact that these systems are often perceived as tools of surveillance and that many social workers believe that they are not suitable to the social work environment. There is also an atmosphere of fear related to change in general. Finally, managers and employees would welcome more training and support related to the use and functioning of relevant ICT

solutions. Although not all interviewees were critical and many noted the positive aspects of the current level of ICT in social work centers, the overall results give cause for worry.

In addition to the general aspects of ICT, I asked respondents/interviewees about their first impressions of the newly introduced Krpan information system. Although many challenges remain to be addressed and resolved in the social work centers, there is a sense that Krpan could be part of future solutions. The majority of interviewees agreed but also noted many flaws that were present in the introductory phase and offered several suggestions for improving the added value of Krpan in social work centers. Among them, communication efforts would have to be made to reduce the perception of social work employees that the main purpose of Krpan is to implement control or surveillance.

Because the Krpan system was designed for the public sector as a whole, additional modifications to suit the complex tasks and challenges of social work would also be needed. The ability to connect it to other social work databases and systems is integral to its success because the absence of such connections often results in the duplication of work, which translates into delays and the use of additional time. Once these problems are solved, the Krpan information system will contribute to reducing the amount of paperwork that is currently the prevailing form of communication and documentation in social work centers. It will also offer time savings, allowing social workers to dedicate more time to their users and generally begin to move the sector into the era of digitalization which is the trend of social work in the 21st century.

The results of the quantitative analysis indicated that knowledge management is underutilized in practice. I explored this issue during the qualitative phase when I asked interviewees their opinion about the state of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia. An analysis of the responses of the nine interviewees established certain commonalities between the perception of interviewees and the four constructs I defined to measure the extent of knowledge management. Specifically, several interviewees mentioned management responsibility, knowledge creation, and knowledge transfer. Two constructs, knowledge storage and retrieval and, perhaps the most important process stage, knowledge implementation, did not resonate with the interviewees, and thus are topics that may require additional attention in future research projects. However, as responses from interviewees were not completely disconnected from my definition of the measures of knowledge management in social work, I believe that this type of conversation could provide an approach or entry point to explanations that would make it clear to social workers that their work already includes aspects of knowledge management and encourage them to include even more such activities in their future operations.

The results of my nine interviews confirm the findings of Downes (2014) that the majority of social work centers engage informally in knowledge management activities. These results stood in stark contrast to the quantitative findings in which 67.7% of respondents expressed

the opinion that no knowledge management activities take place in their social work center at all. Four interviewees reported that they have developed a formal training plan for their employees, and five interviews mentioned the aspect of knowledge transfer. Seven interviewees confirmed that their organization informally engages in knowledge management activities.

The interviewees mentioned several other aspects of their work that could be connected with knowledge management: internal learning groups, knowledge databases, knowledge creation, knowledge implementation, added value for employees, investing in employees, adapting to changes, and positive influences on the quality of employees' work and their job satisfaction. However, several interviewees also noted challenges related to existing knowledge management practices while expressing the opinion that significant improvements are still possible in this area. To summarize, I believe that general remarks related to informal knowledge management in social work centers sound a positive note, suggesting that the combination of knowledge management and social work is achievable.

Findings from both the quantitative and qualitative research suggest that informal knowledge management practices have been present in social work centers for many years. Interviewees provided concrete examples of knowledge-related activities that are already present in their practice: namely, training plans and programs, knowledge creation, and knowledge transfer. They also discussed why knowledge management may be underutilized, suggesting that its day-to-day practice depends both on specific managers and available funds, and that it may be described using different terminology. Moreover, they emphasized that in recent years the knowledge management field has been gaining in importance and recognition in the context of social work. Such findings represent an optimistic view regarding the implementation of additional knowledge management activities and initiatives in social work centers.

In an attempt to explain the factors that influence knowledge management in social work centers, I also focused on the previous experiences and education of managers. The interviewees confirmed that the background of specific managers does determine the extent of knowledge management activities in their organizations. However, opinions were mixed about whether managers of social work centers must have a background in social work. In the last few years, professional from other fields have become managers of social work centers, and it would be interesting to examine in future research how these managers differ from those with a social work background in general and in terms of the approach to knowledge management. Interviewees also indicated that the personal characteristics of managers, their mentality and overall attitude toward change, are also extremely influential.

As suggested in the literature, it may be beneficial for organizations to have managers directly responsible for knowledge management activities (Dehgani & Ramsin, 2015). As the results of the quantitative phase of my research produced inconclusive results in this area, I sought to gain additional understanding during the qualitative phase about whether social

work centers in Slovenia tend to have such managers. Several interviewees elucidated the reasons why in general social work centers do not have managers directly responsible for knowledge management activities. Nevertheless, the combined results of the quantitative and qualitative phases, did not yield clear conclusions. Three of the interviewees stated that they have such a manager in their organizations, whereas three interviewees stated that they don't. Two interviewees stated their organizations have a manager who is partially responsible for knowledge management. In general, I conclude that the situation is dependent on the general orientation of top management in individual social work centers and particularly on their view of knowledge management. Interviewees who were generally positive on this subject also mentioned the inclusion of employees in this area, the difference between individual social work centers, and stressed the importance of training. Interviewees who were generally negative stated that it was not possible for management to focus on knowledge management because of the generally heavy workload, while mentioning that certain aspects of knowledge management were already covered. I would once again make the argument that there is too much emphasis on training opportunities in general.

As indicated in research by Moffett et al. (2003), and Van den Hooff and de Ridder (2004) communication is of paramount importance in the field of knowledge management. Management communication is particularly important due to its influence on individual employees as confirmed by Sopuata (2005) and Ng et al. (2006). The quantitative results of my research indicated potential problems in management communication in social work centers, and additional insight was provided on this issue during the interviews. Four interviewees stated that management communication about the expectations and benefits of knowledge management is adequate. Three interviewees only partially agreed that there is active and clear communication from management on this subject, and two interviewees were relatively negative, suggesting the potential for improvement in management communication in social work centers in Slovenia. Once again, the heavy workload was mentioned in connection with this question, and significant emphasis was placed on the training aspect though, as noted above, training does not represent the totality of knowledge management activities.

Although knowledge management can be difficult to measure (Bharadway et al., 2015), I followed the suggestions in Anantatmula's research (2007), and attempted to measure the effectiveness of knowledge management in Slovenian social work centers with changes in soft measures. To evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge management, I focused on four constructs: namely, enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced performance. Both the results of the quantitative and qualitative phases of my research suggest that knowledge management is moderately effective as practiced in social work centers in Slovenia. Interviewees provided several concrete suggestions that would lead to improvements, such as addressing the problems of lack of time as well as limited financial resources and personnel. Interviewees also acknowledged that certain changes were evident after the reorganization, but that it is too early to provide a final assessment. One interviewee

expressed the opinion that it would be beneficial for social work centers to establish systems that would be capable of responding to the constant changes that are occurring in the field.

Pursuing the theme of soft measures, I asked interviewees whether they believe knowledge management has a beneficial effect on all four constructs or if the impact was more important for certain of them. All nine interviewees saw the beneficial impact on at least one construct used to measure the effectiveness of knowledge management. Moreover, five interviewees believe that knowledge management could be beneficial for all four constructs. Other interviewees highlighted specific constructs, with enhanced collaboration and communication being mentioned several times. As respondents see potential benefits of knowledge management on specific aspects of the functioning of social work centers, it would be beneficial to further discuss the possibilities of implementing knowledge management activities and initiatives in social work centers.

As public sector organizations are exposed to limited funds and calls for transparency in their functioning, I wanted to gain insight into the financial aspect of knowledge management. Previous research established that the financial impact of knowledge management tends to be indirect (Akgun et al., 2007), while some authors claim that it is extremely hard to define the financial aspects of any activities related to knowledge (AGIMO, 2004). My findings about financial aspects of knowledge management in the quantitative phase of my research were scarce and inconclusive, but during the qualitative phase I succeeded in gathering many different opinions. The general conclusion is that although the financial aspect of knowledge management may be important, it is not essential to the success of knowledge management initiatives. Several other contributions of knowledge management were mentioned: namely, investment in employees, innovative solutions for users, the possibility of choice, improvements in soft measures, and indirect savings in time and money. Several valid concerns were expressed such as the necessity of knowledge management having at least a positive zero return in terms of financial outcomes and the need to counteract prevailing shortages in time and personnel. Moreover, the priority in the daily operations of social work centers is to deal with the most pressing issues, and to explore other sources of additional income.

Social networks are gaining in importance and recognition. Authors Liebowitz (2005), and Chan and Liebowitz (2006), already concluded that social network analysis can be a useful tool for examining and establishing knowledge flows in organizations. Social networks also have the potential to impact knowledge management in organizations. My initial quantitative results were negative, with only 25.3% of respondents agreeing that their organization promotes social networks among employees. These findings may be due to confusion related to the term social network as it may be exclusively associated with social network websites such as Facebook. However, the results from the qualitative phase of my research provide a different insight into this topic. The interviewees unanimously agreed that social networks in social work centers are important and that the majority of employees feels included and

involved. Moreover, six interviewees provided concrete examples of informal gatherings that regularly occur in their social work centers. Certain challenges were also mentioned: for example, that, as in other organizations, there is often one individual that does not fit in, that there are differences between social work centers, and that employees from the same departments tend to have stronger ties with each other than with employees from other departments. In order to further promote knowledge management in social work centers, maintaining the level of employee inclusion in social networks is important as it could potentially provide a catalyst for other knowledge-related activities in social work centers.

Training and education are particularly important in the field of knowledge management, having been identified as one of the seven factors critical to its success (Valmohammadi & Ahmadi, 2015). Organizations are increasingly aware of the need to provide their employees with training opportunities (Jaw & Liu, 2003; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The results of the quantitative phase of my research revealed that training is currently offered in the existing operations of social work centers. The interviewees confirmed this opinion, but brought up several problems that need to be addressed to further improve the functioning of social work centers and to create more opportunities for employees to attend training related to the topic of knowledge management, and more generally the topic of management and organization.

I summarize here some of the main challenges that were identified in this area and that would merit additional attention from national policy and decision-makers. First, there are differences in the motivation of individual employees. In particular, employees nearing retirement are not motivated to attend training courses. Second, the amount of workload that employees encounter on a daily basis hinders their ability to attend training. Third, in addition to the ongoing shortage of personnel, budgets are restricted and social work centers have limited funds available for training purposes. Currently there is a considerable gap between the ten days training that are defined as mandatory by legislation and the amount of training that social workers actually receive.

The initial results of the qualitative phase revealed that the majority of interviewees do not believe that their organizations offer training opportunities related to knowledge management. This was to be expected. To further discuss the topic of training in social work centers, I asked the interviewees their opinion about the potential broadening of the existing knowledge base, including topics such as knowledge management and more generally management and organization. Although the general attitude toward the inclusion of such topics was positive, there are many obstacles that could slow the implementation of more knowledge management training in social work centers. Such problems, which include personnel shortages, limited budgets, and lack of time due to work overload, will need to be addressed and resolved.

In addition, in the opinion of one of my interviewees, the quality of existing lecturers that cover these topics in the social work environment is questionable at best. Moreover, the

general perception is that the majority of training is specifically related to social work, a tendency that must be taken into account. The gradual introduction of training topics that cover aspects of management, organization, and knowledge management may be possible as many managers in social work centers believe that investing in employees has enormous potential to positively impact their operations.

Lettieri, Borga, and Savodelli (2004) argue that public sector organizations suffer from shortages of finances and personnel. During the qualitative phase of the research, interviewees frequently mentioned that the financial situation in social work centers in Slovenia is far from optimal. They also provided concrete examples of the consequences of limited budgets. The examples include being dependent on employees going on sick leave in order to cover the costs of salaries, the yearly reductions in funds allocated to material expenses, the necessity to search for savings from basic items such as toilet paper, and limited training opportunities. As existing funding is unlikely to satisfy all the needs of social work centers, it would be necessary to present these findings to national policy and decision-makers as they prepare annual budgets for the public sector. As expected, most interviewees also confirmed that no funds are currently available in social work centers for knowledge management activities. Some of the interviewees expressed the opinion that training and other activities related to management and topics related to knowledge management would be welcome if social work centers had the possibility of receiving additional funding.

The management of all organizations, whether in the private or public sector, are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of incentives (Austin et al., 2008). In the case of the field of knowledge management, employees who perform knowledge-related activities should be rewarded so they will be motivated to continue performing these activities and exploring knowledge management topics. Because the general opinion is that public sector organizations are limited in terms of possible incentives systems, I expected a high level of dissatisfaction regarding incentive systems among employees and managers of social work centers in Slovenia. Both the results from the quantitative and qualitative phase revealed that social workers, both employees and managers, are indeed disappointed with the current incentive structures. National policy and decision-makers should also be made aware of the problems exposed by this research: namely, that both promotion opportunities via higher salary class or higher job title are too far deferred into the future to be meaningful or motivating.

Social work centers should find ways of offering non-financial incentives to compensate for the lack of financial rewards. These solutions, though necessary, have only a limited and short-term effect on employees. One of the interviewees noted that it is a difficult situation for social workers to have to be satisfied simply because they are given the possibility of attending training as a form of recognition. The majority of interviewees stated that there is virtually no possibility of offering or receiving financial rewards in social work centers in

Slovenia. I believe that the absence of appropriate incentives can hinder the quality of overall operations because social workers do not feel appreciated and are not motivated as a result.

In addition to general incentive systems in social work centers, I examined both components of incentives (financial and non-financial) that are part of incentive systems in most modern organizations (Armstrong & Murlis, 2005; Milkovich & Newman, 2008). The trends revealed in the research are similar to those observed by Wah (2000): namely, that the majority of organizations are increasingly moving in the direction of non-financial incentives because of financial pressures and efforts to reduce or control costs. Several interviewees highlighted the need for a balance between financial and non-financial incentives. Many interviewees noted shortcomings in the existing incentive structure, which suggests possible discussion points with national policy and decision-makers. Interviewees stated that social workers would want the possibility to be financially rewarded for work done well. Some interviewees noted that particularly the younger generation of social workers will no longer tolerate the lack of financial incentives. The reorganization process will be discussed in greater detail below, but here it is worth noting that many employees felt disappointed with the results. To conclude, my research findings reveal that there is a need to improve the incentive structure that currently prevails in social work centers in Slovenia.

Responses from interviewees indicate that recent reorganization of Slovenian social centers did not achieve its desired goals, namely to bring social workers closer to their users by freeing up more time for field work. Responses of interviewees indicated a sense of disappointment following the reorganization. Interviewees commented that there were feelings of fear and uncertainty at the beginning of the reorganization followed fairly soon by disappointment. Some interviewees believe that the situation in social work centers is in fact worse after the reorganization. Several interviewees stated the need and desire for the reorganization to address the substance of their work and not merely structural elements. This echoes Chandler's proposition (1962) that structure should follow strategy. The general opinion of interviewees is that the reorganization did not sufficiently deal with the substance of work in social work centers. The feelings of fear at the outset of the reorganization mostly had to do with their employment status. Due to the increased workload that was already present and not alleviated by the reorganization, interviewees stated that many social work employees are considering the possibility of changing their profession, which could introduce additional problems in the social work sector in Slovenia which is already suffering from a shortage of skilled social workers and an aging population.

The opinions of interviewees about the terminological aspect of knowledge management were divided. Some believe that social workers understand knowledge management terms, while others believe they do not. Perhaps more important is the general perception that management in general has a negative connotation in social work because social workers tend to relate management issues with the private sector, multinational companies, management structures, and finance. For this reason, I argue that the mindset of social workers would have

to be transformed in order for them to understand and feel positive about the potential benefits of knowledge management. In addition, several interviewees explained that, although they occupy management positions, they do not identify themselves as managers and that many employees do not understand the relationship between the two fields (social work and management). A step in the right direction would be to make social workers more aware of the positive potential of knowledge management to improve the conditions of social work.

The final question in the qualitative analysis addressed the opinions of interviewees about whether it would be possible for social workers to change their perception regarding management and knowledge management with (prior) explanation and training. The majority of interviewees believes that it would be possible to positively change the perception of social workers toward management and knowledge management. Nevertheless, some important challenges were identified that would need to be addressed in order for more knowledge management activities to be implemented in social work. First, the manager cannot do everything in this regard. Employees must also be brought into the process. Second, terminology should be adapted to be more understandable to social workers. Third, knowledge management activities must be presented to social workers in a way that they are not viewed as being merely additional workload. Fourth, differences between individual employees must be acknowledged. Fifth, social workers should be encouraged to discuss knowledge management with the aim of them realizing that they already informally engage in many knowledge management activities.

Finally, interviewees were given the opportunity to add concluding remarks about the topic of knowledge management in social work. Interviewees made some useful suggestions: namely, that knowledge management should be more structured and given a more precise meaning so that social workers could internalize knowledge management activities and begin to see their benefits. If it was revealed that additional knowledge management activities and awareness were needed in social work centers, it would also be desirable to explore possibilities of additional training opportunities. Finally, it would be optimal if knowledge management topics were already at least partially introduced to social work students during studies at the university.

In conclusion, my research suggests that knowledge management could help social work organizations achieve their primary goal: that employees would be better equipped with the knowledge they need to provide users with higher-quality services. The results of this research could also be used as a starting point in discussions with policy and decision-makers on a national level, showing both the existing shortfall in knowledge management activities and how their application could increase the effectiveness of social work centers in Slovenia.

5.5 Theoretical Contribution

As established in various sections of the dissertation, today most public sector organizations are dealing with continuous shortages of human and financial resources (Gill, 2009; Greenaway & Vuong, 2010; Lettieri, Borga & Savoldelli, 2004), while at the same time the expectations of the general public regarding their services remains high. Consequently, public sector organizations are considering organizational changes that might improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations (Edge, 2005; Haynes, 2005; McAdam & Reid, 2000; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004). The role of knowledge and knowledge management is attracting increasing attention from both scholars and practitioners as a way to achieve organizational excellence, (Siong et al., 2011; Willem & Buelens, 2007). Nevertheless, the concept of knowledge management is still new and remains largely unexplored in the public sector (Špaček, 2016). Other researchers (Austin et al., 2008; Downes, 2014; Leung, 2014) also confirm that knowledge management is a new and unexplored concept in the field of social work. Therefore, with my dissertation, I am following the recommendation of Brekke (2012) and trying to engender a positive attitude toward advancing the frontiers of science, and in particular knowledge management, in social work. In addition, I believe that the findings and analysis contained in this dissertation not only apply knowledge from other disciplines to the field of social work as suggested by Brekke (2012), but also could have an impact on knowledge building in other fields. There are two important theoretical contributions made by this dissertation.

In my dissertation, I contribute to existing knowledge in the field of knowledge management in the public sector and social work in the following ways. The first contribution is to partially fill the already identified research gap related to knowledge management as applied to the public sector in general (Špaček, 2016) and more specifically to knowledge management in social work (Austin et al., 2008; Ciaassen, Vu & Mizrahi, 2008; Chen & Hsieh, 2015; Leung, 2014). Svetlik, Stavrou-Costea and Lin (2007) propose that management support and incentives are organizational factors that impact knowledge management practice. With my theoretical explanation and empirical examination I show how management support and incentives directly and positively influence knowledge implementation in the context of knowledge management in social work centers. In previous studies, researchers also establish that knowledge management can help organizations to impact public policies by a more systematic and effective capture, dissemination, transfer and implementation of knowledge (Riege & Lindsay, 2006) and enhance the quality of their services and programs (Ukil, 2016). However, their focus was not on examining the relationship between the aforementioned constructs explored in my dissertation. Thus, my dissertation is relevant as I show how management support and incentives can shape the occurrence of knowledge implementation in social work centers, which can later influence the aforementioned organizational goals.

Moreover, this dissertation emphasizes the importance of employee empowerment as a moderator that is present only in the relationship of incentives with knowledge implementation. Knowledge implementation in the case of low and high levels of employee

empowerment proves to be sensitive also to changes in levels of incentives. The role of incentives is visible in the case of low and high levels of employee empowerment, when higher levels of incentives lead to higher levels of knowledge implementation in practice. In the case of higher levels of employee empowerment, the role of incentives is smaller. However, as the interaction term is negative, the interaction between employee empowerment and incentives could reduce the overall knowledge implementation in practice. Therefore, I suggest social work centers not to simultaneously focus on both employee empowerment and incentives as it could reduce knowledge implementation. Moreover, we could hypothesize that simultaneously enhancing efforts in employee empowerment and incentives might confuse employees in social work centers. Therefore, with my first contribution I also respond to calls of researchers to theoretically advance knowledge management in the public sector (Al Ahbabi et al., 2019).

The second theoretical contribution is a contribution to the knowledge based-view of the organization (Grant, 1996; Hislop et al., 2018; Kogut & Zander, 2003). This dissertation emphasizes the importance of knowledge in social work centers as I identify it as the potentially primary source underlying their functioning. I find that this research orientation is in line with recommendations of social work researchers towards a shift to the knowledge-based view (Edge, 2005; Fitch, 2006). In some regard, my dissertation also continues the tradition of Kahn (1993) who started exploring how professional caregivers can organize in more effective ways to deliver high-quality services. Especially, how can they transfer and implement knowledge to deliver high-quality services. I aimed to conceptualize and empirically validate how knowledge and knowledge management can help social work centers deliver more high quality services. This novel focus on knowledge management in social work offers significant promise as an area of exploration in the public sector context (Henttonen et al., 2016). Moreover, by studying the social work field, this research goes beyond the typical focus of previous studies on knowledge management in the public sector that was conducted within the education and research sectors (Massaro et al., 2015).

5.6 Practical Contribution

Based on the results of my study, I suggest the following important practical implications for managers and employees in social work centers. Although social work centers are not intended to make profit, they could still benefit from my findings by understanding the positive effects of knowledge management on improving the quality of their services. Social work organizations share an obligation to provide quality services (Bloice & Burnett, 2016) for their users. Therefore, they can potentially enhance the wellbeing of the whole of society. Social work centers are increasingly more aware that similarly to other public organizations they are exposed to growing demands from their services users as well as shrinking resources. Therefore, they could aim to improve internally in order to successfully maximize

their existing resources (Dimovski et al., 2017) and to deliver their mission to society (Miller & Whitford, 2007) in the best possible way as a healthy and more balanced society is the fundamental goal of all social policy (Greve, 2017).

My dissertation could also function as a useful guideline or starting point for social work centers that need to assess the current state of knowledge management in their organizations and are considering implementing additional knowledge management activities with the goal of improving the quality of their services (Arora, 2011). The dissertation provides them with empirical evidence that can be used to evaluate the extent and effectiveness of knowledge management practices in their own organizations and provide them with guidelines for the implementation of more initiatives in order to achieve organizational excellence. In the wider context of the public sector, organizations should be motivated to acquire additional knowledge through knowledge management so that the newly gained knowledge can be transformed into organizational assets and resources (Dawson, 2001). Equipped with newly gained knowledge, organizations would be able to work toward creating sustainable competitive advantages in their field (Alavi & Tiwana, 2002), which could also be useful when applying for additional financing at the national or municipal level.

Based on my results, small steps may be possible in at least four areas that were defined as a method of determining the existing level of knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia. First, organizations should consider the possibility of designating a specific manager who would be responsible (at least part time) for the implementation of knowledge management activities (Aljuwaiber, 2016; Dehgani & Ramsin, 2015; Liebowitz & Frank, 2016; Navarro et al., 2010). These managers, among other things, would indicate their support to employees for knowledge management activities, which is fundamental (Garrido-Moreno, Lockett & Garcia-Morales, 2014). In addition, knowledge managers should strive to establish a clearly defined incentive structure, and promote clear and active lines of communication regarding knowledge management (Austin et al., 2008; Bosilj Vukšić, Pejič Bach, Garrido-Moreno, Lockett & Garcia-Morales, 2015). Second, social work organizations should enhance their efforts to critically evaluate new ideas (Bontis, 2011; Duffy, 2000; Karamitri et al., 2015). Third, organizations should address ongoing challenges regarding ICT systems (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Ouriques et al., 2019; Tapio Inkinen et al., 2015) that are meant to transform existing working patterns in social work centers. Numerous challenges remain regarding ICT and many employees in social work centers have difficulties adapting to the new solutions. Fourth, management of social work centers would need to put more emphasis on auditing currently available knowledge and information, and striving to take advantage of the full potential of that knowledge (Bhatt, 2001). Management should also encourage employees to use and apply newly acquired knowledge in their social work practice (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Downes, 2014; Penrose, 2009), as this is the only way that existing and newly acquired knowledge adds value to the overall functioning of organizations (Bierly et al., 2009; Choi et al., 2010).

The mean values calculated from the quantitative analysis indicate that knowledge management is moderately effective in practice. Therefore, the following improvements are suggested in all four areas. First, organizations should push for further enhancements in decision-making processes (Carneiro, 2000; King, 2009) and promote teamwork (Eppler & Sukowski, 2000). Second, organizations should enhance efforts to make knowledge readily available to all employees in their organizations (Alavi & Leidner, 1999; Anantatmula & Stankosky, 2008; Rodrigues et al., 2016) and to promote actions that positively influence the increased awareness of information critical to achieving the organization's mission (Downes, 2014; Rodrigues et al., 2016). Third, organizations should encourage employees and managers to continually learn and acquire new knowledge (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; Dixon, 2017; North & Kumta, 2018), additional skills, responsibilities, and experience (Argote, 2011; Carneiro, 2000; Senge, 1990) to increase their ability to innovate (Argote, 1999; Carneiro, 2000; Jensen, 2014; Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018), and finally to take individual, group and organizational learning to a higher level (Choo, 1998; Restsch & Faisst, 2004). Fourth, organizations should strive toward the achievement of excellence in their processes (Downes, 2014; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Westerlund & Rajala, 2010) and continuously monitor the financial aspects of knowledge management (Inkinen, 2016) in order to enhance the quality of service for their users (Bloice & Burnett, 2016) and provide support for all measures or activities that contribute to the improvement of overall performance (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; King, 2009; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Rost, 2011).

I found that mean values of all four measured constructs for the moderating role of employee empowerment were at best moderate in practice or may be even considered as low. Moderate or low mean values indicate that social work centers have not yet fully exploited the numerous potential benefits of knowledge management. Small steps of improvements are therefore possible also in all four constructs that were examined to understand the moderating role of employee empowerment. First, social work centers should thoroughly explore whether their management supports knowledge management and knowledge implementation. This is of paramount importance as management support has been determined as a critical success factor (Azme et al., 2017; Yew Wong, 2005) and enabler (Lee, Kim & Kim, 2012) of knowledge management and knowledge implementation. If organizations neglect the management support aspect, the probability of knowledge management to be successful deteriorates (Akbari & Ghaffari, 2017). Second, social work centers should examine if appropriate incentives are provided for efforts related to knowledge management and knowledge implementation. Ensuring the appropriate incentives is integral as it potentially influences the success of the overall knowledge management initiative (Ajmal et al., 2010). Additionally, incentives encourage employees to implement their knowledge (Yew Wong, 2005) and express that their efforts are visible and recognized (Razmerita, Kirchner & Nielsen, 2016). Third, it would be beneficial for social work centers to focus on employee empowerment as it is also a significant factor in determining knowledge management and knowledge implementation success (Ahmadi et al., 2012; Hasan, 2012). However, as the

interaction term in my study was negative, social work centers should be aware that simultaneously endorsing employee empowerment and incentives could be detrimental to the overall levels of knowledge implementation. Fourth, social work centers should determine to what level is knowledge actually implemented in practice. As mentioned also in previous chapters only when knowledge is applied in practice it can help them solve their actual problems (Bierly et al., 2009). The sole existence of knowledge is not enough (Alavi & Leidner, 2001), it has to be implemented in practice. Therefore, managers must consider how to improve knowledge implementation, through which practice it is best implemented in social work and what is their role in stimulating higher levels of knowledge implementation. To conclude, I believe it is important also to discuss the potential of knowledge management on the improvement of services in social work with policy and decision makers at the national level.

5.7 Methodological Contribution

My quantitative approach provides an expected methodological foundation as the majority of previous works researching management topics in social work used qualitative approaches (Downes, 2014), mainly case studies. My quantitative focus builds on the suggestion of Soydan (2008), that the scope of social work research is broad and multidisciplinary and should promote methodological diversity. Moreover, with utilizing also quantitative methods I follow the orientation of Guo (2015) that researchers should use quantitative methods to address the most pressing and challenging issues of social work research and practice. Similarly, it builds on the proposition of Brekke (2012) that social work in theory always strived towards multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity, however, it was not yet achieved in practice. With this dissertation, I strengthen previous research, based on a Slovenian sample and using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Typically quantitative research methods significantly contribute to both understanding and effectively responding to existing challenges that social work encounters (Teater, Devaney, Forrester, Scourfield & Carpenter, 2016). In my research, I have used managers and employees in social work centers in Slovenia and measured their individual perceptions of different knowledge management related aspects.

5.8 Limitations

Despite the newly gained information regarding knowledge management in social work centers in Slovenia, my dissertation is not without limitations. The first limitation is related to the study's sampling frame. Due to the implementation of the GDPR Act in May 2018 the scope of my potential respondents was limited. I was able to collect data from 98 managers and employees that represent only a small proportion of the whole population (1,250 employees in social work centers).

My second limitation is related to common method bias as revealed by the Harman's (1976) single factor test and the common latent factor (Liang et al., 2007) and marker variable (Lindell & Whitney, 2001) approach. I would ideally treat common method bias by obtaining data from my respondents in three waves, where I would measure my independent, moderating and dependent variables at separate points in time, at least two weeks apart (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, finding no interaction effect of employee empowerment on the relationship between management support and knowledge implementation may also be a result of my common method bias issue (Jakobsen & Jensen, 2015). Another potential factor that could explain the lack of moderation effect would be the misfit between empowerment and its related expectations. As emphasized in previous research (i.e. Wong & Kuvaas, 2018; Wong et al., 2017), unclear empowerment expectations might result in the confusion of employees related to their decision making roles, which leads to their poor judgement with work related activities and can negatively impact their perception of competence mobilization.

The third limitation of my dissertation is that I cannot make a general conclusion about the proposed relationships and my findings, because I included only a proportion of social work centers in my research. Thus, the generalizability of my current findings across all social work centers or the whole social work field is not clear. Consequently, the future direction is to include more social work centers in subsequent studies, with the aim to draw final conclusions. Researchers could potentially also include other social work organizations to study those effects on knowledge management. This is an important opportunity as the whole topic of knowledge management is still novel and rather unexplored and thus offers potential for future exploration for both researchers and practitioners in social work.

My fourth limitation is that I did not control for the geographic location of my respondents in my research. As indicated by some respondents, there are significant differences in Slovenian municipalities that also have an influence on the social work field. Therefore, we could additionally explore whether the (statistical) region also influences the level of knowledge management activities in social work centers. Fifth, the transition matrix is only hypothesized based on moderate estimates of how knowledge management would potentially influence the patterns of entrance and exit from the workforce of social workers.

5.9 Future Research

In future research, I would like to gain more genuine understanding of individual perceptions of knowledge management in relation to their daily working routines. Such studies could gain additional in-depth knowledge and insights about specific topics related to knowledge management. I would also encourage researchers to focus on examining my two-way interaction effects results. It could be interesting to gain additional insight on why the interaction effect between management support and employee empowerment was not

statistically significant. Similarly, it could be beneficial to explore why the interaction effect between incentives and employee empowerment was negative.

New constructs could also be included in future research. I suggest linking management support and incentives with knowledge creation, knowledge storage and retrieval and knowledge transfer. Moreover, the leadership style of managers in social work centers could be an interesting additional independent or moderating variable. As my present study was based on the individual level of employee perception, a promising opportunity for future research on knowledge implementation would also be examining the same constructs on the team and organizational level. To conclude this sub-paragraph, the field of knowledge management in the public sector and in social work still has many opportunities to be explored. I believe that my research offers useful theoretical and practical contributions, and I encourage more research related to different aspects of knowledge management in the context of social work. Moreover, my results show that public data regarding workforce entrance and exit in general, and specifically for social workers, should be maintained and regularly published, to afford researchers better access to data regarding workforce availability.

In addition, it would be interesting to gain more in-depth knowledge about supervision groups in social work centers and their influence on existing operations and knowledge management related activities in social work centers. I would also suggest future researchers to explore the concept of hierarchy from the legal framework aspect in the public sector as a whole and in comparison with the aspect of hierarchy within an individual social work center. The existing findings and in particular the well functioning aspects of social work centers including involved employees in the decision making processes and two-way communication patterns suggest it might actually already be a hybrid, potentially transitioning towards the learning organization.

To conclude, the concept of knowledge management is relatively new in the environment of social work and has only recently been gaining in importance (Leung, 2014). Therefore, social work managers and employees without a background in management could face certain challenges in fully understanding knowledge management, a situation that was noted in responses during both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research. Prior to conducting follow-up studies, it would be beneficial to educate respondents about the general concepts of knowledge management and only then obtain opinions in questionnaires and/or interviews. This was not possible in the existing research because of both financial and time constraints. Follow-up studies could focus in a more in-depth manner on specific aspects presented in this study: for example, the extent of knowledge management, the effectiveness of knowledge management, influences of various organizational factors on knowledge management, availability of social workers with multiple decrement models and/or the effect of different moderating variables. Likewise, follow-up studies that use different data collection methods and data analysis techniques would be beneficial.

As the optimal functioning of social work centers is related to the quality of services and the satisfaction of users, it would also be interesting to get feedback from the users of social work organizations regarding their satisfaction with existing services, and in this way identify new areas that could benefit from knowledge management implementation. If possible, it would be beneficial for potential future research studies to conduct and validate the same research with a larger sample of social work employees and managers.

CONCLUSION

As suggested in Jashapara (2011), knowledge and the way it is managed has been a part of humankind since its beginnings. Because of this, many authors have already conducted research on this subject and gained valuable insights into knowledge and knowledge management. Over the last two decades, knowledge management has been steadily growing in importance (Špaček, 2016) in both the private and public sectors and is gradually becoming a new management area in social services (Leung, 2014). Several authors have determined that the implementation of knowledge management can deliver significant business gains (Arevuo, 2002) and improve organizational performance in general (Rašula et al., 2012). It can contribute similar benefits to all kinds of organizations in both the private and public sectors (Arora, 2011). Many countries are currently engaged in reform of their public sectors with the goal of improving the quality of public services. At the same time, public sector organizations are grappling with limitations of personnel and financial resources (de Vries & Nemec, 2013; Mayne & Zapico-Goni, 2017). The same applies to the social work sector (Kelly, 2016). As a result of these factors, the search for solutions to improve service effectiveness is becoming even more important (Austin et al., 2008; Edge, 2005). As organizations strive to achieve organizational excellence, it is essential for them to recognize the effectiveness of knowledge management in practice and its general contribution to organizational performance.

The purpose of my research was to evaluate the current state of knowledge management in Slovenian social work centers. I wanted to examine the extent and effectiveness of knowledge management, the influences of different organizational factors on knowledge management, the availability of social workers using multiple decrement models, and the effect of moderating variables. This is the first study focused on understanding how individuals employed in Slovenian social work centers perceive different aspects of knowledge management in their organizations. Additionally, I looked at the constructs of management support, incentive systems, knowledge implementation, and employee empowerment. My results are based on a sample of 98 questionnaire respondents and nine follow-up interviews with social work managers and employees employed in Slovenian social work centers.

My research revealed the activity levels related to four constructs used to measure the extent of knowledge management. The results for management responsibility, knowledge creation,

knowledge storage and retrieval, and knowledge implementation were moderate at best and could even be considered low. In comparison with the other four constructs, knowledge transfer has the highest levels of activity in practice, which was partially expected due to the strong and collaborative culture present in social work organizations and among social workers. The moderate activity levels indicate that the current situation in social work could be interpreted as organizations not understanding or fully exploring the potential of knowledge management and its benefits when addressing their current operations and looking for solutions on how to improve their overall functioning. Due to the conditions that currently prevail in social work centers in Slovenia, this could be explained by the extensive workload that social work centers and their employees currently face in part due to the reorganization processes. In addition, social work centers, because of the general state of the public sector in Slovenia, confront considerable and ongoing shortages of personnel, time, and finance resources.

The aforementioned shortages hinder the ability of social work managers and employees to devote more time and resources to gaining an in-depth understanding of knowledge management and other current trends in management and organization. Similarly, organizations lack the ability to provide additional training and education to their employees even if they express the desire to participate in knowledge management activities. This is despite the fact that numerous organizations in the private and public sector (particularly in foreign countries) have already acknowledged and benefited from knowledge management.

Part of my research focused on identifying enhanced collaboration, enhanced communication, enhanced learning, and enhanced performance in organizations that currently use knowledge management. During the quantitative phase of my research, thirty respondents provided insight into the effectiveness of knowledge management. Results showed that all four constructs are moderately effective in practice. My findings suggest that social work centers could benefit from a greater understanding of the potential of knowledge management and its impact on improving organizational effectiveness. The quest for innovative knowledge management practices could ultimately result in increasing the overall understanding and use of knowledge management practices and improve its effectiveness when already being used. However, in the environment of the Slovenian public sector, we must realize that organizations are hindered in this effort by limited human and financial resources.

Moreover, based on 98 respondents working as managers or employees in social work centers, I found, that management support and incentives positively and directly influence the levels of knowledge implementation. Moreover, employee empowerment is a moderator of the relationship between incentives and knowledge implementation, however, the interaction term is negative. Knowledge implementation then achieves the highest levels when employee empowerment is high.

My results are also highly relevant and discuss the important potential impact of knowledge management on the social work profession due to the fact that: (1) there is an imperative to focus on the social dimension of sustainability as it is integral to the quality of a human system, (2) the existing supply of social workers is not sufficient to provide wellbeing for the growing elderly population, (3) at the moment, investments and involvement in knowledge management activities in social work are not extensive enough to positively influence the functioning of social work organizations that are and will be responsible for taking care of our aging population. My model provides clear reasoning for how improvements related to knowledge management activities could benefit the social work field (Colnar et al., 2019).

Additionally, it would be beneficial to reconsider the existing incentive structure available to social workers in the public sector context and its possible improvement, thus making the profession more desirable for existing employees and potential students. As our population is aging, it is also extremely important to engage more young people to choose the social work profession and enter the educational process. Along with the sustainable development of social work, this represents the possible future path towards satisfying the ever-growing demand for social services (Colnar et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the model I have developed allows better understanding of patterns in the social work profession regarding workforce entrance and exit and can be utilized by: (1) social work organizations that employ social workers, to increase their understanding regarding the social workers' demographics and the potential impact of knowledge management on policies and other improvements; (2) social workers' unions, i.e., with regard to negotiating processes that deal with the existing shortage of social workers; as well as (3) policy and decision makers, when discussing and developing future policies covering this important topic of our aging society. In the long term, the results of my study regarding knowledge management can make an important contribution in providing support to ensure appropriate social services to our aging society. Therefore, my contribution is also indirectly towards the sustainability of our society as a whole (Colnar et al., 2019).

Thus, this dissertation represents an important building block for the further exploration of possibilities on how to improve the understanding and implementation of knowledge management activities in the environment of social work and social work centers. It is also necessary to include important national decision and policy makers in the discussion of my findings as social work centers function in the framework of the public sector, which is heavily influenced by the state. I believe that knowledge management could provide additional support towards achieving the goal of all public and social work organizations: namely, that employees who are better equipped with knowledge potentially have the ability to provide users of social services with improved services. The findings of this research could be used as a core argument presented to policy and decision-makers at the state level demonstrating that social work organizations would benefit from the introduction of knowledge management techniques to help them improve overall organizational

performance. However, this option currently remains both unexplored and unused. As there is growing global interest for public sector organizations to more proactively engage in knowledge management activities, I hope that this research at the very least could spark additional interest and debate in the area of knowledge management in the environment of social work and social work centers in Slovenia.

To conclude my dissertation, I believe that while addressing the challenge of ensuring the wellbeing of service users, it is also important to acknowledge the institutional framework, as it can potentially act as a major constraint. A thorough reflection on the existing legislation and the way services are currently being provided is necessary. I believe that knowledge management could contribute to improving the existing state of affairs to some degree, however, it cannot yet move social work beyond the challenges related to its institutional framework.

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APPENDICES

UVOD

V zadnjem desetletju narašča število raziskav na temo managementa znanja. Management znanja sicer opredelimo kot usklajevanje in izkoriščanje organizacijskih virov znanja za ustvarjanje koristi ter konkurenčnih prednosti (Drucker, 1999). Podobno ugotavljata Kim in Ko (2014), ki trdita, da je management znanja pritegnil pozornost raziskovalcev. Tudi avtorji Centobelli, Cerchione in Esposito (2018), Centobelli, Cerchione in Esposito (2019) ter Mariano in Awazu (2016) menijo, da v gospodarstvu, ki temelji na znanju, narašča zanimanje za to akademsko in na prakso naravnano disciplino. Vendar pa je le malo raziskav, ki se osredotočajo na pobude za management znanja v javnem sektorju, zlasti v primerjavi z zasebnim sektorjem (Oluikpe, 2012; Ringel-Bickelmaier & Ringel, 2010). Razpršeno in omejeno razumevanje managementa znanja v okviru javnega sektorja predstavlja velik izziv za organizacije (Cong & Pandya, 2003; Oluikpe, 2012). Poleg tega obstoječe raziskave prikazujejo, da imajo zaposleni v javnem sektorju po navadi manj razvito razumevanje o managementu znanja (Zhou, 2004).

Danes je znanje vse bolj kritičen vir za delovanje organizacij (Willem & Buelens, 2007). Prav tako je uspešnost njihovega delovanja povezana z učinkovito uporabo znanja (Richards & Duxbury, 2015). Čeprav se javni sektor nedvomno razlikuje od zasebnega (Euske, 2003; Halvorsen, Hauknes, Miles & Roste, 2005; Redek, Godnov & Perše, 2015) in ima nekaj edinstvenih lastnosti, je lahko prilagajanje praks managementa znanja v kateri koli organizaciji, bodisi zasebni bodisi javni (Arora, 2011; Silvi & Cuganesan, 2006), še vedno koristno (Špaček, 2016), hkrati pa ima lahko pomembno vlogo pri njenem delovanju (Wiig, 2002). Posebej pomembna je vodstvena perspektiva, ki podpira znanje kot ključni dejavnik, ki vpliva na uspešnost organizacije (Grant, 1996). Tako velja, da je za organizacije danes najpomembnejši izziv, kako se vključiti v učinkovite procese managementa znanja (Lubit, 2001).

Poleg tega se je treba zavedati, da prevladujoče razprave, povezane z managementom znanja, niso prilagojene kontekstu javnega sektorja, zlasti ne kontekstu socialnega dela (Leung, 2007). Upoštevati moramo, da organizacije v javnem sektorju delujejo v edinstvenem kontekstu, ki se precej razlikuje od zasebnega. Zgolj vpeljava orodij in modelov managementa znanja, ki so se izkazali kot uspešni v zasebnem sektorju, se lahko izkaže kot kontraproduktivna v okviru javnega sektorja (Massaro, Dumay & Garlatti, 2015) in še bolj kontraproduktivna v socialnem delu. Organizacije v javnem sektorju in njihovi zaposleni se morajo zavedati omenjenih izzivov, ko razpravljajo o pobudah za management znanja. Danes velja, da je potreba po managementu znanja v okolju javnega sektorja prevelika, da bi jo lahko spregledali (Al Ahbabi, Singh, Balasubramanian & Singh Gaur, 2019). Avtorji Al Ahbabi et al. (2019) celo verjamejo, da je edino vprašanje, ki si ga morajo organizacije v javnem sektorju postaviti, kako lahko pobude managementa znanja kar najbolj izkoristijo.

Strokovnjaki pripisujejo velik pomen managementu znanja predvsem zato, ker pomaga organizacijam izboljšati njihov proces odločanja in jim omogoči, da postanejo bolj ustvarjalne kot tudi inovativne. Tako je neizogibno, da bo management znanja postal pomemben tudi v javnih organizacijah, saj imajo državljani vse večje zahteve in pričakovanja od storitev, ki jih nudi država (vključujoč socialne storitve) (Al-Khouri, 2014). V preteklosti je management znanja skozi praktične primere že prispeval k prihrankom in izboljšavam procesov, saj je, denimo, več kot 70 odstotkov od 1.200 velikih evropskih podjetij iz različnih poslovnih sektorjev poročalo o opaznem poslovnem uspehu, ki je povezan s pobudami o managementu znanja (Arevuo, 2002). Že leta 2002 je 50 nemških podjetij iz različnih industrij vpeljalo management znanja. V enem letu od vpeljave so omenjena podjetja beležila izboljšave na področju uspešnosti in konkurenčnosti (North & Hornung, 2002). Nekoliko novejša raziskava iz leta 2016 je na primeru turških podjetij prikazala pomemben neposreden vpliv managementa znanja na inovativnost (Akgul & Tunca, 2016).

Dandanes se vse več pozornosti namenja tudi storitvam, ki obravnavajo človeka. Ena takšnih je zagotovo socialno delo, in zdi se, da management znanja postaja novo pomembno področje managementa v kontekstu socialnega dela (Leung, 2014). Podobno se po mnenju Rubenstein-Motano, Buchwalter in Liebowitz (2001) v zadnjem desetletju tudi socialne organizacije bolj ukvarjajo z managementom znanja. Glede na napredek v razumevanju managementa znanja in njegovih prikazanih koristih za večjo uspešnost, večjo kakovost storitev in izboljšave procesov je jasno, da bi se lahko aplikacije managementa znanja razširile tudi v okolje javnega sektorja. V okolju socialnega dela bi sicer management znanja moral biti manj usmerjen k ustvarjanju dobička in konkurenčnih prednosti ter bolj k dodajanju vrednosti posameznim storitvam, povečanju družbene blaginje in družbene učinkovitosti kot tudi splošnemu blagostanju (Myers, 2014; Ortenblad, 2011, 2013; Ortenblad & Koris, 2014). Socialno delo sicer velja za poklic, ki pospešuje družbene spremembe, razvoj, socialno kohezijo, krepitev položaja posameznikov in osvoboditev ljudi (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). Opira se na zagotavljanje storitev za uporabnike, vendar je običajno spregledano v študijah, ki so preučevale optimizacijo, povezano z managementom znanja (Chen in Hsieh, 2015) (za izjeme, povezane z javnim sektorjem, glej Al-Khouri, 2014; Asian Productivity Organization, 2013; Batista & Quandt, 2015).

Obstoječe prevladujoče raziskave o managementu znanja, kot že omenjeno, niso dovolj dobro prilagojene socialnemu delu (Leung, 2007). Poleg tega je v literaturi o socialnem delu opazen primanjkljaj o tematiki managementa znanja (Edge, 2005). Sicer pa je mogoče pripoznati socialno delo kot enega glavnih sestavnih delov razvoja socialne vključenosti, socialne kohezije in solidarnosti (Williams & Graham, 2010). V celotnem sistemu socialnega dela imajo centri za socialno delo še posebej pomembno vlogo, saj so spodbujevalci celotnega sistema. Posebej v Sloveniji je moč opaziti naraščajoči pomen centrov za socialno delo v skupnosti, sploh po nedavnem povečanju števila socialnih problemov, ki so hkrati vedno bolj kompleksni (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2017). Zato

bi management znanja moral prispevati k doseganju skupnega cilja, to je k izboljšanju blagostanja uporabnikov socialnih storitev in splošnemu dvigu kakovosti opravljenih storitev.

Raziskovalna tema in raziskovalna vprašanja

Raziskovalna tema moje doktorske disertacije je management znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji. Raziskovalna vprašanja se tako nanašajo na določeno problematiko, povezano z managementom znanja, in na vpliv managementa znanja na delovanje centrov za socialno delo v Sloveniji:

RV1: V kolikšni meri se v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji uporablja management znanja?

RV2: Kako učinkovit je management znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji?

RV3: Kateri organizacijski dejavniki vplivajo na management znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji?

RV4: Kako lahko management znanja vpliva na razpoložljivost ustrezno usposobljenih socialnih delavcev?

RV5: Ali je opolnomočenje zaposlenih moderator pozitivne povezave med podporo managementa, nagradami in implementacijo znanja, in sicer na način, da je pozitivna povezava močnejša z visokim deležem opolnomočenja zaposlenih?

Opredelitev raziskovalne problematike

Da bi dosegli napredno razumevanje načel in potencialnih pobud, ki so povezane z managementom znanja v centrih za socialno delo, morajo najprej socialni delavci in vodje v socialnih organizacijah popolnoma razumeti osnovna načela managementa znanja kot tudi širok nabor njegovih koristi. Tako se v okviru obravnave prvega raziskovalnega vprašanja o obsegu managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji osredotočim predvsem na odgovornost vodstva za management znanja ter štiri že uveljavljene faze procesa managementa znanja: kreiranje, shranjevanje, prenos in implementacijo znanja.

Potem ko mi uspe ugotoviti, ali ima posamezni center za socialno delo formalno strategijo za management znanja in/ali se z aktivnostmi managementa znanja ukvarja neformalno, se osredotočim na učinkovitost obstoječih praks, povezanih z managementom znanja, in sicer tako, da se osredotočim na spremembe v mehkih dejavnikih, ki so lahko posledica managementa znanja. Tovrstne spremembe vključujejo izboljšano sodelovanje, komunikacijo, učenje in splošno delovanje organizacije. Tretje raziskovalno vprašanje se osredotoča na organizacijske dejavnike, ki vplivajo na management znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji. Na podlagi rezultatov empirične raziskave in ugotovitev iz obstoječe literature ponudim konkreten nabor predlogov o organizacijskih dejavnikih, ki najbolj vplivajo na management znanja v praksi.

Četrto raziskovalno vprašanje raziskuje izziv naraščajočega primanjkljaja ustrezno usposobljenih socialnih delavcev v času, ko se prebivalstvo v Sloveniji in drugih evropskih državah nezadržno stara. Ker trajnostno zagotavljanje socialnih storitev v Sloveniji še ni razvito, menim, da sta razumevanje vzorcev vstopa in izstopa na trg delovne sile socialnih delavcev kot tudi dinamika njihovih prehodov pomembna za različne deležnike. Prikažem tudi, kako lahko aktivnosti managementa znanja pozitivno vplivajo na (prihodnjo) razpoložljivost ustrezno usposobljenih socialnih delavcev.

Moje peto raziskovalno vprašanje proučuje moderacijski vpliv opolnomočenja zaposlenih na pozitivno razmerje med podporo managementa in nagradami ter implementacijo znanja. Razvijem in empirično testiram hipoteze o omenjenih razmerjih s pomočjo moderacijske regresije. Predlagane hipoteze so naslednje:

Hipoteza 1: Podpora managementa je pozitivno povezana z implementacijo znanja v socialnem delu.

Hipoteza 2: Nagrade so pozitivno povezane z implementacijo znanja v socialnem delu.

Hipoteza 3: Opolnomočenje zaposlenih moderira pozitivno razmerje med podporo managementa in implementacijo znanja, in sicer na način, da pozitivno razmerje postane močnejše takrat, ko so ravni opolnomočenja zaposlenih višje.

Hipoteza 4: Opolnomočenje zaposlenih moderira pozitivno razmerje med nagradami in implementacijo znanja, in sicer na način, da pozitivno razmerje postane močnejše takrat, ko so ravni opolnomočenja zaposlenih višje.

Na splošno pa doktorska disertacija preučuje povezavo med managementom znanja in socialnim delom tako, da vključuje:

1. teorije na strani konstruktov managementa znanja, socialnega dela, managementa znanja v javnem sektorju in managementa znanja na področju socialnega dela;
2. individualno raven zaposlenih v organizaciji;
3. moderacijski mehanizem opolnomočenja zaposlenih;
4. različne raziskovalne metode, kjer gre za uporabo pristopa mešanih metod, ki vključuje več kvantitativnih in kvalitativnih orodij.

Oprelitev namena in ciljev

Namen te doktorske disertacije je prispevati k poglobljenemu razumevanju povezave med managementom znanja in socialnim delom ter osvetliti pomembnost proučevane teme za napredek družbe.

Cilj doktorske disertacije pa je analizirati odnos med managementom znanja in socialnim delom na primeru centrov za socialno delo v Sloveniji. V okviru svojega glavnega cilja predstavim tudi posamezne cilje, vezane na teoretični in empirični del disertacije. Podcilji teoretičnega dela disertacije so:

1. Opredeliti konstrukte znanja, eksplicitnega in tacitnega znanja ter znanja v socialnem delu.
2. Preučiti konstrukte, procese in strategije managementa znanja.
3. Raziskati razmerje med managementom znanja in organizacijskim učenjem, managementom znanja in organizacijskim pozabljanjem, managementom znanja in učečo se organizacijo, managementom znanja in informacijsko-komunikacijsko tehnologijo, managementom znanja in ravnanjem s človeškimi viri, managementom znanja in organizacijsko kulturo ter managementom znanja in managementom sprememb.
4. Izpostaviti prednosti in omejitve managementa znanja, primere dobrih praks iz zasebnega in javnega sektorja ter pridobljeno znanje in izzive, ki ostajajo v povezavi z managementom znanja.
5. Opredeliti socialno delo, socialni sistem v Sloveniji in različne vrste socialnih organizacij v Sloveniji, s posebnim poudarkom na centrih za socialno delo in izzivih, ki ostajajo pri socialnem delu v Sloveniji.
6. Opisati odnos med managementom znanja in socialnim delom, primere dobrih praks ter koristi in omejitve managementa znanja v socialnem delu.
7. Predstaviti konstrukte, ki so bili uporabljeni za določitev obsega in učinkovitosti trenutnih praks managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji, ter organizacijske dejavnike, ki vplivajo na management znanja.
8. Raziskati modele mnogoterih pojemanj, ki jih je mogoče uporabiti kot orodje za napovedovanje prihodnje razpoložljivosti ustrezno usposobljenih socialnih delavcev.
9. Preučiti moderacijski vpliv opolnomočenja zaposlenih na odnos med podporo managementa in nagradami ter implementacijo znanja.

V empiričnem delu testiram predlagane hipoteze in konceptualni model. Ključni podcilji tega dela disertacije so:

1. Preučiti in predstaviti mešane metode raziskovanja, raziskovalni dizajn in uporabljeno metodologijo.
2. Opisati zajem podatkov.
3. Na ravni posameznikov empirično testirati hipoteze, ki temeljijo na postavljenem konceptualnem modelu.
4. Predstaviti omejitve moje raziskave.
5. Predstaviti praktična priporočila za centre za socialno delo.
6. Poudariti prispevek moje doktorske raziskave k znanosti.

Oprelitev znanstvenih raziskovalnih metod

Da bi odgovoril na raziskovalna vprašanja, za katera sta potrebna poglobljeno razumevanje kot tudi nabor številnih podatkov o proučevanem fenomenu, uporabim trenutno dostopno literaturo za njen pregled. V empiričnem delu uporabim kvantitativne in kvalitativne podatke. Empirični del doktorske disertacije je zasnovan na podlagi raziskovalnega pristopa mešanih

metod. Mešane metode so pristop k raziskovanju v družboslovnih vedah, pri katerem raziskovalec zbira kvantitativne (zaprte) in kvalitativne (odprte) podatke, združi obe vrsti podatkov ter pripravi končne razlage, ki temeljijo na skupnih prednostih obeh naborov podatkov in prispevajo k razumevanju raziskovalnega izziva (Creswell, 2015). Uporabim pojasnjevalni sekvenčni raziskovalni dizajn, kjer sem najprej uporabil kvantitativno in nato kvalitativno metodo, ki mi je pomagala podrobneje razložiti moje kvantitativne rezultate. Predlagani pojasnjevalni sekvenčni raziskovalni dizajn prikazujem v spodnji tabeli.

Tabela: Koraki v pojasnjevalnem sekvenčnem raziskovalnem dizajnu

Korak	Vsebina
1	Zbiranje kvantitativnih podatkov in analiza
2	Kvantitativni rezultati
3	Kateri kvantitativni rezultati potrebujejo dodatno razlago
4	Zbiranje kvalitativnih podatkov in analiza
5	Kvalitativni rezultati
6	Interpretacija kako kvalitativni rezultati pojasnijo kvantitativne rezultate

Vir: Creswell (2015)

Z uporabo mešanih metod obogatim kvantitativne podatke, predvsem s podrobnostmi o kontekstu osebnih izkušenj (Creswell, 2015). Uporabljene mešane metode so bile sestavljene iz spletnega vprašalnika, ki sem ga prek Socialne zbornice Slovenije poslal zaposlenim in vodjem v centrih za socialno delo, ter iz poglobljenih intervjujev, ki sem jih opravil z intervjувanci.

Doktorska disertacija vključuje dve odvisni spremenljivki: 1) obseg in 2) učinkovitost managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji ter štiri neodvisne spremenljivke: 1) organizacijsko kulturo, 2) organizacijsko strukturo, 3) organizacijsko infrastrukturo in 4) organizacijsko vodenje. Splošna enota analize v doktorski disertaciji je posamezni center za socialno delo v Sloveniji, čeprav se je v praksi izkazalo, da so posamezniki, zaposleni v omenjenih centrih, dejanska enota analize. Prilagojeni spletni vprašalnik, ki sem ga uporabil za svojo raziskavo, je že uveljavljen; med drugimi ga je uporabil Downes (2014). Posamezna vprašanja v vprašalniku so privzeta in prilagojena iz obstoječe literature. Vprašalnik ima devet glavnih delov, vsak od njih pa se nanaša na specifično raziskovalno temo. Omenjenih devet delov je naslednjih: obseg managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo, učinkovitost managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo, organizacijska kultura, organizacijska struktura, organizacijska infrastruktura, organizacijsko vodenje, velikost organizacije, demografski in drugi podatki.

Skupaj ima vprašalnik 86 zaprtih in pet odprtih vprašanj. Nominalna lestvica je uporabljena za vprašanje o spolu, ordinalna pa za vprašanja o stopnji izobrazbe in letih izkušenj. Petstopenjska Likertova lestvica je uporabljena za merjenje mnenj anketirancev. Elektronsko

sporočilo je bilo poslano iz baze anketirancev, ki je na voljo samo Socialni zbornici Slovenije. V omenjenem elektronskem sporočilu je bilo vabilo k sodelovanju pri raziskavi. Dodatno sem vzpostavil številne osebne stike s posameznimi zaposlenimi v centrih za socialno delo, da bi pridobil zadostno število anketirancev za potrebe moje raziskave. Zbrani podatki so v formatu, ki je primeren za izvoz in nadaljnjo obdelavo v orodju SPSS (verzija 24.0). V celoti je moj vprašalnik izpolnilo 98 anketirancev. Vsak je potreboval približno 13 minut, da je v celoti izpolnil vprašalnik.

Po analizi tem, ki potrebujejo dodatno raziskovanje, in določitvi vprašanj za intervjuvance sem izvedel posamezne polstrukturirane odprte poglobljene intervjuje (v nadaljevanju besedila: intervjuji). Takšni intervjuji so eden od najpogostejših pristopov pri kvalitativnem raziskovanju (Bryman in Burgess, 1999). Da bi pridobil čim več različnih mnenj z različnih organizacijskih ravni, sem opravil intervjuje tako z vodji centrov za socialno delo kot z zaposlenimi v centrih za socialno delo. Dodatno sem svoje intervjuvance stratificiral glede na razlike v velikosti njihove organizacije (glede na število vseh zaposlenih), izobrazbo in geografsko lokacijo, pri čemer sem vključil različne slovenske regije. Podrobnosti o strukturi intervjuvancev pri intervjujih prikazujem v spodnji tabeli.

Tabela: Struktura intervjujev v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji

	Intervjuva nec A	Intervjuva nec B	Intervjuva nec C	Intervjuva nec D	Intervjuva nec E	Intervjuva nec F	Intervjuva nec G	Intervjuva nec H	Intervjuva nec I
Velikost organizac ije	50+	26–50	50+	26–50	11–25	6–10	6–10	50+	11–25
Izobrazba	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1
Vodja ali zaposlen	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
Regija	1	2	1	3	2	4	4	2	4

Vir: Lastno delo

Da bi raziskal, kako organizacije implementirajo svoje aktivnosti, pobude in projekte, povezane z managementom znanja, sem pripravil vprašanja, ki so določila okvirni potek intervjuja. V praksi pri pojasnjevalnem sekvenčnem raziskovalnem dizajnu vprašanja za intervjuje dokončno določimo šele po zaključku kvantitativne analize, kar sem upošteval tudi pri svoji raziskavi. Pri določanju glavnih tem in konceptov sem sledil zgledu Liophanicha (2014). Teme vključujejo splošna vprašanja o posameznem centru za socialno delo in intervjuvancu ter vprašanja o organizacijski strukturi, informacijsko-komunikacijski tehnologiji, obsegu managementa znanja, učinkovitosti managementa znanja, organizacijski kulturi in terminologiji.

Kvantitativne podatke sem izvozil v statistično orodje, ki se pogosto uporablja v družboslovnih raziskavah, in sicer SPSS, verzija 24.0. Za raziskovanje razmerij med spremenljivkami sem uporabil opisne statistike (srednje vrednosti, standardne odklone,

korelacije in Cronbachovo alfo). Za preverjanje faktorske strukture nabora opazovanih spremenljivk (Suhr, 2006) sem uporabil potrditveno faktorsko analizo, ki je najpogostejša oblika faktorske analize v družboslovnih raziskavah (Kline, 2010). Poleg tega sem uporabil regresijsko analizo, da bi lahko določil dejavnike, ki pomembno prispevajo k napovedovanju odvisnih spremenljivk, in velikost učinka vsake neodvisne spremenljivke na odvisno spremenljivko ter oceno edinstvenega prispevka odvisni spremenljivki s strani vsake neodvisne spremenljivke.

Da bi napovedal prihodnjo razpoložljivost socialnih delavcev, sem uporabil objektivno mersko orodje (model mnogoterih pojemanj), ki temelji na že uveljavljeni aktuarsko-matematični metodi. S pomočjo hierarhične regresije s centriranimi spremenljivkami sem testiral svoje hipoteze. Ker je moj vzorec premajhen, nisem mogel razviti strukturnega modela. Za analizo kvalitativnih podatkov sem uporabil vsebinsko analizo in tematsko kodiranje, ki omogoča identificiranje delov besedila, ki jih povezuje skupna tema ali ideja in jih je možno indeksirati v kategorije, da se lahko vzpostavi okvir tematskih idej (Gibbs, 2007).

Prispevek k znanosti

Doktorska disertacija prispeva k znanosti na teoretičnem, empiričnem, metodološkem in praktičnem področju. Prvič, teoretično bo analiza managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji prispevala k širšemu sprejemanju in razumevanju managementa znanja v socialnem delu. Doktorska disertacija ponuja temeljit pregled obstoječe literature o managementu znanja in izboljšuje naše razumevanje, kako prakse managementa znanja delujejo v javnem sektorju, zlasti v socialnem delu. Natančneje, teoretični prispevek disertacije je tudi delna zapolnitev že ugotovljene vrzeli v raziskavah o managementu znanja na splošno v javnem sektorju (Špaček, 2016) in managementu znanja na področju socialnega dela (Austin, Ciaassen, Vu & Mizrahi, 2008; Ciaassen, Vu & Mizrahi, 2008; Chen & Hsieh, 2015; Leung, 2014). Drugi teoretični prispevek je prispevek k pogledu na organizacijo, ki temelji na znanju. S svojim teoretičnim prispevkom k organizaciji, ki temelji na znanju (Grant, 1996; Hislop, Bosua & Helms, 2018; Kogut & Zander, 2003), se odzivam na klice raziskovalcev po teoretičnem napredku managementa znanja v javnem sektorju.

Drugič, empirično doktorska disertacija omogoča poglobljeno razumevanje razmerja med managementom znanja in socialnim delom. Ponuja tudi poglobljeno razumevanje o povezavi med podporo vodstva, nagradami in implementacijo znanja ter moderacijskim mehanizmom opolnomočenja zaposlenih. Po mojem vedenju gre za prvo raziskavo v slovenskem akademskem prostoru, ki obravnava management znanja v socialnem delu. Disertacija lahko pomaga tudi centrom za socialno delo pri konkretni implementaciji aktivnosti in iniciativ, ki so povezane z managementom znanja. Lahko jim pomaga tudi pri izdelavi ocen trenutnih aktivnosti, ki so povezane z managementom znanja, in pri identifikaciji dejavnikov, ki bi lahko izboljšali njihovo delovanje, kar bi se odrazilo v splošnem boljšem delovanju

organizacije. Izboljšano delovanje organizacije pa bi vplivalo tudi na povečano učinkovitost centrov za socialno delo, izboljšave v njihovih storitvah in izboljšano blagostanje uporabnikov storitev.

Tretjič, metodološko je večina prejšnjih raziskav na temo managementa znanja v socialnem delu temeljila na uporabi kvalitativnih raziskovalnih metod ali študij primerov. Moja raziskava okolju socialnega dela edinstveno prilagaja že razvite merske instrumente. Doktorska disertacija tako razvije nov pristop k proučevanju managementa znanja v socialnem delu, tako z uporabo spletnega vprašalnika kot s triangulacijo kvantitativnih rezultatov na podlagi izvedenih intervjujev z vodji centrov za socialno delo in zaposlenimi v centrih za socialno delo. Z raziskovalnim pristopom mešanih metod tako gradim tudi na predlogu Soydana (2008), da je nabor raziskav na področju socialnega dela širok in multidisciplinaren ter bi moral spodbujati tudi metodološko raznolikost. Podobno meni tudi Guo (2015), ki pravi, da bi raziskovalci morali uporabiti tudi kvantitativne metode za reševanje najbolj perečih in zahtevnih vprašanj v socialnem delu. Poleg tega je ena od glavnih prednosti uporabe mešanih metod ta, da kombinirana uporaba kvantitativnih in kvalitativnih pristopov omogoča boljše razumevanje raziskovalnih izzivov oziroma pojavov, bolj kot uporaba enega samega pristopa (Molina-Azorin & Cameron, 2010).

Četrtič, predlagam nekaj praktičnih implikacij za vodje in zaposlene v centrih za socialno delo. Čeprav njihove organizacije niso primarno usmerjene k ustvarjanju dobička, bi jim lahko kljub temu koristila razumevanje in izvajanje posameznih aktivnosti managementa znanja, ki bi s seboj prinesle pozitivne učinke, kot je izboljšanje storitev in blagostanja uporabnikov storitev. Na podlagi kvantitativnih in kvalitativnih podatkov so se kot posebej problematična izkazala predvsem naslednja področja: prevelik poudarek na hierarhiji, pomanjkanje ustrezno usposobljenih socialnih delavcev, primanjkljaj v kakovosti storitev za uporabnike, premalo izkoriščen management znanja, pomanjkanje časa, grožnja preobremenitve in/ali izgorelost, nezadovoljstvo z obstoječimi informacijsko-komunikacijskimi rešitvami, zlasti nezadovoljstvo z informacijskim sistemom »Krpan«, zmerno učinkovit obstoječi management znanja, primanjkljaj na področju usposabljanj, ki so ozko usmerjena v socialno delo, pomanjkanje financ, neprimerna struktura nagrad oziroma spodbud ter ne nazadnje dejstvo, da reorganizacija centrov za socialno delo, izvedena v letu 2019, ni prinesla zelenih rezultatov. Drugi praktični prispevek pa sta diseminacija rezultatov za zainteresirane deležnike na državni ravni ter prenos znanja in ugotovitev moje raziskave na vse zainteresirane deležnike.

Omejitve raziskave

V tem poglavju na kratko povzamem nekatere ključne omejitve svoje doktorske raziskave. Prvič, velikost mojega vzorca je bila omejena. Delno tudi zaradi sprejetega zakona GDPR v maju 2018, kar je omejilo moj dostop do anketirancev. Drugič, pristranskost zaradi zbiranja podatkov o vseh spremenljivkah hkrati. Kot so prikazali Harmanov (1976) test, skupni

latentni faktor (Liang, Saraf, Hu & Xue, 2007) in marker spremenljivka (Lindell & Whitney, 2001), bi lahko pristranskost, ki je nastala zaradi zbiranja podatkov o vseh spremenljivkah, hkrati vplivala na nekatera predlagana razmerja v moji raziskavi. Tretjič, ne morem podati splošnih ugotovitev o managementu znanja v centrih za socialno delo, saj sem lahko v svojo raziskavo vključil le del vseh centrov za socialno delo. Četrtoč, geografska lokacija. Kot so izpostavili nekateri intervjuvanci, prihaja do velikih razlik med slovenskimi občinami, kar bi lahko imelo vpliv tudi na socialno delo. Geografsko lokacijo sem samo delno vključil v svojo raziskavo, in sicer pri izvedenih intervjujih. Petič, predpostavljena tranzicijska matrika, ki je vključevala zgolj zmerne ocene, kako lahko management znanja potencialno vpliva na vzorce vstopa in izstopa socialnih delavcev na trg delovne sile. Kljub temu pa našteje omejitve ne vplivajo na pomembnost rezultatov raziskave.

Struktura disertacije

Disertacija je vsebinsko razdeljena na njen teoretični in empirični del. Po uvodu sledi poglavje, ki je osredotočeno na eksplisitno in tacitno znanje ter znanje v socialnem delu. Nato predstavim management znanja, pri čemer je poglavje razdeljeno na posamezna podpoglavja o procesu managementa znanja, strategiji managementa znanja, managementu znanja in organizacijskem učenju, managementu znanja in organizacijskem pozabljanju, managementu znanja in učeči se organizaciji, managementu znanja in informacijsko-komunikacijskih tehnologijah, managementu znanja in ravnanju s človeškimi viri, managementu znanja in organizacijski klimi ter organizacijski kulturi, managementu znanja in managementu sprememb, nadalje o koristih, ki jih management znanja prinaša, o primerih dobre prakse managementa znanja iz javnega in zasebnega sektorja, o tem, kaj smo se o managementu znanja naučili, kot tudi o preostalih izzivih, ki so povezani z managementom znanja.

Drugi vsebinski del teoretičnega dela je namenjen socialnemu delu. Bolj podrobno se osredotočim na definicijo socialnega dela, razložim socialni sistem v Sloveniji, predstavim različne tipe socialnih organizacij v Sloveniji kot tudi pomembno vlogo centrov za socialno delo v Sloveniji in zaključim z obstoječimi izzivi v socialnem delu v Sloveniji. Nadaljujem s povezovanjem področja managementa znanja in socialnega dela. V tem delu teorije raziskujem trenutno stanje managementa znanja v socialnem delu ter se osredotočim na primere dobrih praks managementa znanja v socialnem delu in splošne koristi ter omejitve managementa znanja v socialnem delu.

Sledi del o obsegu managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo. Ta del vsebuje odgovornost vodstva za management znanja kot tudi kreiranje, shranjevanje, prenos in implementacijo znanja. Naslednja vsebinska sekcija v teoretičnem delu razišče trenutno učinkovitost managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Sloveniji. V tem delu se posebej osredotočim na sodelovanje, komuniciranje, organizacijsko učenje in splošno delovanje organizacije. Naslednji del preučuje vpliv organizacijskih dejavnikov na management znanja. Natančneje preučim vpliv organizacijske kulture, organizacijske

infrastrukture in organizacijske strukture ter organizacijskega vodenja na management znanja.

Predzadnja vsebinska sekcija pridobi vpogled v razpoložljivost ustrezno usposobljenih socialnih delavcev. Dotaknem se tudi področja trajnostnega razvoja s poudarkom na njegovi socialni komponenti, poglobim diskusijo o obstoječih izzivih v socialnem delu in predstavim študijo primera socialnih delavk v Sloveniji, iz katerega je razvidno, kako se bo njihova razpoložljivost v prihodnosti zmanjševala. V zaključku teoretičnega dela svoje doktorske disertacije preučim moderacijski vpliv opolnomočenja zaposlenih. Natančneje se osredotočim na podporo vodstva, nagrade in implementacijo znanja, pri čemer vključim tudi moderacijski vpliv opolnomočenja zaposlenih.

V empiričnem delu najprej predstavim uporabljeno metodologijo, v nadaljevanju pa tudi kvantitativne in kvalitativne podatke, vprašalnik, intervjuje ter mešane metode raziskovanja. Nadaljujem z opisom vzorca, postopka zbiranja podatkov, razlago o izbranih merskih instrumentih, nato predstavim raziskovalni dizajn ter zanesljivost in veljavnost svojih podatkov. Sledi predstavitev vseh raziskovalnih rezultatov, ki sem jih pridobil z uporabo različnih raziskovalnih metod. Nato se osredotočim na diskusijo kot tudi utemeljitev teoretičnega, praktičnega in metodološkega prispevka k znanosti. Pred zaključkom predstavim omejitve svoje raziskave in se dotaknem nekaterih potencialnih tem, ki bi bile lahko zanimive za prihodnje raziskave. Na koncu disertacije so zaključek, seznam literature in virov ter priloge.

Appendix 2: Cover Letter for Participation in Research

Spoštovani,

Socialna zbornica Slovenije sodeluje pri zbiranju podatkov za potrebe doktorske disertacije, ki jo pripravlja Simon Colnar, doktorski študent 3. letnika Ekonomske fakultete, Univerze v Ljubljani, pod mentorstvom prof. dr. Vlada Dimovskega.

Doktorand pripravlja doktorsko disertacijo z naslovom *Obseg in učinkovitost managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo Republike Slovenije*. Dobljeni rezultati bodo izjemnega pomena za področje socialnega varstva, predvsem v povezavi z aktualno reorganizacijo centrov za socialno delo.

V empiričnem delu doktorske disertacije želi doktorand preučiti, kakšno je vaše mnenje o aktivnostih povezanih z managementom znanja v vaši organizaciji. Predlagani vprašalnik, je sestavljen iz številnih virov tuje literature, ki so že uspešno preučevala management znanja v različnih organizacijah javnega in zasebnega sektorja.

Z dobljenimi rezultati, bo doktorand poskušal podati nekaj predlogov izboljšav pri delovanju centrov za socialno delo, ki bi omogočile doseg skupnega cilja, še boljše storitve za samega uporabnika socialnih storitev.

Za izpolnitev ankete potrebujete približno 15 minut. Vprašalnik je anonimen.

Vabimo vas k izpolnitvi anketnega vprašalnika na povezavi <https://www.1ka.si/a/140186>

Zahvaljujemo se vam za sodelovanje.

S spoštovanjem,

Simon Colnar in Socialna zbornica Slovenije

Obseg in učinkovitost managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Republiki Sloveniji

Vprašalnik je del **doktorske disertacije**, ki proučuje obseg in učinkovitost **managementa znanja** pri delovanju **centrov za socialno delo** v Republiki Sloveniji. **Raziskava** managementa znanja v centrih za socialno delo v Republiki Sloveniji je **odobrena in podprta** s strani **Socialne zbornice Republike Slovenije**. V primeru izpolnjevanja **anketnega vprašalnika**, je ta popolnoma **zaupen in anonimen**. Nobena izmed zahtevanih informacij ne bo razkrila vaše ali vaše organizacijske identitete. V kolikor pa bi želeli prejeti povzetek rezultatov anketnega vprašalnika, lahko pustite podatek o vašem elektronskem naslovu na katerega vam bomo poslali omenjeni povzetek. **Anketna vprašanja se nanašajo na vaš pogled na delovanje vaše organizacije, tako da vas prosimo, da se odgovori nanašajo samo na delovanje vaše organizacije.** *Management znanja je niz organizacijskih praks in aktivnosti, ki stremijo k izboljšani učinkovitosti in uspešnosti organizacije z izkoriščanjem resursov znanja in s sistematičnimi pristopi k managementu ljudi, tehnologij, sistemov in procesov.*

Simon Colnar

Procesi managementa znanja - moja organizacija:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
1. Ima točno določenega managerja, ki skrbi za procese povezane z managementom znanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Spodbuja izmenjavo znanja in idej med zaposlenimi in skupinami zaposlenih	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Nagradi zaposlene za predlagane nove ideje	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Nagradi zaposlene za deljenje njihovega znanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Uporablja izkušnje ali primere dobrih praks z različnih projektov in delovnih nalog, da bi izboljšalo delovanje v prihodnje	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Ima vzpostavljene standarde, ki dovoljujejo zaposlenim, da predstavijo nove ideje brez strahu pred posmehom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Ima vzpostavljene metode, ki kritično ovrednotijo informacije za nadaljnjo uporabo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Ima vzpostavljen standarden postopek za shranjevanje referenčnih gradiv, kot so na primer standardi, strategije, navodila in podobno	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Uporablja baze podatkov za shranjevanje referenčnih gradiv	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Ima informacije shranjene v obliki, ki je že dostopna zaposlenim	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Nove ideje ali aktivnosti, ki so jih prejeli s strani zaposlenih prikaže tudi drugim zaposlenim v organizaciji	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Ima vzpostavljene metode, ki pretvorijo znanje v aktivno uporabo le-tega v praksi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
13. Ima vzpostavljene metode, ki na redni bazi kritično ovrednotijo informacije	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Ima vzpostavljene metode za razvoj novih idej in novih načinov izvajanja aktivnosti glede na obstoječe prakse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Učenje in kreiranje novih idej in novih načinov izvajanja aktivnosti dojema kot kontinuiran proces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Namenja dovolj pozornosti vlogi in pomembnosti znanja, ki ga imajo posamezni zaposleni	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Zaposleni se lahko obrnejo na druge za pomoč in usmerjanje	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Ključni zaposleni v organizaciji so znani in z njimi je vzpostavljen stik	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Lahko je ugotoviti kdo v organizaciji poseduje določeno znanje	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Ažurnost informacij, ki so v različnih bazah podatkov, navodilih ali kakšni drugi obliki se redno preverja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. So točno določeni posamezni zaposleni, ki morajo skrbeti za ažurnost informacij	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Managerji so aktivni pri komuniciranju koristi, ki jih deljenje znanja in priložnosti za učenje prinašajo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Učinkovitost managementa znanja - moja organizacija:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

23. Učinkovitost managementa znanja – moja organizacija

- a) Ima formalno strategijo za management znanja
- b) Se ukvarja z aktivnostmi managementa znanja neformalno
- c) Nima strategije za management znanja, niti se neformalno ne ukvarja z aktivnostmi povezanimi z managementom znanja

24. Učinkovitost managementa znanja - koliko časa je vaša organizacija že vpeta v management znanja:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor; **prosim odgovorite samo v primeru, če ste pri vprašanju 23. označili odgovor a ali odgovor b)**

- a) Manj kot 1 leto
- b) 1-5 let
- c) 6-10 let
- d) 11-15 let
- e) 16-20 let
- f) več kot 20 let

Prosim odgovorite na naslednji sklop vprašanj samo v primeru, da ste pri odgovoru na vprašanje 23. označili odgovor a ali odgovor b!

Učinkovitost managementa znanja - moja organizacija:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
25. Procesi v organizaciji so se izboljšali	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. Managerji so bolj inovativni	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. Zaposleni so bolj inovativni	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. Managerji imajo več znanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. Zaposleni imajo več znanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. Zaposleni imajo več kompetenc	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. Zaposleni imajo več izkušenj	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Managerji sprejemajo boljše odločitve	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. Zaposleni sprejemajo boljše odločitve	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Timsko delo se je izboljšalo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. Učenje posameznih zaposlenih se je izboljšalo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. Več je zavedanja o ključnih informacijah za doseganje poslanstva organizacije	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. Znanje posameznikov je bolj dostopno celotni organizaciji	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. Stroški v organizaciji so se znižali	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. Našim uporabnikom zagotavljamo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
bolj kakovostno storitev					
40. Gledano v celoti je naša organizacija boljša	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Prosim odgovarjajte od tukaj naprej na vprašanja ne glede na vaš odgovor pri vprašanju 23.!

Organizacijska kultura - moja organizacija:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
41. Prva skrb zaposlenih je delovanje v skladu s poslanstvom organizacije	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. Zaposleni so osredotočeni na iskanje koristi za celotno organizacijo in ne za njih kot posameznike	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43. Sodelavci spodbujajo deljenje znanja in učenje	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. Napake so prikazane kot priložnosti za učenje	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45. Spodbuja odprtost, poštenost in skrb za druge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
46. Zaposleni se bojijo, da bi delitev znanja lahko ogrozila varnost njihove zaposlitve	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
47. Zaposleni se oklepajo svojega znanja zaradi strahu pred pomanjkanjem priznanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48. Prisotno je pomanjkanje zaupanja v sodelavce, ker napačno uporabljajo znanje ali si pripisujejo zasluge za znanje drugih	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49. Ceni kreativnost, inovativnost in napredno razmišljanje	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Organizacijska struktura - moja organizacija:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
50. Spodbuja delitev znanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
51. Opolnomoči zaposlene	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
52. Prikazuje hierarhičnost, status izhajajoč iz pozicije in posledično moč v organizaciji	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53. Komunikacija in delitev znanja poteka od zgoraj-navzdol	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Organizacijska infrastruktura - moja organizacija:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
54. Organizacija zagotavlja primerne resurse za delitev znanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
55. Organizacija ima nagrade in vzpostavljene metode priznavanja, ki motivirajo zaposlene in priznavajo delitev znanja s strani zaposlenih	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56. Pričakovanja glede delitve znanja so predstavljena zaposlenim na sestankih	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
57. Delitev znanja je prisotna tudi v poročilih o uspešnosti zaposlenih	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
58. Organizacija ima program za zadrževanje znanja in veščin v primeru, ko zaposleni zapusti organizacijo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
59. Organizacija zagotavlja usposabljanja za aktivnosti povezane z managementom znanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
60. Informacijsko-komunikacijska tehnologija uresničuje potrebe posameznikov	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
61. Informacijski sistemi vplivajo na način dela zaposlenih	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
62. Informacijska-komunikacijska tehnologija podpira delitev znanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
63. Pomoč pri informacijsko-komunikacijski tehnologiji je zagotovljena za zaposlene	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
64. Zaposleni neradi uporabljajo informacijsko-komunikacijsko tehnologijo zaradi nepoznavanja in neizkušenosti	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
65. Zaposleni imajo možnost neformalnega sodelovanja in delitve znanja ter izkušenj	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
66. Organizacija spodbuja socialna omrežja med zaposlenimi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
67. Zaposleni so spodbujeni k udeležbi zunanjih izobraževanj in dogodkov, ki so relevantni pri njihovem delu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Organizacijsko vodenje - moja organizacija:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
68. Organizacija ima formalno strategijo managementa znanja, ki je usklajena s strateško vizijo organizacije	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
69. Managerji odkrito podpirajo delitev znanja in priložnosti za učenje	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
70. Managerji aktivno komunicirajo in predstavljajo koristi delitve znanja in priložnosti za učenje	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
71. Managerji so zavezani k razvoju učinkovitega sistema delitve znanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
72. Managerji redno vključujejo zaposlene v procese odločanja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
73. Managerji opolnomočijo zaposlene	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
74. Nazivi, status in formalnost imajo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Sploh se ne strinjam	Se ne strinjam	Niti niti	Se strinjam	Povsem se strinjam
pomembno vlogo v organizaciji					
75. Managerji so preobremenjeni z operativnimi nalogami, da bi si vzeli čas in raziskali možnosti za boljši management v organizaciji	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

76. Število zaposlenih v vaši organizaciji:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

- a) 1-5
- b) 6-10
- c) 11-25
- d) 26-50
- e) Več kot 50

77. Starostna skupina:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

- a) Pod 20 let
- b) 20-29 let
- c) 30-39 let
- d) 40-49 let
- e) 50-59 let
- f) nad 60 let

78. Spol:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

- a) Moški
- b) Ženski
- c) Ne želim odgovoriti

79. Najvišja dosežena stopnja izobrazbe:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

- a) 5 stopnja ali nižje
- b) 6/1 (višješolski programi (do 1994); višješolski strokovni programi)
- c) 6/2 (specializacija po višješolskih programih; visokošolski strokovni programi; visokošolski strokovni (1. bolonjska stopnja); univerzitetni programi (1. bolonjska stopnja))
- d) 7 (specializacija po visokošolskih strokovnih programih; univerzitetni programi; magisteriji stroke (ZA imenom) (2. bolonjska stopnja))

e) 8/1 magisteriji znanosti (PRED imenom)

f) 8/2 doktorati znanosti (PRED imenom)

80. Šolanje sem zaključil na naslednji instituciji (najvišja dosežena stopnja izobrazbe):

--

81. Leto dokončanja vaše najvišje pridobljene stopnje izobrazbe:

--

82. Ali ste manager / vodja tima:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

a) Da

b) Ne

83. Na katerem operativnem nivoju managementa delujete:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor; **prosim odgovorite samo v primeru, če ste pri vprašanju 82. označili odgovor a)**

a) Operativni / nižji manager

b) Srednji manager

c) Top / vodilni manager

Prosim odgovarjajte od tukaj naprej na vprašanja ne glede na vaš odgovor pri vprašanju 82.!

84. Koliko let ste zaposleni v vaši organizaciji:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

a) Manj kot 1 leto

b) 1-5 let

c) 6-10 let

d) 11-15 let

e) 16-20 let

f) 21-30 let

g) več kot 30 let

85. Kaj najbolj opiše vašo prejšnjo zaposlitev:

(ustrezno označite, možen je samo en odgovor)

- a) Zasebni sektor
- b) Javni sektor
- c) Akademska stroka
- d) Samozaposlen
- e) Nisem bil zaposlen
- f) Drugo:

86. V kolikor imate še kakšen dodatni komentar ga prosim zapišite spodaj:

Pustite vaš elektronski naslov, v kolikor bi vas zanimal povzetek rezultatov raziskave:

Najlepša hvala za sodelovanje v raziskavi!

Simon Colnar

Intervju – Management znanja v centrih za socialno delo 2019

1. Ozadje intervjuirane osebe

- Mi zaupate **koliko zaposlenih** je vse skupaj v vaši organizaciji?
- V katero **starostno skupino** sami spadate?
- Kakšna je vaša najvišja dosežena **stopnja izobrazbe**?
- Za katero **smer študija** ste se odločili?
- Ali ste sami **manager / vodja** tima?
- Koliko **let** ste že zaposleni v vaši organizaciji?
- Ali je bila vaša **prejšnja zaposlitev** podobna?

2. Organizacijska struktura

- Se vam zdi, da je v vaši organizaciji **hierarhičnost** pomembna? Ali sta po vašem mnenju decentralizacija in fleksibilnost možna v okolju javnega sektorja?
- V kolikšni meri so **zaposleni vključeni v procese odločanja**? Ali bi bilo smiselno zaposlene še bolj vpeti v procese odločanja v prihodnosti?
- Kakšni so tipični **komunikacijski vzorci** v vaši organizaciji? Koliko komunikacije poteka od zgoraj-navzdol in koliko od spodaj-navzgor? Ali se vam zdi primerno, da komunikacija glede delitve znanja poteka primarno od zgoraj navzdol? Kakšni so po vašem mnenju razlogi za to in kako bi to lahko spremenili?
- Ali menite, da je v vaši organizaciji trenutno **dovolj zaposlenih**? Kako občutite morebiten primanjkljaj zaposlenih na nivoju dnevnih aktivnosti? Se vam zdi, da je zaradi primanjkljaja ogrožena kvaliteta vaših končnih storitev za uporabnike?
- Ali menite, da **bi se v primeru dodatnih kadrovskih moči spremenil tudi odnos do managementa znanja**? Bi nekatere aktivnosti le-tega lažje izvajali v praksi z večjim številom zaposlenih?

3. IKT

- Kako bi ocenili vaše **zadovoljstvo z informacijskimi rešitvami**, ki jih uporabljate pri svojem delu? Kje so po vašem mnenju največje težave pri uporabi le-teh rešitev v praksi? Kaj bi še želeli posebej izpostaviti?
- Koliko **znanja o informacijsko komunikacijskih rešitvah** imajo v vaši organizaciji **zaposleni**? Ali se vam zdi možno, da bi se zaposleni izogibali uporabi le-teh rešitev zaradi lastne slabe percepcije o njih in zaradi delnega nepoznavanja omenjenega področja?
- Kakšne so vaše prve izkušnje z **informacijskim sistemom »Krpan«**? Je le-ta po vašem mnenju primeren za delo, ki ga opravljate v centrih za socialno delo in vam je oziroma še bo olajšal opravljanje dela?

4. Obseg managementa znanja

- Kaj sami **razumete kot management znanja**?

- Ali se po vašem mnenju vaša **organizacija** (na **formalen ali neformalen način**) **ukvarja** z aktivnostmi povezanimi z managementom znanja?
- **Kako dolgo** pa je po vaši oceni vaša organizacija že vpeta v management znanja?
- Ali menite, da **prejšnje izkušnje managerjev oziroma njihova izobrazba** vplivajo na management znanja in njegovo prisotnost v organizaciji?
- Ali ima vaša organizacija **točno določenega managerja** za aktivnosti povezane z managementom znanja? Zakaj ga po vašem mnenju nima?
- Se vam zdi, da v vaši organizaciji **managerji dovolj jasno in aktivno predstavijo pričakovanja in koristi**, ki so povezane z managementom znanja?

5. Učinkovitost management znanja

- Kako bi **v celoti ocenili management znanja** v vaši organizaciji v smislu **učinkovitosti**?
- Kakšen pa je po vašem mnenju lahko **potencialni vpliv** managementa znanja na **sodelovanje, komunikacijo, učenje in splošno delovanje** vaše organizacije?
- Kakšna pa so vaša pričakovanja glede finančnega vidika managementa znanja v vaši organizaciji?

6. Organizacijska kultura

- Kako bi v vaši organizaciji opisali **tipično socialno omrežje zaposlenih**? Se vam zdi, da je večina zaposlenih vključena v tovrstna omrežja?
- Kakšna so **tipična usposabljanja**, ki jih je v vaši organizaciji deležen tipičen zaposleni? Ali se po vašem mnenju zaposleni dovolj udeležujejo usposabljanj, ki presegajo okvire socialnega dela? Se vam to sploh zdi potrebno?
- Ali ima po vašem mnenju vaša organizacija na voljo dovolj **resursov** za normalno delovanje? Katere resurse pa ima vaša organizacija na voljo za aktivnosti povezane z managementom znanja? Ali so le-ti po vašem mnenju primerni? Zakaj resursov za management znanja ni na voljo?
- Kako bi opredelili tipično **nagrajevanje zaposlenih** v vaši organizaciji? Kako bi lahko po vašem mnenju izboljšali nagrajevanje zaposlenih predvsem v smislu motivacije in priznavanja zaposlenih? Kako pomembno se vam zdi finančno in nefinančno (ki temelji na notranji motivaciji posameznikov) nagrajevanje zaposlenih?
- Ali je po vašem mnenju moč opaziti kakšne **spremembe po reorganizaciji** centrov za socialno delo pri vedenju zaposlenih? Le-ti drugače gledajo na medsebojne odnose s sodelavci (npr. v smislu zaupanja, sodelovanja pri delitvi znanja)? Kako po novem dojemajo varnost njihove zaposlitve?

7. Terminologija

- Kako bi ocenili **splošno razumevanje zaposlenih v csd-jih glede tem kot je management in podrobneje management znanja**? Ali se vam zdi, da zaposleni

v celoti razumejo posamezne pojme, ki so povezani z managementom znanja, npr. znanje, opolnomočenje, socialna omrežja, ipd.?

- Ali menite, da bi se pogled socialnih delavcev na določene vidike managementa znanja spremenil, v kolikor bi jim **prej nekdo podrobneje razložil** kaj management znanja je, s posebnim poudarkom na aktivnostih, ki se morda v praksi že izvajajo neformalno?

8. Ali bi želeli še kaj dodati glede obravnavane problematike?

Appendix 5: Transcripts from Interviews

<i>Transcript 1: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Hierarchy</i>	28
<i>Transcript 2: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Decentralization and Flexibility</i>	30
<i>Transcript 3: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Involvement of Employees in the Decision Making Process</i>	32
<i>Transcript 4: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Communication Patterns, Top-down Communication and Top-down Knowledge Sharing</i>	34
<i>Transcript 5: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Personnel Issues and its Potential Effect on Daily Activities</i>	37
<i>Transcript 6: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards the Quality of Services Users Receive</i>	40
<i>Transcript 7: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Knowledge Management in the Case of Additional Personnel</i>	42
<i>Transcript 8: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Satisfaction with Information-communication Technologies Available to Social Work Centers</i>	44
<i>Transcript 9: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Knowledge of their Coworkers Related to Information-communication Technology and Potential Avoidance in Using Such Solutions due to Deficit in Own Knowledge</i>	47
<i>Transcript 10: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards the New Information system “Krpan”</i>	50
<i>Transcript 11: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals What Knowledge Management is</i>	54
<i>Transcript 12: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals Whether their Organization Formally or Informally Engages in Knowledge Management Activities</i>	57
<i>Transcript 13: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals of How Long their Organization is Practicing Knowledge Management Related Activities</i>	60
<i>Transcript 14: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on How the Previous Experiences and Education of Top Managers Influence the Level of Knowledge Management in their Organization</i>	62
<i>Transcript 15: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Whether their Organization has a Specific Manager Responsible for Knowledge Management</i>	65
<i>Transcript 16: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Whether they Believe Managers are Actively and Clearly Communicating the Expectations and Benefits Related to Knowledge Management</i>	67
<i>Transcript 17: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Knowledge Management Effectiveness in their Social Work Center</i>	69
<i>Transcript 18: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on the Potential influence of Knowledge Management on Enhanced Collaboration, Enhanced Communication, Enhanced Learning and Enhanced Performance</i>	71
<i>Transcript 19: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on the Financial Aspect of Knowledge Management</i>	73
<i>Transcript 20: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Social Networks Between Employees</i>	75

<i>Transcript 21: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Typical Training an Employee Attends.....</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Transcript 22: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Training Outside the Framework of Social Work.....</i>	<i>79</i>
<i>Transcript 23: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Existing Financial Resources.....</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Transcript 24: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Existing Financial Resources Available Purposefully for Knowledge Management.....</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Transcript 25: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on the Existing Incentive Structure.....</i>	<i>84</i>
<i>Transcript 26: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Both Financial and Non-financial Incentives.....</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Transcript 27: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on the Reorganization Process.....</i>	<i>89</i>
<i>Transcript 28: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Knowledge Management Terminology.....</i>	<i>93</i>
<i>Transcript 29: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals Whether Previous Training Could Influence the Perception of Social Workers Towards (Knowledge) Management.....</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>Transcript 30: Concluding Thought from Respondents.....</i>	<i>97</i>

Transcript 1: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Hierarchy

Category	Example from Interview
Hierarchical structure is important, new organizational structure	<i>“From the 1st of October 2018 on there is a new organizational structure, here is now the headquarters of social work center X. The center has its own local organizational units. Local organizational units can be considered as sub-organizational structures (each has its own manager, which is responsible that activities are performed in accordance to the needs, tenders, legislation and local specifics). The manager at the headquarters and at local organizational units is perceived as a hierarchical structure (which is in principle important).” (Interviewee A)</i>
Hierarchy is important	<i>“Hierarchy is important, especially as our functioning is rather heavily defined by various laws.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Hierarchy is not important	<i>“No, hierarchy is not so important. In the first place is humanity. Of course there is something that the leader, director has to do, however, it is more important that everyone is being heard (that we are able to communicate) and to do social work.” (Interviewee C)</i>
Hierarchy is important, reorganization, properly functioning	<i>“Hierarchy is important, especially after the reorganization, when we are united in one social work center with three additional units. It is important so that everyone can do their job. The units are relatively small (so there is no need to additionally structure things inside units). Now there is a top manager, assistants, units, it functions properly, there are no evident problems.” (Interviewee D)</i>
Hierarchy is important, final decision making, responsibility	<i>“For our unit hierarchy is important (especially in terms of making final decisions). According to the level of education (all employees have a university degree) and team work, it is important that communication is horizontal, however, it is also important that it is known who makes the final decisions and is responsible for them. Specifically in these two fields hierarchy is important. The final decision must be in the domain of the top manager as he or she is responsible for that decision.” (Interviewee E)</i>
Unsure about hierarchy, reorganization, responsibility	<i>“Hard to define whether hierarchy is important or not. We did not have any problems with the reorganization process, the collaboration in the local area was good, there were no problems where the regional center will be, we devoted a lot of efforts that the reorganization would be beneficial for the user. However, now a lot of responsibility lies on the regional manager, the amount of responsibility that he or she has is terrifying.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Surveillance, centralization proved to be poor	<i>“Today, there is greater surveillance from the MLFSAEO. Before, when there were 62 social work centers we were more independent, there was not really a lot of surveillance, especially not the amount that we have now when there are only 16 social work centers. It can be seen that centralization did not bring anything good. Also my coworkers acknowledge that today the amount of surveillance is higher.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Hierarchy is important, organization of work and employees	<i>“To some extent, hierarchy is important, especially in the sense that one takes over the organization and course of work, concrete allocation of employees in their fields of work, the organization of cases that they are dealing with, from this point of view hierarchy is important. Our structure is</i>

	<p><i>such that in fact it is very dual (employees and the manager), the intermediate phase does exist, there are the so called team leaders, however, they are more or less field coordinators that do not have the right to make decisions related to the course of work or the allocation of employees. This is always the task of the managers, in our case, the assistant director, that is one person. Our work is basically very hierarchical, from coordinators to other positions. ” (Interviewee H)</i></p>
Hierarchy is important	<p><i>“It is important. For the work process, transparency, level of responsibility and allocation of work. ” (Interviewee I).</i></p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 2: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Decentralization and Flexibility

Category	Example from Interview
Routine	<i>“As the majority of employees are females, they are afraid of having to work in shifts. They have children and a family. Routine is a very suitable option for them.” (Interviewee A)</i>
Decentralization and flexibility are desirable, limiting legislation	<i>“Both decentralization and flexibility are desirable, however, the organizational structure would have to adapt first to the current needs. As a public institution, we are currently too big for effective management. Currently, the way we are managed is quite hierarchical and central. To be more concrete, as a social work center we would have to be a smaller institution to be able to function with less hierarchy, however, we are rather bounded with existing legislation. Adjustments would be desirable, necessary and meaningful, however, they are hard to achieve due to the aforementioned legislation. We try to adapt to the existing situation, including the formal legal framework. Compared to the private sector, we are much more limited in our functioning.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Decentralization and flexibility are important, beneficial for social work and users	<i>“For social work, decentralization and flexibility are very important. It has to be flexible and decentralized, otherwise it is hard to find solutions. I feel flexibility and decentralization at the level of daily activities with autonomy at my work. I have a lot of support from my manager, who does not interfere in my work. My manager is supportive of all activities that could be potentially beneficial for our users.” (Interviewee C)</i>
It used to be more flexible	<i>“It used to be more flexible (before the reorganization, when social work centers were smaller and had more autonomy). There was less coordination (now it is necessary to coordinate everything between three units and their daily tasks). Coordination is more difficult today, simply because we are bigger.” (Interviewee D)</i>
Decentralization and flexibility are desirable, centralization is poor	<i>“Decentralization and flexibility should also be important in the public sector. I do not know what is currently being done with this path towards centralization, which is not good. The situation is now even worse. There is strong emphasis on bureaucratic work, which is a shame. I do believe that smaller units are more efficient. The constant trend towards specialization is limiting us, it is important to have a lot of knowledge and especially in social work it is important to have very broad knowledge.” (Interviewee E)</i>
-	- (Interviewee F)
Advocate for decentralization, centralization is poor	<i>“My perception regarding decentralization is positive, centralization as can be seen nowadays has proven to not produce good enough results. We imagined centralization in a different manner, that it would enable us more professional support in difficult cases (i.e. we do not have a lawyer in our social work center). The problem is that there is no additional personnel as the MLFSAEO was not able to provide them.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Decentralization and flexibility is important, evaluate the contribution of individuals	<i>“This could be very important if we were able to organize it, however, I think that until now we did not manage to succeed. I.e. the coordinators should also assume the role of team leaders, get some authorization, power, responsibility to allocate cases, personnel and professional content. This</i>

	<i>should also be properly evaluated with time and potentially even with finances.” (Interviewee H)</i>
Decentralization and flexibility are necessary, social work is flexible	<i>“This would be necessary. Flexibility is a characteristic of social work, which is very dynamic and flexible. Decentralization is necessary, especially as there are major differences between different regions in Slovenia. They are so different that it would make more sense that a specific region is one decentralized unit.” (Interviewee I)</i>

Source: Own work

Transcript 3: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Involvement of Employees in the Decision Making Process

Category	Example from Interview
Employees are involved	<i>“They involve themselves in the process. Every proactive employee can express his or her opinion and propose an initiative.” (Interviewee A)</i>
Employees are involved, different levels of proactivity	<i>“Employees are nowadays already involved in the decision making process. In my organization, employees propose initiatives, especially now in light of all the changes that are occurring. I personally try to involve employees, ask for their opinion and then decide whether I can acknowledge their opinion. It very much depends on the situation and conditions that apply to that specific situation. Employees are consulted regarding every important decision. Of course there are still possible improvements to involve them even more. Some employees are more proactive than others, with some I have to devote more effort to involve everyone, especially to gain the opinion of those that tend to be more introverted. I notice that the longer an individual is employed, the greater the possibility for him or her is to become numb and accepts his or her path and has less ideas than a younger colleague. Differences with different age groups are in some cases noticeable.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Employees are involved, flow of information	<i>“Employees always have the possibility to make suggestions related to their work, users and organizational aspects. The ability to participate in decision make with us exists, although I hear that the situation is potentially different in other social work centers. Differences can be seen with the flow of information, a lot depends on the manager, that the flow of information is available to everyone. A possible improvement would be that each social work center would expose the appropriate information to every employee.” (Interviewee C).</i>
Employees are involved	<i>“I strongly encourage them to get involved. They know the most in their field of expertise, including the aspects that are currently missing.” (Interviewee D)</i>
Employees are taken into account	<i>“I take into account the suggestions and wishes of my employees. In this way they are also involved in the decision making process.” (Interviewee E)</i>
Predefined tasks, initiatives from employees exist	<i>“As far as day-to-day activities go they are more or less predefined, there is not much of a discussion here, the activities must be regulated. Initiatives from my employees are different, particularly we discuss, which employee wants to maybe work in a different position, as a specific position brings a certain amount of tasks that are predefined. Each year, in our annual interview we discuss what are their additional wishes, what do they want to do more, voluntarily and what are they willing to offer.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Employees are involved	<i>“They are involved, especially in challenging times. We make arrangements and employees have their own suggestions how to solve ongoing challenges.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Employees are involved, differences with individuals, predefined tasks	<i>“I would say that they are involved in the part where they can contribute their own ideas. Everyone that wishes to be involved has this option. There are certain individuals that rather “stay back”, they are in a predefined position, they do not wish to engage in such activities, they work on their own matters, when they are assigned a task, they usually take it or say that it is</i>

	<p><i>too much for them to do or it exceeds their competences. It is more dependent on personal characteristics than age. It is hard to say if they could be even more involved, due to the nature of our work, where there is not a lot of freedom of choice. We have certain authorizations, tasks that are defined in the law and others task that are so to say defined in a catalog of our tasks. We have a bit more freedom in the service activity, where we can plan what we are going to do, how we will behave within specific rules and definitions. While if we again discuss the authorizations and tasks that are defined with the law, the nature of the task itself is such, that I doubt it would be possible to decide on the level of individual employees to i.e. not perform a specific task. I cannot say I will not do a conversation with a user as it is already predefined in the aforementioned documents.” (Interviewee H)</i></p>
<p>Employees are involved, decisions related to social work</p>	<p><i>“Employees are involved, as a professional leader I involve them. Every social worker is in charge of his or her own cases, co-decides with his or her users in which direction they will take the case. If we are talking about decisions that are related to our professional work on the level of the social work center, then employees are involved in the decision making process. In personnel issues and finances they are not involved. Generally, they are involved when their professional work is the main issue.” (Interviewee I)</i></p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 4: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Communication Patterns, Top-down Communication and Top-down Knowledge Sharing

Category	Example from Interview
Two-way communication, establish relationships after reorganization	<i>“Communication is both top-down and bottom-up. Differences can be seen between local units, how much effort did the manager previously invested in building relationships. At first, after the reorganization there was some confusion as individuals skipped some managers and instantly contacted the regional manager. After some discussions, things turned out to be fine as the relationships are now clearer to all employees. I do not want to place myself above others even though I am a manager. Communication is well organized, especially given the work that we have to do.” (Interviewee A)</i>
Two-way communication, public sector context, knowledge sharing via mentorship	<i>“The communication takes place both top-down and bottom-up, however, we are also determined with the fact that we are functioning within the public sector, where some tasks have to be hierarchical as also the manager in an organization can receive some instructions from another public sector institution. I try to include every employee in the communication process. Regarding knowledge sharing, professional matters, direct work practice and other stuff also employees come to the manager. The manager then tries to discuss the proposed changes with higher ranks to actually implement them in practice. In our organization we try to help individuals, to introduce them our work and there is also mentorship. Again, a lot is dependent on the individual, some older employees see this as their mission, to share their knowledge with their younger colleagues, however, there can be differences also related to individual characteristics. Regardless of age, some see it as added value for their younger colleagues (to share knowledge), while others see it as an unnecessary additional activity in which they do not want to engage. Then as I manager I feel there is no point into putting pressure on them to engage in such activities. I believe that everything is distributed similarly to the Gauss curve, where the vast majority is neither for nor against it, and some are extremely for or against it. I would like to commend some individuals that are happy to assume some additional tasks and attend additional training and engage more when it is necessary.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Two-way communication, regular information via different channels, role of manager	<i>“I feel all levels of communication (top-down, bottom-up and between employees). Our manager regularly informs us (emails, meetings, etc.), we can go on trainings, where we gain new information and we can also then discuss them with our colleagues. Information comes via different channels.” (Interviewee C).</i>
More top-down communication, knowledge sharing did not work well, would like more knowledge related activities in practice, younger employees are motivated	<i>“I acknowledge that less comes from employees to managers (when I assumed a management position, I especially noticed that there are less employees that come to me). There is a filter between the employees and top managers, the local managers (employees come to them first). Then local managers typically forward such information, I still need time to get used to this, I miss the constant connection with employees. There is simply not enough time to ask them questions, to have 2 annual conversations, I miss this and the ideas from my employees. I assume that it is also possible that something is lost in the communication, i.e. that the local manager misunderstands something, forgets something or even does not share it with me. At the beginning I tried that on meetings, everyone that attended training</i>

	<p>would prepare an abstract and share it with others, however, it did not went well in practice. First of all, it is additional task for the employee and can also influence others (i.e. the whole organizations stops working for 30 minutes). Moreover, the topic is possibly not crucial for them, they could get stuck with too many cases to solve, therefore maybe knowledge transfer is a bit lacking. In practice, we would like more knowledge transfer, to build a knowledge base, although we do have a common disk. It depends on the motivation of the individual if he or she reads something, however, I assume that is not used that much. I think it is defined by the level of proactivity of an individual, we are in general a young team, the generation has changed. The younger employees have an interest to gain knowledge, points and promotion. They are active and get involved in every possible training, whereas the older employees not so much.” (Interviewee D)</p>
Two-way communication	<p>“In our organization communication is well functioning. Communication is bottom-up, top-down and between employees.” (Interviewee E)</p>
Two-way communication, regular information	<p>“Communication is top-down and bottom-up. I.e. everything related to the reorganization process was available on a daily basis to every employee and they were informed with was going on.” (Interviewee F)</p>
Two-way communication, informal knowledge sharing	<p>“Communication is on all levels and we tell each other stuff in a very direct manner. Many times employees between themselves are able to solve problems. However, it is true that there is a difference between the previous manager and me, today the system is different. Employees needed time, to start actively thinking as previously there was a lot of task delegation. I always say, that only someone who encounters problems knows where changes are necessary and can suggest them, I do not do this to avoid responsibility. I can have my own suggestions, however, I do not know if this is the optimal solution as I do not do it in practice. I do try to get involved in every work aspect, to get a feeling. Nevertheless, when there is a concrete problem, a think that employees themselves are the most competent ones to propose an effective solution. With this, I think it is good that we talk to each other when we sit together in the morning or when we have lunch together.</p> <p>In such occasions, we regularly discuss work related issues and reach agreements when a challenge arises. I am not saying that every time the solution is effective, however, we see if it will work or not and can change our tactics. You cannot know in advance if the selected solution is ideal, you need to test it and change it. There must be some flexibility, although people in general prefer to be within a framework, so this can be a demanding task.” (Interviewee G)</p>
Two-way communication, informal knowledge sharing on meetings	<p>“Let us say that communication is two-way. Knowledge sharing does not go only in one direction. Our management constantly informs us about the available training and other opportunities. Usually, everything comes to our email address, both from external and internal sources. There are also initiatives from employees themselves, i.e. look at what I found, I think this topic is interesting, I met someone who is dealing with this topic, I think it would be beneficial if we invite this person and you can explain all similar situations to our manager. We organize things in way (established quite some years back) that when someone attends training it is customary for them to report, although it does actually depend on the individual how he or she does this. Also time and competence are relevant. And the topic, if it was a very</p>

	<p><i>narrow topic then of course you will not present it to a wider audience. If it could be useful, then of course it will be presented. We organized some internal meetings, where all employees were invited and could come, then a topic from a certain training was presented and it lasted approximately 30 minutes per topic. It is a very good way of doing things and we also have another good way of doing things, we have an electronic and physical library, which means that everyone that attends a training (assigned by work), has to give the materials to the library, available to everyone, on a computer or physically. I could say that this is our internal knowledge base. More emphasis is on reporting inside certain teams that are related to a specific work area. My team, when someone goes on training, we then almost every time or once a month in a meeting discuss what was the topic of that training. This is currently functioning and we would wish for more similar activities if we had more time. I see it as a good way of knowledge transfer.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Interviewee H)</i></p>
Two-way communication	<p><i>“Communication is bottom-up and top-down. Communication is good, information flow is functioning, there are always possible improvements, however, with us this is currently well functioning.”</i> (Interviewee I)</p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 5: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Personnel Issues and its Potential Effect on Daily Activities

Category	Example from interview
Lack of personnel, priorities and fighting fire, influences all activities	<i>“There is a significant shortage of personnel, it influences all our activities. We work based on priorities and we are fighting against fire. I really see that we have lack of personnel. My employees are even unable to attend training courses. When we are looking for some reserves in our personnel, we can quickly acknowledge that there are none left. In august (2019) we will be exposed to a new collapse as there will be new work transferred from Ljubljana. To put it simple, there is too much work for one individual. We need additional personnel as we cannot solve everything with overtime. We are definitely short on personnel, yes, we got some new social workers, however, we also got numerous new tasks assigned by the law.” (Interviewee A)</i>
Lack of personnel, fighting with fire, not enough time	<i>“I am of the opinion that we do not have enough personnel to do our work and all our tasks to the highest possible quality standard. We do work based on priorities, what are especially pressing issues and we are fighting with fire. Employees experience this when they are unable to professionally grow, as they are unable to attend training courses as there is simply no time for them.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Lack of personnel, overload,	<i>“Social work centers definitely do not have enough employees. In the past few years, new tasks were assigned with different laws, however, there was no additional personnel. We can feel this overload and the consequences of this extensive workload. Employees more often have to go on sick leave and they have problems with their mental health. We almost feel guilty to go on vacation as you do not know who will be your substitute and that you will put additional burden on that individual. The situation is not easy. The additional cases that are assigned from Ljubljana definitely do not help. Additionally there are other fields of work (i.e. changes in the field of family work), where there will be a lot of additional stuff and we often have our doubts how will we be able to do all this.” (Interviewee C)</i>
Happy with more personnel, hard to work in such circumstances	<i>“We would be happy with more personnel. In our case, especially problematic are the general offices. We have only two individuals employed for this aspect, which takes away time to do other work or on a daily basis I have to deal with a lot of administration. A lot of this work gets on the desk of the manager, I would wish for at least half an employee, so that I am able to actually manage and deal with other tasks. Nowadays we are always fighting with fire, we are always behind and a lot of the time we have to be present in Ljubljana. Changes that affect our work (i.e. family work), there were two years to work on that, however, social workers received everything virtually in the last minute. It is hard to work in such circumstances, especially on the long-term because it takes away your energy, if this was once or twice I year we could manage, however, this is actually our reality or our practice. As such, there is a lot of dissatisfaction that spreads over our whole collective. For me it is hard to motivate and encourage good relationships and it takes a lot of my energy. Also the media are more prone to expose the negative aspects of social work, even if there are a lot of examples of good practice, however, this is</i>

	<i>not attractive for the masses.” (Interviewee D)</i>
Lack of personnel, priorities, challenges with basic tasks	<i>“No, there are not enough employees. All our tasks, based on the number of tasks and employees, we are exceeding all standards and norms, we cannot do our work at the highest possible quality level and as professional as we should be able to do so. We are forced to choose priorities, the population is growing, the number of tasks is always higher, the profession is growing, professional knowledge is different, things are in general changing, we need to follow and implement changes, however, we are not able to. The most obvious cases can be seen when sick leave occurs or that we are not able to attend training that is defined by law and that we cannot go on vacation when we want. Even with the reorganization, we even lost some personnel, however, the amount of tasks did not significantly change. We were unprepared for the reorganization, there was no pilot project, no specifically defined consequences and the decision was unprofessional.” (Interviewee E)</i>
Lack of personnel, fighting with fire, overload	<i>“We are fighting with fire. We can compare ourselves with the municipality that has several more employees. I think if you compare these two institutions, I am almost certain that we have more tasks assigned. Employees are constantly exposed to stress, they are facing burnout, when they finish their work they often require sick leave. In our social work center people come sick in the office, you have to basically tell him or her to go home, they feel this responsibility to the people and to their coworkers. Employees share their tasks, help each other out and they are a one man band on one specific field. This will not work in the long-term. It is impossible to carry out tasks in this way, we have to get additional personnel, the excuse that there are not enough financial funds is not really an excuse, we deserve new personnel as the amount of tasks is always higher. We at our unit have a problem to even report all our work in the database. The more you are experiencing personnel shortages, the more you are unable to report such administrative requirements. This creates a perception that we work less. This then transfers to debates about personnel, which is absolutely necessary. And now we also have to deal with “Krgan.”” (Interviewee F).</i>
Lack of personnel, issues with bureaucracy	<i>“Yes, although the MLFSAEO said that in our region it is not a problem, based on the number of cases that were visible in the administrative system. We acknowledge that this is a problem as we did not fill out every single case as the priority was always the user (maybe “Krgan” will improve this; and maybe our priority can be considered as a deficiency). We do everything we can to help people, we search for mutual solutions and administration is not that important. We have it in written form, the documentation is quite extensive, however, in the administrative system this is only seen as one case and there is no perception of how much time you need to deal with this “one” case. Here we need to acknowledge that we have to report this in the administrative system as in the end they evaluate the personnel needs from there. This is the only system that the MLFSAEO uses regarding personnel needs and they do not have the real picture what are the problems.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Lack of personnel, no clear	<i>“I will tell you have I see things from my perspective, my own observations, it is subjective, something also what others could do.</i>

solution	<p><i>Absolutely given the amount of work we have, the number of employees is too low. Something is not right for long now, I do not know how we can solve this as every single new employee is like a drop in the ocean. I have to be honest, in my case, I do not allow to get carried away by this stuff. I always try to organize my work in a way that I am able to follow other trends, other knowledge, other stuff, regardless of how extensive my workload is. It is not my style that I just get to work, do my job and go home. I am always intrigued by training, what others have to say, articles and I always remain a bit curious. Many of my colleagues function similarly, of course there also others that are different, because you are so burdened in one period, you are like a machine and you press your off button for other stuff, like information that is not completely relevant for your work. A lot depends on your proactivity and internal needs.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee H)</p>
Lack of personnel, overload, fighting with fire	<p><i>“Personnel shortage definitely exists. Individual employees are facing burnout, they are becoming apathetic. At the level of daily activities, if someone does not do something, someone else has to do it, if that someone else is not able to do it, then the manager has to do it at the end. Work needs to be done. It is true, we are indeed fighting fires.”</i> (Interviewee I)</p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 6: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards the Quality of Services Users Receive

Category	Example from Interview
Inevitable in the long-term, not able to be closer to people	<p><i>“I do not want that the user would suffer because of lack of personnel, however, I am afraid that it is inevitable in the long-term. We are lucky enough that we have additional programs, where a user can be involved in another service. Other regions in Slovenia do not have this option. A social worker that should go “on the field” or “closer to the people” is unable to do so and sometimes we have to send a public employee (without the necessary competences) to solve such pressing issues. We are experiencing lack of personnel for the past 20 years, however, nothing has changed.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Interviewee A)</p>
Small deficit in quality, little added value, not able to be close to the people	<p><i>“We often run out of people to do that something more for an individual, i.e. to be more “on the field” or “closer to the people” or just to have longer conversations with our users. Similarly, those conversations are not common enough. Regarding the quality of services, yes to some extent the user can feel a small deficit in the quality of services, however, he or she always gets at least the minimum that is defined by the law. It often happens though, that there is no added value and we would like to be able to dedicate more time and effort to one individual or to look at his or her case from a broader perspective.”</i> (Interviewee B)</p>
/	/ (Interviewee C)
The user feels it, a lot of negativity	<p><i>“Sooner or later the users feel this (lack of personnel) in practice, he or she also feels it with the quality of services as you are always pressured to catch deadlines, you are falling behind and in such a situation it is almost impossible to be kind to everyone all the time. Especially when people come with unrealistic demands, they are rude because they feel in distress and there are also a lot of users from which you do not get a lot back. I.e. the elderly are a very grateful population, here in social work there is no such thing, you rarely get a compliment or feedback, more or less they are of the opinion that we are partially to blame for their existing situation.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Interviewee D)</p>
The quality of services would improve, innovative solutions to counteract the deficit in personnel	<p><i>“We do our best so that the user will not feel this lack of personnel, however, there are differences between social work centers. I.e. there can be a lot of non-governmental organizations in close proximity, we are also trying to collaborate with the Faculty of social work as we are aware of our deficit in personnel and we try to provide services also in this way, like in other social work centers (with the help of students). This does not mean that strictly professional social work (i.e. family counselling) can be done by students, volunteers or people without the necessary competences, however, they can help with some basic tasks. Of course, the quality of services would improve if we had enough employees, so that also our employees would be able to attend training courses and educate themselves. It can always get better, however, we do our best so that the user does not feel this.”</i> (Interviewee E)</p>
The user feels it, extensive effort to counteract the lack in	<p><i>“I am afraid that yes, sometimes the user could feel it with the quality of services. We do our best for the user. We are a small social work center,</i></p>

employees	<p><i>we know personally almost everyone that comes, even if there are some legal deadlines, we sometimes cannot afford to not do something as this could result that in the meantime that person would be without money.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee F)</p>
User is the priority, hard circumstances	<p><i>“Our priority is always our user. The problem is that it is sometimes beyond our power to help him or her, which is bad, because there are moments when we feel devastated as the user rejects the need for change and continues to drown. We then question ourselves, whether we did enough, are we still professional and the boundary is very thin.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee G)</p>
Optimum quality, “additional services” are lacking, difficult job in general	<p><i>“When you are so busy that you cannot read all of your emails, there are a lot of other things you cannot do. Regarding the quality of services, I will put it in this way, maybe it can be seen in some aspects, i.e. how kind and polite you can be with your user and what you would be able to do if you had more time, like sit with him or her for an additional 15 to 30 minutes, this is of course evident. Strictly referring to quality, I do not believe that we are in any kind of deficit, like that the user would not hear what he or she needs, that something is not done or a task that remains unfinished. The user always gets what he or she is entitled to, which is the optimum (explicitly I will not refer to it as minimum as I do not believe that this exists in social work). The task is setup the way it is, as such it is at its maximum and there is no possibility for you to not do something as in that case you actually did not finish the task. So in this part, the quality is still optimal. I have to add, that we are dealing with situations when people are at their lows. Our job has tasks and authorizations from the state to deal with risky situations in people’s lives. In general there is some resistance and you do not want to tackle things that represent a problem to you. We as an institution are not like i.e. a school when everyone comes with a positive mindset, in social work it is not like that. We are really the last solution in our society and we deal with all kinds of individuals, the ones who are first or last, it does not matter. It is a fact that people when they are in distress behave very differently. Some will try to deal with their problems, while others will try to run away.”</i> (Interviewee H)</p>
The quality of services for the user is worse, complex challenges.	<p><i>“The situation for the user is worse. We are providing continuous services, if we do not have enough time for our user it is very similar to the doctor’s office, you have limited time and there is another user already waiting, the tempo is high. We are dealing with complex issues, double diagnoses, addictions, psychiatric problems, you cannot just solve those problems, you need a lot of time.”</i> (Interviewee I)</p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 7: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Knowledge Management in the Case of Additional Personnel

Category	Example from Interview
Positive attitude towards management, learning organization, reduce overload, they need more time	<i>“We will have to develop management as it is absolutely necessary due to the nature and content of our work. Employees that decide for this profession (social work), have to constantly upgrade their capacities, knowledge, develop new things, be open and have the desire to learn. I would say that my vision is a learning organization and we do a lot of work regarding moving in this direction. All employees have this potential, to learn or train, to gain new knowledge, to learn together, there is potential and interest, however, due to overload and extensive everyday activities there is simply not enough time to do this.” (Interviewee A)</i>
Attitude would change, basic fields have priority, would enable growth of individuals	<i>“Of course the attitude would change with more employees. Although knowledge management would only become important when the basic fields and the most pressing issues are covered. It could have a big influence on the professional development of employees and to follow their needs as it would give them more opportunities. Work would also be more evenly distributed and an individual would be able to focus more on personal and professional growth, including the knowledge aspect.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Knowledge form practice, gap between theory and practice, positive attitude with acknowledging those conditions	<i>“Knowledge management should include knowledge from practice, not so much emphasis on theory, the MLFSAEO knows a lot about theory, however, they are a bit in the dark what it means actually to go “on the field” and “closer to the people”. Then knowledge management would be extremely welcome. However, currently there is no connection between theory and practice (it was always lacking, there are differences between “fields” and users). In general there is quite a big difference between theory and practice, I assume that in a way there was not a lot of attention given to the fact that we have a deficit in personnel. A number in a system does not mean much.” (Interviewee C)</i>
Attitude would change, time is problematic, knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing	<i>“With more employees I believe that the attitude towards management would change. Today, time is the problem and if there is not enough personnel, there is not enough time for every activity. With more personnel we would gain more time, work would be more evenly distributed, we could also think about projects, programs, what is currently missing and what do we need. With more personnel, we could also arrange knowledge transfer within and between units, so that every employee would have knowledge. With internships, there is some knowledge transfer (when they are circulating throughout the organization), within existing fields teams are constants, there is the knowledge of older employees that is more visible (complex, professional tasks). Especially if we are talking about past cases, how and why they solve them in that way and in most cases older employees are happy to share their knowledge.” (Interviewee D)</i>
Unlikely more emphasis on knowledge management, hard to identify with management	<i>“I am not sure if the attitude towards management would change. In social work, we managers really find it hard to even identify with the title manager as we are a bit specific with our mindset. A good manager must have the same qualities as social workers, at least this is how we think and</i>

	<p><i>even on training courses we identify more as leaders, not managers. Terminology would have to be different, managers is a bit odd expression, we and our employees or even our profession perceive it as something that is from other fields (economy, companies, money). We are aware that a good social work manager, a good public sector manager must have the same characteristics as elsewhere, with adapted goals (i.e. profit is not the goal). However, I have my doubts whether there would be significant change with knowledge management in the case of additional personnel.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee E)</p>
/	/ (Interviewee F)
Positive attitude towards knowledge management , they need more time	<p><i>“Yes, if we would have more time, we could examine this aspect more. Now when the user is our priority, it is hard. However, in general I think it is necessary and useful. It is absolutely interesting also for social work, if I am a manager, the catch is not that I do everything good myself, a good manager is the one that can listen to their employees, acknowledge problems and searches for mutual solutions. At the end, the manager decides as he or she is the one that carries the responsibility, at least a bigger proportion of it than the others. It is more efficient, when you have individuals involved, that they have experience themselves and are working on specific tasks. A good manager is also the one that tries the work of everyone, that has an overview over the work in the social work center (which is really broad), can see things differently and notices more when there are actual problems. I can see the difference between different managers of social work centers when we discuss potential ideas.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee G)</p>
Positive attitude towards knowledge management, they need more time, reduce overload	<p><i>“It is possible that the attitude would also change in that direction. To put it simple, if you are able to include something into your schedule, it is doable. I am able to do this with my daily activities and then ask when something is unclear when I have the opportunity. If we were able to devote 1 hour per day to knowledge, know-how, knowledge sharing it would be a completely different story. For example 7 hours for professional work, 1 hour for organizational stuff, knowledge. This would be phenomenal, because now in reality you barely eat your lunch before 2 pm (even if you are excellent in self-organizing). This is doable in the short-term, however, not in the long term. To imagine what we get, what we do with the number of employees that we have, is problematic, also in the context of management.”</i> (Interviewee H)</p>
It would be better, dependent on the manager	<p><i>“Certainly it would get better, part of real management is dependent on the leader, how he or she is flexible, how he or she is prepared to share responsibilities, the level he or she relies on democracy and not authority, however, of course it would be better.”</i> (Interviewee I)</p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 8: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Satisfaction with Information-communication Technologies Available to Social Work Centers

Category	Example from Interview
Time delays are not desirable, more adapted to social work, fully functioning at all times	<i>"We are still only introducing such solutions. In June (2019) we will join "Kspan". All the time, upgrades are needed, sometimes the system is not functioning and we cannot issue papers important to our work. Information systems, databases are wonderful, however, they must be 100% functional and especially the goal should not be to prolong our work. Searching for information must in its very essence be fast and available when the user really needs it. I missed collaboration between us as the users and the software developers, so that it could be more adapted to social work. Systems must be connected, now we will have a lot of databases and it would be necessary that they are connected. Time savings must be evident as this was the purpose of such systems."</i> (Interviewee A)
Additional support is needed, improvements are possible	<i>"Information-communication technology in terms of hardware (i.e. computer, printer) is excellent and this is true for the public sector as a whole. We would wish for a bit more support, however, this is again related to personnel deficits. There are definitely areas where improvements are possible. Information-communication solutions could be improved, however, this is true in the whole public sector."</i> (Interviewee B)
Older workers have problems, time delays, more adapted to social work	<i>"We are ok with technology, we get it, it is upgraded (thanks to our manager) and everything works (i.e. printer, computer). The younger generation is very literate with this stuff, while older workers are sometimes unable to catch up. We do not have yet an experience with "Kspan", but we were present at the basic presentations. "Kspan" will require additional time, it would have to be more dedicated to the user, there is too much bureaucracy, paperwork and input from our side. Even with the existing solutions, we did not have enough time to input all cases, many are not able to, they do not know how, and it requires additional time. The MLFSAEO does not have real data about work "on the field." It should be more adapted to social work, it is not the same as in an administrative unit, here you are dealing with a human being, you are trying to find solutions for him or her, when he or she is in trouble and it is a big difference than just to issue an ID card as we are dealing with different stuff."</i> (Interviewee C)
Partially satisfied, missing support	<i>"Partially satisfied. Hardware is ok (it happens that we have to wait for something, i.e. a monitor and it gets tight). With solutions I am partially satisfied, you cannot do almost anything without a computer today as work is postponed. The internet network is appropriate, however, we cannot have wifi (this is negative if you consider laptops). We are missing some support from the informatics department and we regularly notify the MLFSAEO about this problem. The MLFSAEO provides external contractors, however, they cannot do everything, they are trying, working to their limit, nevertheless here improvements are possible."</i> (Interviewee D)
Satisfied – better than it used to	<i>"We are satisfied with the basic stuff that we order at the MLFSAEO, the</i>

<p>be, time savings will be possible, could be more adapted to social work, older workers have more problems</p>	<p><i>MLFSAEO supplies them without any trouble. They never rejected our demands. The influence of managers and local managers is visible as we are able to get once or twice a year everything according to our demands. We have modern hardware solutions and regarding this aspect everything is perfect. I would say that software solutions were upgraded over the years, improvements are visible, especially if it is compared to previous work patterns. Now everything is in one place, which is fine, there were some initial problems with the introduction, however, at the end improvements are visible. We will get "Krpan" in June (2019), I think it will be a welcome solution and it will be better than what we now have. I do believe that time savings will be visible, maybe not at the beginning, however, certainly at the end. Although "Krpan" is not completely adapted for the needs of social work. I will be able to sign documents electronically, which is better than now. I expect that some workers will have some problems, there will be less work for the general offices, archiving will be better as nowadays we still do not have an appropriate archive. This is the future, even if some are scared of scanning, especially older employees, this will be a step to working with less paperwork. As a manager I attended training, so that I will be able to offer help in the introduction phase, when it will be necessary. The younger employees do not have any problems, also the older ones understand and they do not complicate. The system is great and I think that at the end everything will be fine. Of course, there are some differences between social work centers, they do not function in the same way and some are more systematical than others. Again, it will be better than what we have now."</i> (Interviewee E)</p>
<p>Lack of personnel, lack of time, it is necessary</p>	<p><i>"I am aware that this is necessary given the time we are living in. We still had some tasks that were dependent on written form. I was trying to buy some software programs to solve those challenges, however, we did not have the necessary financial funds. The problem is elsewhere, not in the program but in the deficit of personnel and lack of time. All of this will bring additional tasks, it severely influences one of our employees that is now full time engaged with "Krpan."</i> (Interviewee F)</p>
<p>Connection between databases</p>	<p><i>"What is missing is the connection between different databases as it requires from us to input data in every single database. The connection even with "Krpan" is nonexistent and we miss this a lot."</i> (Interviewee G)</p>
<p>Completely not adapted to social work, strictly monitoring</p>	<p><i>"Personally, I see the biggest problem in the fact that this solution is completely unusable for things that we in our profession actually need. Its purpose is to monitor assignments as they are defined in the law and in all other aspects it is unusable. We cannot get a single piece of information about the user, which we might need. Solutions are actually lacking in comparison to what is happening in practice. I do not believe that the problem is collaboration with developers, I was a member of a working group twice, when we discussed possible solutions. I noticed another problem, a completely different view on things. Developers and support teams are only focused on the number of assignments and its characteristics with the sole purpose of monitoring (i.e. ticking boxes). This is also what the state expects and does not care how this job was done and how many other tasks were completed at the same time. From our perspective, we always care that our work is done in benefit to the user, if the state gets the data is secondary. Therefore, the state does not have a</i></p>

	<i>clear representation of how much work actually gets done.” (Interviewee H)</i>
Very unsatisfied, not adjusted to social work	<p><i>“No, we are not happy with existing solutions, social work is not administrative work, you cannot frame social work into one information system and quantify it. However, this is exactly the way information systems are nowadays created. For “Kspan” I agree that collaboration with developers was lacking. “Kspan” is not adapted to social work, social work is so specific, dynamic and complex, not one case is equal to another, every information system has its limits and you cannot incorporate in it the practice that is happening “on the field.” Such databases are the sources of data for the MLFSAEO, the MLFSAEO uses them when it discusses personnel issues, the numbers in the database are not real, social workers do much more, however, we are unable to put everything in the database. Solutions are very unadjusted to social work.” (Interviewee I)</i></p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 9: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards Knowledge of their Coworkers Related to Information-communication Technology and Potential Avoidance in Using Such Solutions due to Deficit in Own Knowledge

Category	Example from Interview
Surveillance tool, disaster for social work, fear and deficit in knowledge, older workers tend to have more problems	<i>“Definitely they see it as a tool of surveillance. With individuals, there are different problems or challenges, some are very focused on working with the user and find it a chore to input data into a system. They are also afraid that someone will try to quantify their work and how much work is done by an individual. This is disastrous for social work, some characteristics with working with people cannot be framed as a standard or norm. Of course, there is also some fear, maybe even deficit in knowledge (i.e. when introducing emails) and some still have problems when scanning documents, attaching files. Especially the problem is visible with the older workers. Younger employees are more capable, they accept and understand new solutions faster, while the older workers were brought up in a different age. Even some expressions that are nowadays used in the information-communication technology world cause them to completely freeze.” (Interviewee A)</i>
Older workers have less knowledge, surveillance tool, more training, deficit in knowledge	<i>“Knowledge of information-communication technology depends on the individual, a little is of course also related to their age, the younger employees are more competent in using such solutions, this is a fact. Also, it depends how open is an individual towards novelties, new knowledge and to learn something by himself or herself. For the necessary stuff, employees receive training, organized by the MLFSAEO. I believe that it would be beneficial if such training was not solely focused on our social work field, maybe it could also include word and excel. The knowledge that is paramount for us to do our work, everyone has that, however, stuff that could fasten our work (i.e. shortcuts in word, excel), this is potentially missing with employees. Also the perception of surveillance is present (i.e. Krpan) and partially also deficit in knowledge with some employees how to use this in practice. When you introduce a solution where it is perfectly clear what someone is doing, how many cases he or she managed to solve, of course the individual sees it as surveillance. Also fear of change is present and I would say partial deficit in knowledge regarding this aspect.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Older workers cannot keep up, surveillance tool, training is fast	<i>“Younger generations have this knowledge (some have grown up with applications), while with the older workers it is visible that they lack something. 55+ years of age those individuals have problems, everything is happening relatively fast (i.e. you receive a mail, you have to install this on your computer) and some do not manage to keep up. There are significant differences in different age groups. Me personally, I see it as a tool of surveillance, a lot of attention is given to details, however, I do not see what is the meaning of all of this, that social workers are closely monitored. Training are fast courses, one manages to gain knowledge, the other that does not have enough knowledge struggles to keep up (partially this is also the source of the deficit in knowledge). We get a lot of information and some really cannot keep up with such a fast pace. I believe this is surveillance.” (Interviewee C)</i>

Quickly gained new knowledge, a bit of fear is present	<i>"We managed to relatively quickly gain new knowledge related to the field of information-communication technology. In my opinion it is good when social work centers are small units, so that they can learn together, today everyone knows everything, so we can try, talk, communication is easier and everyone's door is open. If a social work center is bigger, i.e. in three floors then it is more difficult. I would not say surveillance, however, a bit of fear is present, we are not completely competent, even me personally I am not at my peak level yet, however, I know the stuff that is necessary. If we are in a hurry, we do things the old way and then input it also in the new system." (Interviewee D)</i>
Younger employees have good knowledge, fear related to changes, learn from other's experiences, potential, however will take time	<i>"Knowledge, yes the younger employees have good knowledge, enough knowledge. According to my experience and behaviors from the past it is important that also employees will be responsible to do their part. If someone will not do their work, the manager will have a better insight, which is not wrong, we are obligated to organize work and this will be a beneficial tool for us to better organize future work. Personally, I do not see it as surveillance, however, I cannot speak for others. I did not get the feeling from my social work center that they feel more monitored. There will be less paper, less costs, although there will be fear from social workers regarding technical solutions, I cannot say how this will result, although they do see a lot of fear. It will be hard, however, there is potential. Solutions from the past in social work were good and there was less work to do for employees. There is fear to deal with changes. We will go and learn from another social work center, to talk with individuals and exchange experiences. In two years the system will be upgraded, it will live in practice, however, problems are already in the existing system. I do not expect instant solutions, it will take some time." (Interviewee E)</i>
Extensive and constant changes, support is needed, they do not consider themselves as experts	<i>"Changes are very extensive, constant and we constantly get new instructions. We do not consider ourselves as computer experts. In the introduction phase of "Krran" I had problems, because I could not arrange my certificate. The problems of an average user with this kind of technology are always going to be present and every such thing requires two to three hours that you could do something else. We needed the help of information-communication technology support, so that they arranged everything for our social work center as it is impossible that employees pull their hair out because of this. In my opinion one support person from this field should be full-time employed per region." (Interviewee F)</i>
Difference between age groups, resistance and fear with older workers, paper is a specific of social work, has potential benefits	<i>"Some more, others less. There is a difference between age groups, the older workers find it more difficult to tackle this system, there is more resistance and bigger fear related to changes. With some of the older employees it is visible that they worked with previous systems, they have less problems, they are used to working with such systems and they know how to deal with computer programs and applications. The problem is, that we do a lot of counselling, where social workers that are in charge, mainly write their observations. They then input in the database just the necessary part, so that they have a case open for an individual, regarding other related thing, they are familiar with word. There is still a problem to acknowledge that the user will now be visible on screen, we are relatively attached to paperwork. We have a problem with this, for us it is easier to have a printed version and read as you have a better feeling of a complete</i>

	<p><i>overview in comparison with just clicking on the computer. Although I do see “Krpan” as a benefit, where everything will be uploaded and clear. For the user everything will be in one place, however, there will be some additional tasks. When you have a paper archive, it can happen that you look and look, dig and when you have a serious amount of papers it can happen that you cannot find something and this will be possible in “Krpan.” It will be also beneficial in the case of filling in for colleagues as it will be evident from the system when, who and what did something on the case and it will be easier for the other person to understand. Today you have to physically search your colleagues archive, everyone has his or her own system and it is impossible to have an overview of all cases.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee G)</p>
Knowledge is poor, surveillance tool	<p><i>“I will be very subjective. Knowledge in general in this aspect is extremely poor. I do not consider myself as the type for this, but when I look at my coworkers, the questions they ask, what are they unable to, I am in shock and I do not have a clue if I compare myself to my kids and partner. I would consider myself at a sufficient level of knowledge, I hear others “what is this machine doing to me”, like it is their first time in front of a screen. It is a tool of surveillance, this a fact and this is reality. Especially the new program “Krpan”, this is definitely a surveillance tool. We do not use it yet, we will get it later, however, our perception is that is a tool of surveillance for sure.”</i> (Interviewee H)</p>
Knowledge is good, not good for social work	<p><i>“We have enough knowledge to work with this systems, the younger generations even more. Social work did not used to be so subjected to information systems, colleagues that are retiring say that 30 years back they did social work, now we are administrative workers that input data in systems.”</i> (Interviewee I)</p>

Source: Own work

*Transcript 10: Statements Expressing the Perception of Interviewees Towards the New Information system
“Krpan”*

Category	Example from interview
Not a surveillance tool, beneficial, reduction of paperwork	<p><i>“I believe that its purpose is not to be a surveillance tool. I am always optimistic, i.e. you will not have to sign countless documents per day (which can take hours). For me as a manager it will reduce some of my workload, documents will be uniform and this is a positive effect. I believe that as a public institution, documents should be unified when we send them out of our house. At the beginning, the introduction phase will be hard as the work logic or work patterns will be different. There will be differences between age groups, some are still afraid of scanning documents. In the future, we will not have that much paper left, a lot of documents will be digitalized and you will not have to write everything down on paper. All information about one user will be available in one place, this is interesting to me. At the beginning, some work will be duplicated, however, in the long-term I believe it will be beneficial for us.”</i></p> <p align="right">(Interviewee A)</p>
Could be more adapted to social work, positive solution, it will solve some of our problems	<p><i>“Currently, we have not yet implemented “Krpan”. We will introduce it later, however, we will test it in advance elsewhere. In general, I see it as a welcome solution as some of our existing solutions that are or were used until very recently are unacceptable nowadays (i.e. dos environment). It would be extremely desirable if “Krpan” was more adapted to us, especially to specific requirements and procedures that social work centers do within their functioning. It seems that there was not enough collaboration between the developers and users at social work centers, as the system was primarily designed for the public sector as a whole. Therefore, it is not well adapted to social work. I heard from my colleagues that in practice things are moving slowly. In the long-term, “Krpan” will solve a lot of things, simplify and speed-up (also some processes), however, we expect quite some problems at the beginning. It would be unrealistic to expect that this is the solution to all our problems, however, it is definitely one tool that will help with solving some problems and will help with our modernization.”</i></p> <p align="right">(Interviewee B)</p>
Does not find it a good solution, not well adapted to social work, not appropriate for social work	<p><i>“I believe that digitalization is necessary. I have heard how the system is good, however I disagree. It will bring additional work to social work, there will not be enough time for the user if the social worker will have to input everything. I question myself then what is really my job. Am I a social worker or an administrative worker that has to satisfy all systems? Even if I want to devote more time to the user, there is simply no time to do so. The previous solution, this is where they look at numbers, this is not right, a lot of social workers are not able to constantly input their data, the numbers are not real, they are a lot lower than in practice, exclusively because there is not enough time to enter all data. We will implement “Krpan” later. I have heard from others that it is not well adapted to social work, it is not ok. I am sure that modifications for social work are missing. Electronic signatures will save some time (this is ok, less time needed for this). There will be no paperwork, the case will be available to everyone, however, some of us are attached to written documents, I will find it hard to examine users from the screen. Maybe this is coming too fast for social</i></p>

	<p><i>work, I cannot imagine it now in social work. It is very poorly adjusted to our work, however, we will accept changes, but our work is not similar to let us say issuing an ID card, this are long-term procedures, that include services that the user uses. At the end of the day, this is a human with his or her problems.” Interviewee C)</i></p>
<p>Problems it does not work in practice, beneficial in the long-term, satisfied with the progress made</p>	<p><i>“Previous systems are developing, they are upgraded, however, in practice a lot of the times systems do not work, especially when we are processing cases it often happens that the systems do not work for i.e. two hours. This means that all of Slovenia does not work for two hours and that is how time delays and bad mood are created. There are some months that are more quiet, however, in August if the system will not work, there will be a significant problem. I do not know if we will be able to do all our work, we are searching for solutions. Although the system is constantly upgraded and we provide suggestions, this is also related to finances. Regarding “Krpan”, not everything is fully functional, in some aspects work is prolonged as we are currently working in two databases, it is not synchronized. Transparency will be better in the long-term, it will help us, (i.e. you will not have to search numerous papers about a case, everything will be in one place). Although there will also be more control from the MLFSAEO (this was also one of the reasons why they went into this project). It is hard currently, we were a pilot project, a lot of stuff at the introduction phase did not work, then the MLFSAEO made some adjustments, with which I was satisfied. It is hard to collaborate on such things until you try them in practice, there was a training course for all 1,600 employees and a lot was presented. We were able to try, however, until you are sitting behind your own computer with your own work, you are not able to see all of the problems. Our suggestions were taken into account, what they managed to repair, they did and partially adapted it to social work, they were fast, flexible and efficient. However, the connection between different databases is still missing.” (Interviewee D)</i></p>
<p>Welcome solution, time savings, should be more adapted to social work</p>	<p><i>“We will get “Krpan” in June (2019), I think it will be a welcome solution, it will be better than what we now have. I do believe that time savings will be visible, maybe not at the beginning but certainly at the end. Although “Krpan” is not completely adapted for the needs of social work. I will be able to sign documents electronically, which is better than now. I expect that some workers will have some problems, there will be less work for the general offices, archiving will be better, nowadays we still do not have an appropriate archive. This is the future, even if some are scared of scanning, especially older employees, this will be a step to working with less paperwork. As a manager I attended training, so that I will be able to offer help in the introduction phase, when it will be necessary. The younger employees do not have any problems, also the older ones understand and they do not complicate. The system is great and I think that at the end everything will be fine. Of course, there are some differences between social work centers, they do not function in the same way, some are more systematical than others. It will be better than what we have now.” (Interviewee E)</i></p>
<p>Not fully adapted to social work, should be a connection between different databases,</p>	<p><i>“The system is not fully and completely adapted. In my opinion it would be better if they would introduce it somewhere before and if they would fully connect it with other databases. Now, it is only partially connected,</i></p>

<p>there are some benefits</p>	<p>however, social workers have so much more tasks. Now we have a lot more work to do as you have to prepare in advance everything in word, then copy it to “Krpan”, work with it there and then go back to word.</p> <p>Duplication of work is occurring. Nevertheless, this is a system for documenting materials, to have this aspect of work appropriately arranged is a benefit, however, it is hard to do this in social work as the user wants to sometimes see his or her case and it is maybe better if it is in written form. Both employees and users find it hard to look at a difficult life situation on screen. There is still some ambiguity, i.e. in the case how to send something to the MLFSAEO. The system is not fully developed, if it was we would not have so many complaints. If things would be functional in every area, then employees would indeed have less to do, however, currently this is not the case. There are specific cases when problems occur, i.e. signing documents, time delays occur, especially when the time comes for financial funds to be paid out, it can cause a lot of stress. One employee was considered how to enable people the things they need. In my opinion it would be beneficial to do some pilot projects, before every single social work center starts using this solution. This is in the domain of the ones that are in charge. Now additional tasks have been delegated to employees, even if this is not part of their job description. This will function only until employees feel connected to each other and show the willingness to help each other and not engage in conflicts.” (Interviewee F)</p>
<p>Surveillance tool, in the long-term it will be important, beneficial, not fully adapted to social work</p>	<p>“In a way it is a surveillance tool and at the same time it is also helpful to us as we did not have similar stuff before. It was established that cases were not documented properly as we devoted to our users and first helped him or her solve their problem. In a way, administration was always in second place. I do believe that it is necessary also as a form of protection for social workers. We need to know that users are capable of taking advantage of the situation, here there would be all the needed evidence about a case, that shows the reality and what was done. Now that we have this control system labelled “Krpan” that doubles our work and prolongs it, we finally can motivate ourselves to have everything properly arranged, documented as you have to have them properly arranged. Until you input all of the data in “Krpan” you are unable to solve the problems of the user. I believe that in the long-term it will be important, needed, however, the problem is that it is not fully developed, the work of social work centers is broad and complex and many aspects of “Krpan” are not adapted to social work. When we look at services, documents, we see a lot of things, we have problems as we cannot systematically arrange certain stuff, although everything should be in “Krpan”, including less paperwork.</p> <p>There are times when paperwork is needed, to look at stuff and to go through chronologically. We will have to get used to it. The problem is that a lot of new things came all at once in a matter of months, including the reorganization, “Krpan” and family law, new tasks were assigned and the situation is far from perfect.” (Interviewee G)</p>
<p>Digitalize social work, some advantages, also some skepticism related to “Krpan”</p>	<p>“Sincerely, the time of written documents is over. We have to find a way to digitalize our work. We cannot have closets full of documents as we are living in a different time. Personally I am scared how the program will function and enable us to get rid of the paperwork. I see its advantage that I will be able to have a digital archive of my cases, that would be great and</p>

	<p>would solve some of my problems. I see an advantage in digitalization. However, regarding the first responses I am unsure whether the system will enable us everything we need and want. It happened that some social work centers stopped using “Krpan” on purpose and rebelliously work in their old patterns. They said there is no chance they will be using “Krpan” until everything is fixed.” (Interviewee H)</p>
<p>Surveillance tool, some positive aspects of “Krpan”</p>	<p>“We see it as a surveillance tool – every single employee at our social work center. No one is trying to avoid it, if there is a deficit in knowledge, we are compatible, empathic and within our collective we help each other (some of our employees are excellent with this and they spread their knowledge on others). We implemented it in practice. It will bring traceability, control, the manager has an overview into what is happening at the social work center, how many written documents an employee produced (on a daily or weekly basis). I see an advantage, that in a year or two it will show the real input of social work centers (the missing data that are not in current databases). In a way, some things will be speed up and simplified, however, a lot more burden will be on the general offices as now they have to scan everything. They are functioning on the basis of paper for now, however, with “Krpan” there will be a lot less paperwork, the goal is to go to completely no paperwork. I am not that fond of this direction as we are dealing with people, we are not an administrative unit to issue a driving license. We have to make decisions that impact people’s lives, we could potentially empower someone or see someone hit rock bottom (even if social workers are extremely involved, it is not the same as issuing an ID card). Social work is the last intervention of society, when all other systems fail (police, legal system and health care), social work is the one that should find solutions, when other systems are not functioning properly or did not manage to produce desirable outcomes.” (Interviewee I)</p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 11: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals What Knowledge Management is

Category	Example from Interview
Knowledge system, knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, key individuals	<i>“That we establish on the social work center level a system of creating knowledge, gaining knowledge and transferring knowledge. To really develop a system, activities and key individuals that are responsible for the creation and transfer of knowledge.” (Interviewee A)</i>
Knowledge system, individual and organizational level, whole set of aspects	<i>“A set of all processes that are related both to the individual and the whole organization (the processes, the whole system). It is essentially a whole system of an organization, including financial, human resources, personal, professional and private aspects. A complete whole system that influences the individual and the organization.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Something new, knowledge transfer, knowledge implementation, manager is responsible	<i>“Something new, something we did not grow up with. A person or a team that is responsible for gaining knowledge, competences, skill and to include all employees, so that knowledge is transferred to everyone in the organization, implemented in practice, so that we search for positive aspects of it, examples of good practice and that it is included in the work of the whole team. It depends from organization to organization who is directly responsible, with us it is the manager, he or she forwards invitations to seminars, trainings according to various work fields. In the framework of financial possibilities. It also depends on the motivation of the individual and his or her desire to attend an event. On meetings we try to present to our colleagues what we learned and heard on training. Short presentations, approximately 30 minutes, different than being present at a training, however, you still get some information.” (Interviewee C)</i>
Training, personal growth	<i>“To ensure employees the possibility to attend training, in multiple different ways, every manager must evaluate how much money will go for training and what we can achieve with this money, so that our employees will grow, attend training (individual or group training). Also some of our work forms are in a way a training session, where you learn stuff related to our profession. We would expect more from the MLFSAEO, changes in legislation, more in the area of training, that it is finally appropriately arranged, that costs are rationalized or perhaps even organize some events that are free for social work centers.” (Interviewee D)</i>
Knowledge transfer, recognition and rewards, responsibility of the manager and employees, mentorship, training	<i>“Knowledge is important for our social work center, knowledge transfer is important, it transfers between every employee bottom-up, top-down, it is important that we are open, that we have the necessary conditions to do our job. Within the time we have available, we cannot do everything, so the responsibility of the manager is also to ensure the knowledge necessary to do a good enough job, to support our users and employees and this is the added value of employees. In the social work sector, we are not fully aware of the importance of knowledge, especially knowledge transfer. It is important, that knowledge transfer is rewarded, that the mentor is rewarded. Older workers have a lot of knowledge to share, however, even if they are prepared to do so, what is in it for them, it is hard to motivate them, if they organize training sessions, we cannot pay them. It could maybe be possible through the Social Chamber or the Community of Social Work Centers (we would be able to pay them there). How to transfer</i>

	<p><i>knowledge within an organization is important. How to manage with knowledge. This is appropriately arranged in our social work center, every seminar that one attends, we send the material to everyone, we would need more time, so that the fresh knowledge would be shared with others, so that they are familiar with new theories, professional findings and so that they can move forward, to professionally grow and not to regress. I miss more personnel and we need more time. We have monthly or weekly meetings with social workers, so that we at least send the materials and to inform others about the most important things in bullets. The responsibility is not only on the manager, it is also the responsibility of the individual to gain new knowledge and to educate.” (Interviewee E)</i></p>
Knowledge acquisition, training	<p><i>“If I had unlimited options, I would in accordance with the legal framework and the wishes of employees direct them in high quality seminars, where they would gain knowledge how to work with their users, maybe some knowledge that is not strictly related to legislation, i.e. communication or something for personal growth, so that they are able to quickly gain this knowledge, not that they have to deal with this alone in the afternoon. Nowadays, we almost get sick when someone attends a training session as we have to provide a replacement for him or her and put their job burden to someone else.” (Interviewee F)</i></p>
Similar to leadership, get the work done, keep employees happy and offer them support	<p><i>“Management is in a way very similar to leadership, so that the job is done with as much quality as possible, economically, also from the point of view of the users. We cannot divide management between leadership and our profession, because they are related. Simply to do what is necessary, that the work processes are functioning so that the users are happy, the employees are happy, that they feel support and that they are heard. If this is missing it also influences their work with our users. In a way I am aware of my responsibility as when something goes wrong in any field, I am the one responsible for my employee, that he or she is competent enough, has enough knowledge for the job that he or she is doing. When someone is on sick leave, that I find someone that will replace him. It depends if there are enough social workers on the labor market, when there was internship it was easier, a lot of emphasis was on trying to get the individual know-how about how work is done, so that in the end he or she is ready to do it. Also there was mentorship within the organization, they were able to qualify the young employees, apprentices so that they had enough competences to start working somewhere. When we had the possibility to employ someone it was easier (even if just as a temporary replacement), from the beginning it was easier or I would delegate work so that the apprentice would take the easier tasks and the social worker would get the more demanding tasks. The problem then was in the fact that every individual was highly specialized in one field and when someone was required in another field, you could not just transfer an individual there. We had to dig employees out of a certain framework, encourage them to try, to give them support, tell them that they have the knowledge and that they are qualified to do such work.” Interviewee G)</i></p>
Knowledge transfer, to gain knowledge	<p><i>“I understand it as how we transfer information forward, to gain some knowledge. And of course, the way how knowledge is transferred, if something is urgent, additional and good to know. Knowledge can be considered as widening what I already know, gaining more in-depth</i></p>

	<p><i>understanding and on the other hand keeping track of novelties and additional relatively unimportant stuff that are still somehow related to my field. Maybe even knowledge transfer with employees from other departments, between employees of the same department as someone is responsible for something and the other for something else, to exchange some thoughts, for me this is already knowledge transfer.” (Interviewee H)</i></p>
<p>Collaboration, knowledge transfer</p>	<p><i>“Collaboration, continuous and transparent transfer of information, working in pairs, teamwork, to be heard, to care for others, emphatic relationship, co-create and a safe enough working environment for everyone (for the user and for the social worker).” (Interviewee I)</i></p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 12: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals Whether their Organization Formally or Informally Engages in Knowledge Management Activities

Category	Example from Interview
Formal plan regarding training, knowledge transfer, internal (learning) groups, knowledge database	<p><i>"We are engaged in knowledge management, every year we make a plan or program regarding training for the coming year. We define everything, topics, seminars that are already offered, where someone will go, for how many days, how will the knowledge transfer occur among coworkers, we have done this before. What is new, are professional (internal) intervention groups – like learning groups. Every time they met, they must do a report, that is then transferred to local managers, employees, so that knowledge is shared. It also stored somewhere, acting like a knowledge database."</i></p> <p>(Interviewee A)</p>
Formal plan regarding training, informally present, knowledge transfer, very basic level of knowledge management	<p><i>"Formally we have an annual plan of training that is defined based on the needs of employees. Every employee gets the basic training, what is most necessary for them to do their job. Also informally, knowledge management is definitely present, it contains different things that are transferred between the manager and employees and between employees (we are working on this and seeking solutions). I would say that knowledge management is on a very basic level, especially if we compare ourselves with private organizations or startups that are heavily engaged into this topic."</i></p> <p>(Interviewee B)</p>
Informally engaged, knowledge creation, knowledge implementation, training	<p><i>"We are engaged more informally, we have to educate, our field is moving forward, legislation is new and there are new forms of practice. We have to gain knowledge, be complementary, upgrade and implement it in practice. Our manager really supports training and education. If someone does not want to attend a training session, this is really weird. You must keep moving forward as a lot has changed in our profession in the past 30 years."</i></p> <p>(Interviewee C)</p>
Weak in this area, informally some activities, knowledge transfer, low to moderate form of activities in practice	<p><i>"We are weak in this area, maybe this is more common between and within units (all social work centers are not connected with each other). Informally we exchange knowledge (if we work on similar topics), we communicate, send materials, these relationships are good and no one is trying to hide knowledge. Within smaller social work centers, presentations for every employee were possible due to a small number of employees, it is all related to work, if a lot of employees are absent, this can take up to two hours for every employees, it is too much time consuming. Maybe it is better to just publish the materials and the one that wants, can examine them and ask that colleague that attended a seminar. We are open, ready to help. A lot of reserves, however, time is the problem. I would say that there is low or moderate form of knowledge management in practice."</i></p> <p>(Interviewee D)</p>
Formal training plan, informally engaged, added value, invest in employees, quality of work and satisfaction of employees	<p><i>"We are definitely engaged. Formally we have a training plan, annual conversations with employees and we are also informally engaged. With annual conversations, employees have the opportunity to share their vision, what kind of training do they want, where are gaps in their knowledge, this is the basis to define the plan for training, of course in the framework of available financial funds and possibilities. I think it is</i></p>

	<p><i>important that we invest in knowledge, this can be an added value, to invest in employees. The quality of our work and the satisfaction of our employees is higher (for employees and the whole organization). Training was never a problem within our social work center, it was visible to me even when I was a social worker. Now as a manager I trust my employees to choose the training they need. Of course, I also send them to specific training, i.e. in the case of legislation changes. However, they are also able to choose themselves, for their soul and what they think they need.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee E)</p>
Informally engaged, knowledge transfer	<p><i>“We often have meetings, where everyone is involved. Also knowledge is transferred there between employees. We go and have lunch together, where we also discuss work. However, we as a small social work center have different work tasks as those that are bigger, we do not have some knowledge that is necessary for specific tasks, something that was also mentioned with the reorganization.”</i> (Interviewee F)</p>
Formally and informally engaged, adapt to changes, desire for more training	<p><i>“In a way we are both formally and informally engaged. You have to take a look at the current situation, to adapt to changes, typically legislation changes, if there is work that has to be done, we give emphasis to that, so that we can attend training in those topics. We would be happy if more training is organized regionally, because travelling to the capital enhances our costs. That way, we would be able to include more employees in training sessions. Training is offered during the whole year, we have plans what someone will attend, we especially promote events from the Community of Social Work Centers and the Social Chamber, we are also actively suggesting that the MLFSAEO would offer some training that is free of charge, maybe together with the Social Chamber. We try every year to send as many employees as we can, however, we are limited with finances (every year instead of increasing financial funds, they decrease them, the costs keep getting higher, i.e. rents, trainings), everything is covered from one source, including training. Unfortunately everything is related to financial funds.”</i> Interviewee G)</p>
Unsure in general, some aspects are written, training, plan for training, dependent on the manager	<p><i>“I do not think that we have it written, there is something in one article in our job contracts. I am not sure, we are obliged to attend training due to our basic legislation at least a couple of days in year. Besides that, we have to formally present a plan of training content and its extent. That plan is often just a formality, if it is acknowledged or not is often dependent on the judgement of our manager. I applied now for many years to attend a specific training program, however, I did not get an approval until now. There is some “know-how” needed how we are going to do this.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee H)</p>
Formally and informally engaged, training plan, knowledge transfer, knowledge storage, different terminology, limited as a public sector organization	<p><i>“We are formally and informally engaged, the formal part is the training plan, there is someone in our organization that attends training, then transfers the findings to his or her colleagues, there are meetings, where knowledge is transferred, we have folders, reports, materials are printed and distributed, we organize training ourselves and we have groups where we invite someone to hold a presentation. Some training courses are hard to attend, financial funds are always a problem, the sum of money that is available is what it is, the MLFSAEO does not devote any specific funds that are related to training of social workers, often we go on training in</i></p>

	<p>our private time, maybe we even pay something ourselves, we try to find a balance so that one time one person goes the other time another person goes. I would say that terminology is different, for me knowledge management is an organizational structure in a successful company, where they have a strong human resource office, that is also responsible for training, education, support and to reduce workload with other programs (i.e. spa sessions). In social work there could be representatives that would adapt themselves to the characteristics of “field work” and the “needs of the field”, social work would therefore have more visibility and would be perceived as a more professional profession. Other associations have more room for this kind of actions as they are not fully financed by the MLFSAEO, they are also partially dependent to the market, they thoroughly examine their hiring process, management, getting funds, gaining knowledge, we are lacking in this aspect in social work centers. Here there is more the mentality that we have a specific amount of money available and we have to cope with that, if we want to do something extra, in a way we cannot do it as have to be responsible with every cent we use. We are limited with several laws as a public sector organization.”</p> <p>(Interviewee I)</p>
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Source: Own work

Transcript 13: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals of How Long their Organization is Practicing Knowledge Management Related Activities

Category	Example from Interview
Many years, training plans and programs	<i>"We are practicing it all these years. There are always some plans and training programs. When the year ends, I distribute a questionnaire to employees, which topics they are interested in, whether training is the answer to their needs and wishes and if they would be interested to pay some training themselves." (Interviewee A)</i>
Many years, different levels of knowledge management in different times, depends on the manager	<i>"I would personally say that knowledge management is present ever since I got employed in this social work center, in some form I would argue that from the very beginning. In different times, knowledge management was differently present in the organization. Of course it depends on the desire and direction of the manager, how much emphasis he or she puts on knowledge sharing, I believe that one good aspect of the reorganization is that now we have common training sessions, where we come together and it is also easier financially." (Interviewee B)</i>
Many years, new knowledge, knowledge transfer	<i>"Ever since I was employed, also other managers were developing new things, new programs and they gave a lot of emphasis on this aspect. They always wanted to get close to the user. The existing system offers what it can offer, so it can happen that we cannot offer any service to our user, consequently new services were developed, that then proved to be good in practice. Since the previous manager we created and shared knowledge." (Interviewee C)</i>
Many years, not heavily present in practice, informal	<i>"Ever since I got employed in this social work center, the informal forms are always present, something is distributed if there is a desire. However, I do not know how present in practice it really is. My feeling is that we stopped tracking it in practice, everyone tries to cover his or her priorities, what is urgent. I would not say that there is significant interest to learn and grow. Maybe this would be different if not everyone had the possibility to attend the three training courses they want and they are fine with that. Without this, I am sure that employees would search for novelties, try to learn from each other and search for information." (Interviewee D)</i>
Many years, terminology, knowledge transfer, different roles	<i>"This was not labelled as knowledge management, for me term is new, before your doctoral dissertation I have not heard it before. In the context of knowledge since the very beginning of this social work center, knowledge transfer was present even when I was a social worker in a different role as a mentor to student, apprentices, now I am in a different role. All the time we also work on this aspect of functioning." (Interviewee E)</i>
Many years	<i>"The functioning of social work centers with meetings, professional councils is and was always present (although sometimes there is not enough time for such meetings). We welcome such meetings as this is the opportunity for employees to express their issues with specific cases and them we can look together how to solve this problem." (Interviewee F)</i>
Quite some time, more present nowadays	<i>"We have had it before, however not to this extent. Lately, it is much more present." Interviewee G)</i>

Approximately 10 years	<i>"I would argue that in the last 10 years or so. Before, individuals had their own trainings and there was not a lot of knowledge sharing. Lately, this is more present, with some recommendations and demands the management is responsible for this phenomenon. That we have to report where we were, what we heard and to send the materials to the library. This is in the last 10 years or so, we did not have this before." (Interviewee H)</i>
Difference between past and present, nowadays not enough money	<i>"There is a considerable difference between the past and the present. It used to be more dependent on the manager, who had more authority and decided who goes on training and who does not. Nowadays there is not enough money or we use it in a very short time period, even the Social Chamber and the Community of social work centers charge such training, despite the fact that we are members. Everything you have to pay nowadays and it is hard to evaluate the quality in advance and if the quality will justify the fee." (Interviewee I)</i>

Source: Own work

Transcript 14: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on How the Previous Experiences and Education of Top Managers Influence the Level of Knowledge Management in their Organization

Category	Example from Interview
Influential, positive attitude towards changes and development	<i>"It definitely has an influence. A lot depends on the manager, what are his or her previous work experiences, is he or she from an environment where they practiced this before, does he or she know the professional work of employees and what does he or she bring along. If he or she has a positive attitude towards changes development. If something is a routine, represents some safety, why change it? My vision is that I always want something new, Tuesday cannot be the same as was Monday. Work has to dynamic, diverse, you have to develop yourself and have a sense of freedom. If you feel more free, you will a higher sense of responsibility and you are able to get the job done. I am very oriented towards empowering employees and I have motivation speeches. To encourage them to be creative." (Interviewee A)</i>
Influential, attitude towards changes	<i>"His or her personal background is definitely influential. Again, I would say a lot depends on the individual regardless of his or her education, how is his or her attitude towards changes, in some part he or she is defined by his or her past." (Interviewee B)</i>
Mentality is key	<i>"In our example, the needs identified "on the field" created new services, as we did not find existing solutions, we developed new ones. This was done 30 years ago, when you were employed in this organization, you were automatically part of it. You took the mentality forwards, searched for solutions how to learn something new, you went forward with your suggestion if it was good, you got the necessary support. Mentality is key, searching for solutions. Not that much depends on experiences and education. As there was no supply, we looked for solutions." (Interviewee C)</i>
Influential	<i>"I think it matters, as a social worker I missed training opportunities (previous experience) and because I missed them, now I try to provide them to my employees." (Interviewee D)</i>
Personal characteristics, dependent on power or not	<i>"It depends on the personal characteristics of an individual, how ready he or she is to search for solutions, what is his or her vision, is he or she someone that has a strong desire for power, control, surveillance, then he or she will have problems accepting this. I have a feeling that some people are afraid of others that have a lot of knowledge as they feel threatened. Sometimes it is better to leave someone in the dark. How much information do employees get, in my case I share everything with them. Trust, how the manager feels about trust (or does he or she rely on power), how open he or she is, how much does he or she understand that knowledge is necessary for good relationships in the organization (how does knowledge sharing occur, are employees satisfied). It is also a reward for employees as you give them the opportunity to personally and professionally grow. Or he or she can hinder such possibilities." (Interviewee E)</i>
Social workers should not be managers	<i>"I would never allow a social worker to become a manager. I also hear critics that other professions are taking over social work centers and they are causing damage, that they do not have a sense for people, I do not</i>

	<p><i>believe this is the case. I think it is more true that a social worker that becomes a top manager can do more harm than good. If you i.e. attend the law faculty you have a wider spectrum of knowledge, the Faculty of social work is severely lacking in this aspect. Maybe it would be good to distinguish between the “business” and “professional” part of management, because a manager that is too social can cause a lot of harm to the social work center, he or she looks at everything through the eyes of the user, they tend to forget about their employees, what do they as an organization need so that they are able to do their job with high quality, on time and within legal boundaries. It is important for social work managers that they express the need for a skilled workforce, that knows what it is doing and enough personnel to effectively do all or tasks.” (Interviewee F)</i></p>
<p>Accept changes, specific knowledge of social work, social workers are more appropriate to manage social work centers</p>	<p><i>“First of all it is important that you accept changes, as in social work changes are constant. Sometimes things change on a daily basis and you have to adapt, there is no other way. The users themselves are demanding and the work is demanding. There are situations where it is integral that an individual knows social work, knows the work they do in social work centers, even if he or she does not have this knowledge it is important that they get it as soon as possible, to experience every single work field, to get a complete overview, there is no other way. If you do not have a complete overview, you could propose the wrong measures. Even if you have excellent knowledge and you are qualified, there is a large difference between the private sector and social work centers. The difference is enormous, you simply have to know our field, it is so specific, the profession is important and one mistake can have enormous consequences. I do not think that someone with a legal background is appropriate, i.e. even if social workers do not have that amount of knowledge regarding management and leadership. I am of the opinion that we are more knowledgeable regarding our profession, which I would say is an advantage to get things done. We are more adaptive regarding changes, we are not cemented in one place and we do not have a feeling that because I am the manager I have to know everything, I have to delegate and I will do all of the work. You cannot function in this way in social work. I think it is essential that I can count on my employees, that everyone will professionally do their job and it is important to trust your coworkers. Also, employees should be able to say that they do not know how to do something, then look together at the problem as a team and solve it successfully. This is what it is all about, even maybe within management, so that everything is functioning. When you get the feeling that someone is unable to do his or her work, when mistakes are made, then you have to intervene and not lose your trust as a manager, you have to guide your employee so that at the end he or she is able to solve the problem on his or her own.” (Interviewee G)</i></p>
<p>Very influential, personal characteristics and preferences, difference between social workers and other professions</p>	<p><i>“Very influential. Of course it also depends on personal characteristics and preferences. I still think that the background has a significant influence. Someone that is from social work will have a completely different view or relationship (not necessary better) towards knowledge management than someone that is from other fields. A social worker knows very well what a human needs and is willing to approve training and accelerate knowledge sharing and access to information. It is also possible that we are talking about someone that went to a management position,</i></p>

	<p><i>however, in his or her previous position there was no need to share knowledge and even now he or she will not see that need, maybe he or she will perceive it as an obstacle, that employees go and come back confused and they do not do their job, I have really heard such statements. Changes were evident in our profession, when managers became also people that were previously in other professions (i.e. private sector) or in a management position in a similar profession, not necessary in social work. I acknowledge that people that come from the public administration or from the MLFSAEO to management positions, they are often completely insensitive to what the user needs. They strictly look at the “business” and “professional” part. With the professional part, people that did not come from the public sector usually understand more regardless of their education that you as a social worker need something in your field and how we could arrange things so that we as an organization would benefit. With managers that came internally, it depends on their experience, usually they continue in that way. People from the public sector usually promote the business part, they do not see the professional part, are not interested and they do not understand. Consequently they cannot emphasize knowledge nor knowledge transfer.” (Interviewee H)</i></p>
Influential, benefit if you are a social worker	<p><i>“The experiences of the manager are influential, we also have internal leaders and I think it is an advantage if you come from within the organization (as a social worker) as you experienced part of the work process as an active member. Experience is the best guidance when implementing novelties and improvements. If you acknowledge something you were missing and you are a good manager, you are emphatic, able to make good judgment calls and you are aware that employees come first, you can transmit this to your employees. Also the background in terms of education and previous work experience can influence the level of attention towards management.” (Interviewee I)</i></p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 15: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Whether their Organization has a Specific Manager Responsible for Knowledge Management

Category	Example from Interview
We have a specific manager, difference between social work centers	<i>“Yes, we have a specific manager responsible for knowledge (more precisely, I am the manager responsible for knowledge). I have to soften the local managers to this topic, there are quite some differences between different managers and different approaches. Some value control, others efficiency, others are more open, oriented towards development and results. I want to share my vision with others, but they have to accept it.”</i> (Interviewee A)
We do not have a specific manager, introduction of new job positions	<i>“We do not have a specific manager for knowledge management, again I would emphasize the shortage in personnel, we tackle issues according to priorities, what is urgent has an advantage in comparison with other tasks and currently knowledge management is less urgent. It would also be beneficial to introduce new job positions such as quality managers, pr person, and in the last phase also a knowledge manager or in the initial steps an employee that covers the field of management and organization. With some specific topics employees deal on the side and therefore they are not systematically developed.”</i> (Interviewee B)
We do not have a specific manager, best approximation is our top manager	<i>“There is no specific individual employee responsible, the best approximation would be our manager and local manager (each in their own way) and individuals that try to bring something new into our work, the individuals that believe that extra training is necessary for the quality of our work, however, this is not one specific employee.”</i> (Interviewee C)
Partially we have a specific manager, more focused on training than on knowledge management	<i>“Partially I am the one manager assigned to deal with activities related to knowledge management. With local units, local managers have the possibility to influence training, they know their employees, they know who is strong in his or her field, where he or she needs training, they can approve them training, however, they have to check with me if funds are available. They can give their approval based on the topic and the work process. Our organization has such specific managers responsible more for training than knowledge management.”</i> (Interviewee D)
We have a specific manager, take into account employees	<i>“We have a specific manager responsible for knowledge management, I assume this position, I take into account the suggestions and wishes from my employees – so they are also involved in the decision making process. I acknowledge them as much as I can, however, there are no illusions.”</i> (Interviewee E)
We have a specific manager, more focused on training	<i>“We have a human resource employee at the regional level. We have an agreement, that a local manager can decide on which training they will focus their employees, what is available with existing funds, we divide the funds with units the same as before the reorganization, it is easier this way, even if we are now a joint social work center, practices are so different between units. Every local manager knows his or her employees. Essentially I am the specific manager.”</i> (Interviewee F)
Working as a team, more	<i>“Regarding knowledge, knowledge creation, this is how I understand the question. We are working as a team, even in the case of annual training</i>

focused on training	<i>plans, we look at those aspects as a team and every employee suggests where it would be necessary for him or her to go (however no one only says I will go, even though it is important for promotion), they say it would be beneficial if one of us goes, there will be knowledge presented that we will need and it would be good if someone could go and then report to their colleagues. In this aspect, a lot of solidarity is seen between employees.” (Interviewee G)</i>
We do not have a specific manager, human resource management	<i>“Not really. Our colleague is responsible for the library (knowledge database) and we send the materials to him or her, so that he or she arranges it. It is only part of it. Otherwise no, that someone would be specifically assigned to this no. I miss it, that someone would be responsible for human resources management, in our social work center this is not present.” (Interviewee H)</i>
Assigned individuals for specific areas	<i>“Some aspects are covered by the manager and internal leaders and for specific areas there are assigned specific individuals.” (Interviewee I)</i>

Source: Own work

Transcript 16: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Whether they Believe Managers are Actively and Clearly Communicating the Expectations and Benefits Related to Knowledge Management

Category	Example from Interview
Clear and active communication of benefits and expectations	<i>"I clearly and actively present all the activities and benefits that are related to knowledge management." (Interviewee A)</i>
Employees are familiar, present in their annual reports, more emphasis on knowledge and training	<i>"The management acquaints employees with this aspect. It is also partially present in their annual performance reports, however, more in terms of their knowledge and training." (Interviewee B)</i>
Manager informs employees, more emphasis since reorganization	<i>"The manager forwards stuff, supports us and encourages us to attend training. However, in other social work centers the situation is different. We talk also about knowledge and knowledge management, especially from the reorganization on, again others can unfortunately feel the difference, in our social work center we get information, appraisal and encouragement." (Interviewee C)</i>
Differences between social work centers, a lot of challenges related to everyday work	<i>"There are differences between social work centers regarding the clear and active communication of expectations and benefits. In some this is present in others there are some problems, i.e. burnout, sick leave, long-term absences, operations, a lot of replacements, personnel was changing, you have to have an introduction period for new employees, communication got lost, a lot of work is necessary to introduce an employee, then another one leaves, the situation was hectic and we sometimes forgot to share this information to our employees." (Interviewee D)</i>
Clear communication	<i>"With the flow of information I take care of the aspect of actively communicating benefits related to knowledge management. Communication is clear." (Interviewee E)</i>
Clear communication regarding training	<i>"Employees also know why they are sometimes unable to attend training, I have very responsible employees, they do not use force to demand their own rights. It can happen that they are registered for a training but cannot go due to existing workflow. Unfortunately sometimes the work process does not allow training." (Interviewee F)</i>
Employees are already aware of the benefits, previous work was done by the manager	<i>"Employees themselves are aware of the benefits of knowledge sharing. We started with this in a way, that the manager emphasized that it is important that they share knowledge, that every time one attends a training, the manager expects that he or she will be able to share his or her knowledge to his or her coworkers, that he or she will be actually able to share knowledge. To be able to do this, he or she must listen carefully on training, here there is a difference in individuals, there was an example when someone attended a training and when he or she later came back he or she did not know what to tell his or her coworkers, there was no effect of that training. There was then someone who provided so much detail that the manager was thrilled how broad of a perspective he or she has and how many important details were highlighted and refreshed." (Interviewee G)</i>

	G)
Not extensively presented, often no support from management	<i>“It is not extensively presented, more lacking than not. It is present in some way, in a formal aspect, that there are some methods established how this is done nowadays, in practice this is not present. When we say sometimes that we need something, we often get the answer you already know how to do that. Often the answer is like that, no support to broaden something or gain more in-depth understanding.” (Interviewee H)</i>
Clear communication	<i>“Everything is presented to employees and all novelties are presented in meetings. We discuss everything regarding training, legal novelties, challenges with specific cases and professional work (regional and state level).” (Interviewee I)</i>

Source: Own work

Transcript 17: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Knowledge Management Effectiveness in their Social Work Center

Category	Example from Interview
Improvements are possible, working on knowledge management, we need more time	<i>“Improvements are always possible. First we have to see what the reorganization will bring as a lot is dependent on that. We are planning knowledge management, we are working on this aspect, however, we could be more successful and effective. So that knowledge management would actually be visible in work outcomes, we would need more time during our work day to devote to knowledge and development.” (Interviewee A)</i>
Helps with our work, limiting circumstances, visible work outcomes	<i>“Knowledge management sure helps with our work (numerically I would give it a solid 3 out of 5). There are circumstances that are limiting us (personnel, finances, etc.), however, what we do in regards to knowledge management has a positive impact in practice and is visible with work outcomes.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Effective	<i>“I would say it is effective, I am very satisfied. I have all the necessary information, all employees have information, the supply for services exists and there is support from management.” (Interviewee C)</i>
Solid basis, more effective in groups	<i>“In my opinion it would be more effective within groups, i.e. for a social work center as a whole that everyone hears stuff, that it is interactive in workshops, that we solve cases and to hear experience of others (not just a classical powerpoint presentation and listening, to engage individuals, to collaborate). We had an example when we had to write our problems in advance and then we could really focus on the most urgent issues. I would like that also in the future, employees themselves would express their problems, dilemmas and talk about it. If we could achieve that, we would actually solve a problem in a seminar, then people will be satisfied, they will not have a dilemma anymore if they are doing the right thing. There is enough trust for employees to share their tacit knowledge, they are able to speak up and express their own dilemmas. We have a solid basis, if we would be able to nurture it, the results would be good. In such meetings it is beneficial if the direct supervisor is not present, then employees have the courage to talk more, it is more open and the outcome is better. Otherwise some employees are not able to open up.” (Interviewee D)</i>
Very good assessment	<i>“I would say that our knowledge management is very well functioning.” (Interviewee E)</i>
Discuss changes	<i>“We have a habit of organizing meetings in the case of changes, so that we can talk, see where something is unclear, to prepare a report that is possible to forward to the regional level, to mention on other meetings and we are actively present in such meetings. When there are changes with the legislation we ask that at least the most important things are forwarded to all social workers that cover this field. That they have all the necessary information of what services should they provide for the user.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Constant changes in legislation, not well equipped with knowledge in some	<i>“A big disadvantage is that legislation frequently changes, your interpretations can change in the period of two to three months when you start working on something and this is a big disadvantage. In some aspects</i>

aspects	<i>we are not well enough equipped with knowledge and we have to manage ourselves. It is not necessary that you are always moving in the right direction, you have to experience also the bad cases, so that you can improve and unfortunately this is the way it is.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Effective on a basic level, something is happening after the reorganization, lack of time	<i>“On some basic level this aspect is functioning. We get information, we have the possibility to say what we want, share with each other, gather materials, talk with colleagues and managers. On a basic level the system is established and the model is effective. Maybe there is an absence of a better knowledge management model between managers and local managers and even team leaders and employees. Its influence is that there is not really an efficient system that would really function in practice. Maybe now something is happening, we are now a bigger social work center with more employees, more possibilities to do internal stuff. We are able to invite someone, it shows that we are from different social work centers, so that we are able to share knowledge. This is a good effect in the context of knowledge management effectiveness. The lack of time still brings a lot of disadvantages, especially we are unable to get together and share knowledge because we have to arrange a meeting for almost two months in advance that everyone is able to move away from their daily workload. Even though we have official office hours, you have work to do for the next day and the next week.” (Interviewee H)</i>
Effective	<i>“In our social work center it is effective and it shows on the satisfaction of our employees.” (Interviewee I)</i>

Source: Own work

Transcript 18: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on the Potential influence of Knowledge Management on Enhanced Collaboration, Enhanced Communication, Enhanced Learning and Enhanced Performance

Category	Example from Interview
All four constructs are important, shortages in time and personnel	<i>“All four constructs are important, on each and every one we should work on and improve. We would like to do more, actively work on this, however, we are simply not able to (shortages in personnel). For finances we always find a way, extra financing with projects, there is money available. However, for different workshops, employees have difficulties to attend as they simply do not have time. The supply of training courses is enormous and you have to decide what is important for us. There are a lot of courses that are important and beneficial for us.” (Interviewee A)</i>
All four constructs are important, additional emphasis on learning	<i>“Definitely it would influence all four constructs, perhaps the most influential would be learning. It definitely influences all four constructs, the more knowledge an individual has, the more he or she is aware of personal relationship and i.e. solves differently conflicts or tense situations.” (Interviewee B)</i>
Discusses communication, collaboration and learning	<i>“Communication is very important, without access to information it is hard for you to work. A person in a specific position can have a great influence on this, if he or she acknowledges that sharing information is beneficial for employees and users. Collaboration is good in our social work center, there is no hierarchy in our region, we are relaxed, information flows and collaboration are functioning well. Regarding learning, there is a lot of literature, there is no time that I would decide that I will read or do research on something during work. There is no time for literature, we discuss stuff with coworkers, more people have more knowledge, you were possibly missing something or were blindsided. In your apprenticeship time there are older mentors, later this is lacking, i.e. when you change your job position to another field. You are a social worker, however, still it is a different field, you miss a bit of mentorship, there is simply not enough time, everyone is so involved in his or her own work. Nevertheless, you always have the possibility to ask a question, however, you would perhaps need a bit of introduction to some aspects. Also sometimes it is difficult to share some delicate knowledge and in other times you are simply not able to as you are in a deficit regarding the number of solved cases. If I would have more time, I would devote more time to someone that is new, maybe I would even take him or her with me “on the field”. Shortage in personnel definitely shows, maybe it is even crucial when discussing our functioning.” (Interviewee C)</i>
Communication, collaboration	<i>“Communication and collaboration are definitely a good basis to look forward, if employees are collaborating appropriately between themselves, between units, if they are properly communicating then they will share their knowledge, knowledge hiding will not occur and they will openly ask in a dilemma. One time you will give information, the other time you will receive information. I think it is a good idea to emphasize this in annual questionnaires if this is only my (manager’s) perception or if the results will be different regarding how relaxed and open employees are.” (Interviewee D)</i>

All four constructs are important, direct effect on employees, indirect effect on users	<i>“Outcomes are visible in all four areas and can be measured. I conduct surveys with my employees, where we measure satisfaction, relationships, satisfaction with training, here it is visible that they are satisfied and we have extremely high evaluations regarding employee satisfaction. With this they are able to grow personally and professionally, with knowledge management we also have an influence on employees, and indirectly on users and we have to be aware of this.” (Interviewee E)</i>
All four constructs are important	<i>“All four constructs are related, you cannot have one without the other. If there is no communication, all the knowledge in the world cannot help you.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Collaboration, learning on team level	<i>“Very important is that institutions collaborate and share knowledge, that they strengthen their ties, this is many times important for things to function properly. Also learning between institutions, at the organizational level and also on the individual and team level as team work is what defines us and is important to me. Even more important than at the individual level. Team work is essential, it has a significantly greater impact on the quality of work, this collaboration is very important, however, it is a challenge especially with non-governmental organizations that they believe that we are competitors and are not willing to collaborate, however, we would be able to work better together. Also social work centers as coordinators that try to create ties, everyone is still scared for their program if they will get funds and finances. I many times proposed that we would work on a joint program as I believe this would improve the quality, however, it is difficult to get organizations to work outside their framework as they strongly identify with their own programs.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Collaboration	<i>“The biggest influence on collaboration as I can see now that this is a big problem. Some have some knowledge, are qualified for something, while others are not. Then it can happen that work duplicates. One does something in a time frame when the other with better knowledge would already do everything. Work could be better divided, which would result in time savings and better relationships. Also other constructs are important, however, I would highlight collaboration. With this we would be able to improve also our general level of knowledge.” (Interviewee H)</i>
All four constructs are important, additional emphasis on communication and collaboration	<i>“All four construct are important for our organization, that we remain competitive and transparent in our functioning. There are also external factors that influence the satisfaction of employees. Salaries are low, workload is heavy and there are also additional tasks that require you to be at your job for 24 hours at once. As a leader you can only invest everything that you got into you employees, with this you keep the information flow constant, deal with conflicts as they arise, deal with overload, you do everything you can to avoid burnout and dissatisfaction. Communication, collaboration, the feeling that you are heard, this is the basis for satisfaction.” (Interviewee I)</i>

Source: Own work

Transcript 19: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on the Financial Aspect of Knowledge Management

Category	Example from Interview
Money should be available for knowledge management, invest in employees	<i>"There is no harm to devote money for training, knowledge has to be treated as a priority. I would rather organize a training session than buy a new desk. Investing in human capital should be more in the focus, investing in employees."</i> (Interviewee A)
Middle term should be a return on investment, extra activities where they could show benefits and added value	<i>"At least in the middle term our organization would have to receive enough returns to justify the investment in knowledge management. There is no extra money in terms of public finances, the funds are divided as they are, at the state level organizations are treated the same, they have to function the same and receive the same funding. Additionally social work centers can perform programs, where you apply at tenders, which is according to my opinion the best approximation to a market. In this aspect it would make sense if we could expose our benefits and added value. However, all funds that we would obtain would have to be invested in the future development of our social work center as it is the same for every public sector and non-profit organization."</i> (Interviewee B)
Not expecting financial impact, searching for new solutions for users	<i>"Definitely we are never expecting a financial impact in social work. It is important that we search for new solutions for our users, to be one step ahead of the legislation, every time we are surprised and we have to search for a solution that does not yet exist. We do not search for a financial impact as we are looking for ways to help people when they are in need."</i> (Interviewee C)
Finances are not crucial, bigger problem is time and personnel	<i>"Finances are not the crucial problem, at least at our social work center. We can manage with what we have, a bigger problem is time. In that time we have to do our regular work, so that there are no deficits. I see a lot of reserves with personnel, we need additional employees and with the money we have we can do more in the training area."</i> (Interviewee D)
Finances are not essential, more about the option of choice	<i>"Finances are not the necessary condition when deciding about knowledge management, it is more about the option of choice, finances are limiting our possibilities to engage with professional groups, actives, working groups, there are not only training courses that require a fee, there are also free training courses. On the market we are able to provide a lot of things with the finances we have. The financial impact is not necessary."</i> (Interviewee E)
They cannot think about knowledge management right now, happy with improvement in soft measures, financial funds from other sources i.e. European Union	<i>"When you are hungry, you do not think about going on vacation. It would be extremely welcome if we would achieve improvements in the four aforementioned aspects (enhanced collaboration, communication, learning and performance). Several times employees will express their desire to attend seminars for personal growth that are not just related to their work field. Absolutely, meetings and knowledge transfer would be extremely welcome. I think it is necessary that we start devoting funds for training, and that we also start looking for funds elsewhere, i.e. the funds from the European Union, that we could devote more funds to personnel. It can happen that you just forget about an individual and his or her training. It is important that an employee grows. I see changes with my own</i>

	<i>functioning from when I got employed in this social work center, when I attend a training course and I see things in a broader sense. New knowledge is welcome.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Would be welcome, try to achieve savings	<i>“Financial effects, hm. We are trying to achieve savings with heating, i.e. 500€ that we can then spend on training courses. Of course it would be welcome.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Measured with financial impact to some extent, could see savings in time and money	<i>“Of course, you have to pay everything and then set the record straight. From this aspect of course also knowledge management would have to be measured with a financial impact to some extent. The whole thing could be relatively simple. In we would invest more in this structure of doing things and in employees, we would see eventually that we do our tasks in a shorter time period, that they are done with more quality and that users do not return that often with the same problem. This is then automatically a saving in terms of money and time. I am not talking about tomorrow, however, five to ten years could be reasonable.” (Interviewee H)</i>
Improvements in soft measures, financial aspect is not that important	<i>“We would be satisfied with improvements in the four aforementioned aspects, the so called soft measures. The financial aspect is not that important, we have what we have. If we would be able to send someone extra to a training course that would be a great accomplishment. There are not enough funds for everything, but this is an input to work on yourself, you can then play your part in the improvements of the functioning of the whole organization and feel greater satisfaction. Our organization is based on several different parts, finances are here secondary. Due to the orientation of all employees, the organization can function the way it does, solidarity is important and management can help a lot.” (Interviewee I)</i>

Source: Own work

Transcript 20: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Social Networks Between Employees

Category	Example from Interview
Everyone is included, no problems	<i>"Everyone is included and involved in our social network. There are no problems." (Interviewee A)</i>
Today situation is better, more connected within same work fields, miss collaboration between different fields	<i>"Today the situation is better than it used to be a couple of years ago. Employees are connected (of course more with some than with others). The organization size is influential and the individual's working field, where it is logical that those working on the same field are more connected. In a sense I miss collaboration between different fields, especially problematic are external units that are also physically separated and there is less collaboration." (Interviewee B)</i>
Good situation, differences in comparison with the past, morning exercise	<i>"There are differences between social work centers, in some the situation is better than in others. It used to be quite different 15 years ago (a lot has changed), we used to have our morning coffee (we were a smaller unit where the debate was also around cases). We would socialize and exchange important information, which was also beneficial for the user. The information flow was great. We felt connected and it was really nice to work here. With the years, we got new tasks, new employees (no balance between the two), our organization got bigger, the difference is visible (I would not say that people are alienated, however, there is no real connection and the situation is moving more in this direction as the years go by). Now, some units were joined with the reorganization, there was some initial fear that we will not get along (due to many different working areas), there were some second thoughts at the beginning, however, at the end of the day it is dependent on the individual and not on the work he or she does. At the end we wanted to feel good within our collective. We have morning exercise instead of coffee, for five minutes, we get along great, especially this are the small things that every individual brings to the unit and that connect people. There will always be someone that does not fit in. In general, in our social work field the situation is good, however, it depends from unit to unit, with the reorganization somewhere the situation is now worse." (Interviewee C)</i>
Overall the situation is good, groups, individuals that do not fit in, morning coffee	<i>"There are groups, like in any organization, also there are individuals that are specific, that do not fit in and can be detrimental to the overall connectedness in the organization and collaboration as their personality is different. In every unit there is such an individual (which I would replace at a given opportunity). Overall the relationships are good, units share information (i.e. who is working on something). Smaller units have their morning coffee, where they share information. They are more similar in the nature of their work." (Interviewee D)</i>
The situation is good, common activities	<i>"There is not an individual that would not fit in, we are connected, we go on trips together, hiking, we promote health at our workplace, programs to strengthen our ties, when you sense some tension you have to react before a conflict arises (I am very sensitive when it comes to relationships and nonverbal communication). We have training sessions to avoid conflicts. How to communicate with each other, with difficult users, our employees are now very much aware that you can change yourself and not others."</i>

	(Interviewee E)
Very connected, informal gatherings	<i>“We are very connected. In a little unit it is important that there are no conflicts, I do not allow for someone to not fit in. In a small unit it is impossible to do your job with high quality for the user if there are conflicts present. We take care also for informal gatherings, once a year we have a trip together, everyone attends, even those that already retired. We have really good relations, we know that after the reorganization it is very stressful and that it is not beneficial to argue with each other. The moment we start arguing, our social work center will not function properly anymore.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Very connected, teamwork, working in pairs, informal gatherings	<i>“We are a small unit, which is good. We connect with each other even when someone needs help, we are available and everyone can contact someone to get help. We are very connected, which means we also hang out after work (i.e. cinema, dinner or concerts). In a way this can be understood as professional support. Here also knowledge sharing occurs, we exchange examples of good practice. We promote teamwork, we have internal teams, especially with complex cases we are working on trying to look at things together, what is already done, what is still necessary as sometimes you cannot see the situation that clearly. We do a lot of work in pairs, especially we do not go alone to “the field”, especially when there are difficult conversations we do not work alone, it gives greater transparency and more protection. Users can try to manipulate situations in their favor.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Good relations, differences between different fields	<i>“I would not say that someone is especially problematic. Definitely the relationships are different between different work units.” (Interviewee H)</i>
Good relations, morning coffee	<i>“One employee does not fit in, has a specific work approach. He or she is especially concerned about his or her colleagues, however, puts too much emphasis on details, cannot do everything and has a bigger feeling of overload. Consequently he or she pulls back, says I do not have time. We get together in the morning to drink tea. It is about hanging out, exchanging information, discussing actual cases, to brainstorm and has a good impact on connecting us.” (Interviewee I)</i>

Source: Own work

Transcript 21: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Typical Training an Employee Attends

Category	Example from Interview
Important topic, broaden the knowledge of employees, older employees are not interested, younger employees show interest, sometimes cannot attend training due to overload	<i>"We did a lot of work in our social work center to develop training. It is and would be necessary to broaden the knowledge of our employees. We invite a broad range of employees to hear the content, i.e. rules of good communication, teamwork, public relations, rhetoric. With older employees that are in their last decade before retiring there is no strong desire to attend training, however, with our younger colleagues there is more such desire. It can also happen that social workers cannot attend training sessions due to overload." (Interviewee A)</i>
Training related to financial capabilities, interest of the individual, will receive necessary training for urgent tasks	<i>"Training is assured to our employees in line with our financial capabilities, we are very limited. There are some limitations, in practice this means that each employee attends one or two training courses that require a fee and take the whole day and a couple of other training sessions that are free of charge, to cover up the potential deficit. Some trainings are expensive, i.e. 1000€ per employee, they mean that the employee will be absent for a couple of weeks, there is no real possibility to do this, it is also not possible to invest some more money in just one employee. In the past also this was possible in public institutions. A lot also depends on the interest of the individual. However, an individual will always have training available that is necessary for him or her to do the urgent matters." (Interviewee B)</i>
Limited after the reorganization, discrepancy with existing legislation, dissatisfied employees, annual plan	<i>"In the past I do not recall that there were any limitations, you only had to define the contribution of a training and you could go as it was important for your work and you could contribute to your collective. After the reorganization we are limited (because of new guidelines), because we joined with other social work centers there is only one budget for the whole region, you have one paid and one free of charge training per year, which is different than in the existing legislation that plans 10 days per year for training. Employees are consequently dissatisfied. If this is related to financial issues only, it is hard to say, I hear that the budget for training is fairly small. At the beginning of every year each employee submits a work plan, where he or she also includes the desirable training, so at the begging of the year we are familiar with how things should go, however, then a lot of other stuff arises. How much you can follow the plan is determined with finances and priorities." (Interviewee C)</i>
Fairly covered in the framework of social work	<i>"Three times per year. Fairly related to the framework of social work. We also go according to our own initiatives, to the Faculty of social work, family counselling, Theological faculty, psychotherapy, we co-finance as much as we can, it is mainly driven by own interest and we promote such growth." (Interviewee D)</i>
Continuous training, diverse, professional and personal growth, follow trends	<i>"Trainings are continuous, more long-term, also one-day, couple of hours, practical training (i.e. help with home care), safe driving course, we use local community experts for training, i.e. the center for promoting health organizes workshops. Very diverse, professional and personal growth, solving conflicts, communication, different areas of social work (custody, foster care, transfers). Even the more expensive training courses we are</i>

	<p><i>able to provide to our employees. We follow trends, we select training based on trends that are visible in the environment (this is important) and based on the needs of employees also to collaborate with different other public institutions.” (Interviewee E)</i></p>
<p>Change in legislation, severe deficit in terms of personnel and finances</p>	<p><i>“We need a change in legislation in Slovenia. I.e. the one that prepares a certain law, it is necessary for them to enable training and education that is free of charge as social work centers do not have enough money. Paid training has more quality, however, financial funds that are available to a social work center for training are very limited. We cannot afford to send an employee to training even if it is written in our legislation. Due to continuous changes we would wish that we would be able to attend as much training as possible. As a small unit we intentionally neglected supervision as we had a financial deficit and decided on our meeting that it is more important and it has a bigger contribution that we devote the same amount of money to training, that the perceived benefits will be bigger than with supervision. However, both aspects are written in our legislation, an employee should be able to do both. We have a severe deficit in terms of personnel and finances with our functioning.”</i> (Interviewee F)</p>
<p>MLFSAEO is reducing our funds, according to the needs of employees, related to their working field</p>	<p><i>“We try, according to our possibilities. Also here the financial support from the MLFSAEO is problematic, as instead of giving us more funds for material costs (including training) they are reducing them. We have to decide where and who will go to a specific training. Sometimes an employee will ask if he or she can go to training and I ask them back if he or she is prepared to use the newly gained knowledge. Simply just attending training is not a possibility. We send employees to training that they need. When they return, it is expected to report what are the novelties at a joint meeting, we try to have one every week, however, sometimes we are not able to have it due to priorities. Every employee goes to what is most related to his working field.”</i> (Interviewee G)</p>
<p>Related to the field of social work, dependent on the manager</p>	<p><i>“Typically the content of training is related to the narrow field of social work. Also, I typically need content that is related to my narrow work, I have to justify why I want to go, to attain knowledge, however, I am unable to go to one of my colleagues to explore how he or she does things, I formally cannot justify this. A lot is dependent whether my manager listens or not, if he or she agrees that it is professional training.”</i> (Interviewee H)</p>
<p>Professional content, related to one’s working field</p>	<p><i>“We attend training at the Social Chamber, Community of Social Work Centers, it is related to professional content, also how to overcome stress and take care of yourself. You go according to your working field.”</i> (Interviewee I)</p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 22: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Training Outside the Framework of Social Work

Category	Example from Interview
Necessary to broaden our knowledge	<i>"It would be necessary to broaden the knowledge of employees. We invite a wide range of employees to hear topics such as good communication, teamwork, public relations and rhetoric, which could also be useful outside our profession." (Interviewee A)</i>
Depends on the interest of the individual, priority will always be training focused on social work, possible with more funds to broaden our training spectrum	<i>"A lot depends on the interest of an individual. The priority is training that is related to his or her working field, our profession, changes that influence his or her work, changes in legislation, what is the most urgent in his or her work. If it makes sense and if there are financial funds available I would be open for something else, a broader perspective, however, still related to our work but not necessarily that narrow to our working field. When it comes to social work we are supposed to have wider knowledge as it is not necessary that you work on one field today and on the same field in a month. Again if we had financial funds available we would attend a wider spectrum of training, however, surely still related to social work. It would be beneficial and wise to broaden the horizon of employees. It would be desirable to achieve a wide range of knowledge in the field of social work and of course this is the direction that is necessary and beneficial, however, money is the problem. It is visible that the younger generation in comparison with their older colleagues lacks a bit in broad knowledge, the older employees have such knowledge as when times were different they had the possibility to attend something more and different training. However, again here it is essentially about the individual and his or her initiative, how much he or she is willing to accept novelties and learn. I am sure we could do more on this aspect as a whole and also think about the direction that is not strictly related to social work programs. If funds were unlimited or at least higher we as a social work center would work on this aspect as well." (Interviewee B)</i>
Majority of training related to social work, personal growth welcome, necessary and interesting, no money nowadays for knowledge management	<i>"There is a lot of training related to our work and some also in the field of personal growth, which is fine. In social work there is not an abundance of positive energy, we primarily deal with problems, bad energy, you have to be strong, work on yourself, otherwise it could be hard for you. Training for personal growth is important even if on first glance it does not seem so, a social worker needs this to remain strong, have a clear judgement, to work on yourself and to achieve something. There are no legal trainings (maybe the one from the legal department actually goes), there is something on communication (maybe related to management and organization), supported from our manager that someone attends. I think it is necessary, I like to attend different training, communication and similar events, we communicate with users every day, so there is a contribution to the user and for our organization. It is hard to comment on knowledge management if there are any funds devoted, maybe within training plans, on purpose definitely no." (Interviewee C)</i>
Leadership and management is covered, lecturers are not good enough, beneficial to have such	<i>"Leadership and management, when there was training in May (2019) I sent my local managers there, this is appropriately functioning. It is beneficial that we also have such knowledge, i.e. school for directors. I do</i>

knowledge	<i>not think there is a problem with how this is arranged, the existing lecturers in the school for directors are a problem. When you see their program it seems fine, however, when they actually lecture it fails, there are approximately three good lecturers out of 10.” (Interviewee D)</i>
Important to have broad knowledge, potentially resources for knowledge management within training funds	<i>“It is important that the social worker also has this other knowledge (a good social worker has to have also legal knowledge, this is considered as depth in knowledge). Also knowledge from economics, someone that works on transfers, how is the salary calculated, he or she can go on training how he or she can effectively manage funds. It is present and necessary, we cannot only consider the narrow perspective. Also communication and solving conflicts are included. If there are any resources available for knowledge management, they are within the training funds available.” (Interviewee E)</i>
Personal growth, widen the knowledge, also welcome knowledge from management and organization, personnel issues	<i>“Of course the goal is also personal growth and to widen the knowledge of individuals. Absolutely there are no more training opportunities like they were in the past. In the past older employees were able to attend something for their personal growth, now this is not possible anymore, financially we cannot do it. Every knowledge is welcome (management and organization), I wish we had enough personnel so I would be able to ensure every individual gets the training he or she is entitled with our legislation. I would like to ensure such training that an individual wants, where he or she feels he or she has a deficit.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Training most related to social work, managers are mainly attending other topics, limited with finances	<i>“We go to training that is most related to our work field. We have training at the regional level how to deal with difficult users, this is for everyone. Mainly for other fields (hypothetically speaking legal, management field or communication in public, basic of delegating, management) is for the management, to the extent that we are able to attend. Other aspects are occasionally present, however, they are not the priority, the priority is always related to changes in legislation, you are limited with how many people you can send to a training course and you usually send those that are directly involved and then they provide the knowledge to their colleagues. This does not mean that it is always the manager that attends training, if possible we always combine so that the manager and social worker both go, or usually I send social workers, so that as many of them as possible are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. If possible, we include as many employees as we can, unfortunately finances are limiting us.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Would make sense to broaden our knowledge, less access to such training, limited with time and finances	<i>“It would make sense to attend wider aspects, it happens from time to time. However, there is less access to knowledge from other fields. There is still some possibility to attain this as well. Not only for personal growth, however, for very specific knowledge. Partially it is related how you treat different topics, there is a lot of supply and very few opportunities to attend (because of finances and time). Perhaps we have the best access to some administrative and legal issues outside the framework of social work.” (Interviewee H)</i>
Wider knowledge would be necessary, limited with time, finances and personnel, no	<i>“Wider knowledge would be necessary also for social workers but we are limited with time, personnel and finances. When you work on yourself, you are expanding your perception, way of thinking and knowledge, you</i>

greater investment than in growth of employees	<i>connect with other people, get to grow a wider network, counteract burnout and there is no greater investment in a social worker. ”</i> (Interviewee I)
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Source: Own work

Transcript 23: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Existing Financial Resources

Category	Example from Interview
/	/ (Interviewee A)
Not enough financial resources, flexible with material costs	<i>"In general there are not enough financial resources. However, funds for salaries are always there. We are most flexible with material costs (water, electricity, training or almost everything). The deficit is most often visible with funds available for training, because you have to pay your electricity bill and your rent first."</i> (Interviewee B)
/	/ (Interviewee C)
Our situation is good, different with other social work centers, flexible material costs	<i>"There are enough financial resources, however, the situation is not the same with all social work centers. If it is possible to make some transfers, i.e. from material costs to something else we do it, we had to cover costs with salaries to enable training. For now the situation with us is ok, I hope we will not have to make any cuts."</i> (Interviewee D)
Our situation is good	<i>"We can do a lot with the finances we have available."</i> (Interviewee E)
Deficit in financial resources	<i>"We are lacking in the finances field. We are very limited with our functioning with shortages in personnel and finances."</i> (Interviewee F)
Not enough financial resources, dependent on sick leave, every year less funds for material costs	<i>"The MLFSAEO does not provide enough funds for material costs. Every year we get less funds to finance our salaries. In a way we are scared if there are no sick leaves as in that case we do not have enough money. There is not enough money. In a way, sick leaves are saving us to get through the year with financing salaries and this is the reality as there is always some deduction. For material costs we have less money than we spent the previous year, while the costs are going up. They are going up in reality, to get through and save something with the funds available, we have to carefully examine how to save something and then devote those savings to improve the quality of work. We had to improve our working facilities as the situation was bad. Everyone deserves a nice office, to feel good and that the user is satisfied. Even the users sad that we are almost homeless as it was not looking like an appropriate office. As we did not have enough money to hire someone to paint the walls, we did it ourselves. I will not cut training funds to paint our walls, training is our most important part and we need it the most."</i> (Interviewee G)
Not really know, considering outputs no, saving with toilet paper	<i>"I have no idea, in reality I know almost nothing about this. Considering our outputs we do not have enough financial resources, we are saving with toilet paper."</i> (Interviewee H)
Not enough financial resources, limited with training	<i>"No, there is not enough money for everything. As social workers we are unable to attend anything, except training for new knowledge regarding our work field. There are intervention groups after the reorganization, so that we are able to share our knowledge, insight, here and there we attend a conference, more or less based on our own initiative and not within our working time."</i> (Interviewee I)

Source: Own work

Transcript 24: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Existing Financial Resources Available Purposefully for Knowledge Management

Category	Example from Interview
Dedicating money for training is not a waste, unclear whether they devote funds to knowledge management nowadays	<i>“Dedicating money for training is never a waste. It should be addressed as a priority. I would rather organize a training course than to buy a new desk. A higher priority is to invest in human resources, investing in employees.”</i> (Interviewee A)
Some expenses are the priority, currently no funds for knowledge management, maybe indirectly from training funds, in case of more funds, knowledge management is a possibility	<i>“It has to be understood, that some expenses are more important, i.e. paying your electricity and water bills in comparison with knowledge management. Such costs will always be more important when assigning funds. There are some resources that are devoted in the financial plan for training, later in the annual report we evaluate (financially and content wise) how those funds were spent for knowledge and training, however, we do not purposefully devote any funds to knowledge management at the moment. In principle, knowledge management would fall under the quota for training (if something is indirectly related to knowledge management, otherwise no). It would be desirable that we had more funds for training, then we could also devote some funds to knowledge management.”</i> (Interviewee B)
/	/ (Interviewee C)
/	/ (Interviewee D)
If there are funds they are within the framework of training funds	<i>“If there are any funds for knowledge management, they are within the framework of funds intended for training.”</i> (Interviewee E)
/	/ (Interviewee F)
/	/ (Interviewee G)
/	/ (Interviewee H)
No funds for knowledge management, would be beneficial to devote some funds to management training	<i>“There are also no funds for knowledge management. It would be beneficial to devote some of the training funds for management.”</i> (Interviewee I)

Source: Own work

Transcript 25: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on the Existing Incentive Structure

Category	Example from Interview
Limited in the public sector, promotion every three years – too delayed, financially rewarding with increased work extent, exploring other ways of rewarding employees - training	<p><i>“We are very limited with incentives in the public sector. The possibility is with the annual employee assessment, promotion in every three years (this is one possible incentive – higher salary class, job titles), however, it is too much focused on the future, it should be on a yearly basis. In between there was a period when everything was not recognized for employees, which hindered some of their possibilities. There are also other ways of rewarding employees. Additional training, additional content that they are able to attend. A social worker that is working on an extra project (increased workload, we pay them the additional hours), can arrange additional training (that is not necessary narrowly focused on his or her job, a workshop intended to grow as a person, “company car”.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee A)</p>
Hard in the context of the public sector, promotion every three years – too delayed, financially rewarding with increased work extent, exploring other ways of rewarding employees - training, employees miss incentives	<p><i>“Providing incentives in the context of the public sector is hard. Employees are evaluated and especially their annual assessment influences their promotion opportunities on every three years. Rewards are relatively inflexible and the reward does not have a particular effect if it is so delayed in the future. Financially we can reward our employees with paying them out due to increased workload on special projects, we send them to additional seminars and training as a reward. In general it is quite limited, also employees are missing the opportunity to receive rewards for a job well done.”</i> (Interviewee B)</p>
No financial incentives, positive aspects of non-financial recognition	<p><i>“A nice word of appraisal, I do not see financial incentives. For me nonfinancial incentives are important that I feel accepted, that someone praises you as you did a good job. Even when you are not doing great, an encouraging word can do you a lot of good. The financial part was abolished in 2008, until now they have not brought back the bonus for work performance.”</i> (Interviewee C)</p>
Training as a reward – indirectly also a financial reward, Promotion to a higher salary class or job title in every three years, well arranged in their social work center, non-financial recognition is present – still some reserves	<p><i>“I see training as kind of a reward (I try to equally distribute training opportunities). What is left, is for those that are the best at their work. Every three years you can be promoted in a higher salary class, also you can get promotion via job titles and for that you need points assigned from attending training courses. Indirectly training is actually a financial reward (a higher job title means three additional salary classes and every three years also two additional salary classes, so the maximum is five salary classes in three years, which translates into 20% higher salary in the period of three years). This is very well arranged with us, especially now when they actually released the opportunity for promotion, before it was a problem as people were unable to get promoted. With us, a lot of employees got promoted in a higher job title in the period of five to six years. There are still reserves with non-financial incentives (we had a coaching session on this topic, how, how many times and in which specific moment I should praise my employees), I got feedback that I am fairly good with giving appraisals, the employees are good and happy, I also receive praise from them, I have to still work on this aspect, so that it becomes ordinary to me, that it is present on a daily basis. That I praise specific actions, not to be too general with praise as its effect quickly</i></p>

	<i>vanishes. I use annual conversations with my employees to get feedback. I am generous when evaluating employees as I see it as a motivation for future work.” (Interviewee D)</i>
Not quite satisfied with the incentive structure, non-financial recognition, training as a reward, not possible to give financial rewards	<i>“The incentive structure is not quite how I would wish it was, we reward employees with personal recognition, public appraisal in front of their colleagues, other professionals in other gatherings (not only within our social work center) and also at events. We also reward employees with training, financially it is unfortunately not possible. Every time when it is possible to assign an increased workload I do that (if there are any funds available), in case of replacements (I suggest to the regional manager that they financially reward their employees). Employees are content with this, they are aware that they have the possibility to attend training. Also mentorship can be a reward (you also receive points for this), apprenticeship, at the annual assessment it is important (how to reward your employee), that he or she is willing to share knowledge, it is also part of their yearly assessment, i.e. if he or she is willing to organize two training sessions for coworkers (sharing knowledge in internal training). Also present with yearly assessments is collaboration (in what way, what was done additionally), what is done over the basic level, what was expected, it shows on the yearly assessment and with promotion.” (Interviewee E)</i>
Not a lot of options for rewards, no financial incentives, sad that employees see training as a reward	<i>“There are really no options to reward your employees, especially not financially now when there is no bonus for work performance. What is sad is that we have encountered a situation where the employee perceives as a reward the possibility to attend training as this is something that he or she is entitled to according to our legislation (from a legal point of view this is shocking, this is his or her right that his or her employer should provide). In social work we are already happy with this. Of course there are wishes for paying them i.e. a college tuition (something that was possible in the past), however, there are no such possibilities nowadays. I know that such tenders exist in different fields (i.e. education sector, co-financing tuition fees, I do not know why we do not have this also in social work, the MLFSAEO could obtain European funds). Training is free at the Ministry of Justice, employees can attend for free, in social work we have to pay everything and we have limited funds. Promotion to a higher job title is dependent on training, if they are unable to attend training, they are unable to get promoted to a higher job title.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Very few possibilities, financial rewards are very weak and bad	<i>“It is sad, we have very few possibilities. One option is in case of sick leaves, when other employees assume the responsibility of the one that is on sick leave and we can pay them part of the money that is left for additional hours, increased workload, which they actually do. Financial incentives are very weak, very bad.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Virtually no financial incentives, indirect rewards with employee and user satisfaction assessments, non-financial recognition from the manager three times a year	<i>“That you get something extra beside your salary? Overtime is exclusively related to increased workload, a very narrow situation, i.e. only when there is some new legislation accepted. There is virtually no financial reward, no bonus for work performance as it was abolished years ago. It used to be a possibility to get some % more, however, nowadays it is not possible. Also years ago we had an internal competition for employee of the year, nothing special, something to eat and someone got a plaque and</i>

	<p>recognition from the manager, nowadays we do not have this as well. An indirect form of recognition is the evaluation of employee and user satisfaction from the Faculty of Administration. If you get a higher grade, you have an indirect feeling of satisfaction, maybe this is relevant for this question, it happens three times a year also that our manager at a meeting exposes someone from some work field that did good dealing with novelties or something similar. I think it is good if an employee knows what are the criteria, what it means to be effective, to do something well, be mediocre and so on. We have annual conversations and evaluations, let us say that we get different assessments, and let us say if you get a higher grade it is in a way some form of recognition, however, this is the point where it all stops. It is a moment of satisfaction and awareness that you achieved a higher grade. You live with the feeling that management perceives you as a good employee and feel rewarded from this aspect. I do believe it should also be financially supported, not to a great extent, however, to a small extent in practice. Perhaps that you have the possibility to attend a training course that is a bit more expensive and that is not exclusively related to your working field and you have to attend it as there are novelties in the legislation that you have to master. That you would be able to go on a course where you could widen and gain deeper understanding on a topic that you find potentially interesting.” (Interviewee H)</p>
No incentives, no financial rewards	<p>“There are no incentives, financial rewards do not exist. Except when we were dealing with the deficit in cases, we got approved to pay overtime, there are no financial stimulations, we can only reward an employee to have some more free hours, however, they cannot benefit from that as they cannot even use all of their days intended for vacation. A lot of times we are tied to certain dates when users receive financial payments and we cannot go for more than 14 days on vacation as the user would not get what he or she is entitled to.” (Interviewee I)</p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 26: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Both Financial and Non-financial Incentives

Category	Example from Interview
Financial and non-financial incentives are necessary, non-financial perhaps more important, measuring performance is hard in social work	<i>"It has to be both, financial and non-financial (non-financial has prevailed in recent years). As time goes by, an employee feels that he or she is justified to a financial reward. We cannot work forever on ethical and moral drive. Public appraisal, attitude of users is ever so important, even more than the financial aspect, that the people you are working with are happy and that they are coming back with a nice attitude, appraisal. However, measuring performance is hard in social work."</i> (Interviewee A)
Balance between both financial and non-financial is present, both aspects are important, short term effect of financial incentives	<i>"A balance between financial and non-financial incentives is present (i.e. increased workload and training). Financial and non-financial incentives are both important, while financial incentives have only a short term effect. Financial incentives are especially important for the public sector as it nowadays acknowledged that we have almost wage levelling. Today in practice it can happen that those that are more capable are rewarded in a way that they receive work from those that are less capable. Also non-financial incentives have some financial influences for the organization. A part of our incentive structure is also enabling employees study leave when an individual needs and deserves it. Of course this has also financial impacts for our organizations (in essence it is free, however, it is not completely free of course)." (Interviewee B)</i>
Employees miss a balance between financial and non-financial incentives, younger generations do what they are paid for, we miss financial incentives	<i>"Employees miss a balance between financial and non-financial incentives. Everyone goes to work at least partially because of money, we miss this and we need financial funds to survive. Especially when we do more than legally required, we miss financial incentives, i.e. extra work with users, extra services. Especially younger generations expect to be financially rewarded and say I will not do more than I get paid for. They do their regular workload, however, they do not want to develop something new, maybe due to overload and possibly financial incentives could bring something positive for the future."</i> (Interviewee C)
Balance between financial and non-financial incentives is important	<i>"Balance between both is important."</i> (Interviewee D)
We need both financial and non-financial incentives, with appraisals we build on personal relationships	<i>"We need both, financial and non-financial incentives. We also need appraisal and personal relationships. With appraisals we also build on personal relationships."</i> (Interviewee E)
/	/ (Interviewee F)
A lot of work with non-financial incentives, appraisals for employees at external events, disappointment after the reorganization	<i>"I do a lot of work with non-financial incentives. I attend municipality meetings, present our programs, am always open to the possibility that someone invites us to present our programs, our work, I always speak up and emphasize the quality of the work of my employees. We also talk about this within our team, we acknowledge specific things. I thank my employees for their willingness to work. It means a lot to me as a manager that we come so far, that they support each other and come with suggestions. We</i>

	<p><i>had to achieve this. There are moments when morale falls, after the reorganization for a month morale was very bad. They asked themselves why do we even bother. It went to the feeling of disappointment, now we have a feeling that we cannot say anything against the MLFSAEO. There was also some reluctance towards the reorganization and as a manager I had to step in to make sure that we are still able to function normally.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee G)</p>
/	/ (Interviewee H)
<p>There should be financial incentives, enough of non-financial incentives, wish for more balance, not appropriately arranged now</p>	<p><i>“I think that there should also be financial incentives (at the end of the day we are all working for money). Although social workers often invest enormous efforts so that “field” work is appropriately done. Even though they know they will only receive an appraisal and will not be appropriately rewarded. There are enough non-financial incentives. We would wish for more balance. There is the possibility of promotion as a reward, however, in the end your reach a limit. It is not appropriately arranged as it is now.”</i> (Interviewee I)</p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 27: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on the Reorganization Process

Category	Example from Interview
<p>At first fear – then disappointment, high expectations, easier and faster to respond to the needs of the environment, employees started to compare with each other, some knowledge hiding occurred, self-sufficiency and numbness of older workers, internal groups to exchange knowledge and examples of good practice, the union gained in power as employees were concerned</p>	<p><i>“In general I would agree that at first there was some fear present, today we are more or less disappointed. At the beginning a lot was dependent on how every manager presented / prepared his or her employees in the last years for reorganization. My style is that I want to impress people. To do so, I have to be sure in what I do, in my vision. “If you want to impress people to build an excellent ship, you have to impress them for the journey.” Our expectations were high, that the reorganization will bring a lot of things due to informatization, that there will be less bureaucracy, that we will have more time in the framework of our working time to devote to our mission, working with people, that it will be easier and faster to respond to the needs of the environment, that we will be able to connect on the regional level, with the aim of developing programs / services, exchange and upgrade examples of good practice – with this belief we went in the reorganization process. Employees that talked to each other expected that with their employment contract they would solve every dilemma, anomaly that happened from 2008 on, when there was a new salary system, when everything changed, that they will go to another job position and that all injustice will be repaired. At once there will be more time to do professional social work. What really happened in the first few months was that every employee now has more bosses, the job positions remained the same, there was only some transfer of personnel, while the salary and contracts did not change. Based on those changes, they started to compare with each other which never happened before (i.e. the salary class, number of days for vacation, contract type). Also because of this there was some knowledge hiding after the reorganization. There was also the self-sufficiency effect, especially with older workers (phenomenon of social work), when you invest in something for 20 years, all your knowledge, you attend training, you become more closed. We have to attract younger individuals in our work, be a mentor to them, this also means telling them how you worked all these years (tacit knowledge transfer), what is your work vision and definitely not becoming self-sufficient. I also agree that older workers tend to get numb, there is no real desire to gain knowledge but as they are working with people, you have to educate yourself daily and not only when attending seminars. Work on yourself as a person, as a professional social worker, upgrade yourself and work on your professional image. Even if you are working on something for 30 years, you cannot be convinced that the way you do it is the only right way and it cannot be touched. We introduced professional intervention groups for specific work fields, so that they have a meeting every month or two months. The groups will have the task to examine and evaluate their practice. So that they can exchange examples of good and bad practice, to add strengths, exchange knowledge, skills and to work together on unifying professional practices and models that would be further developed. In this way we could build our own common knowledge base. Nothing will just happen with our profession just because of the reorganization, employees are expecting some changes, however, they are the ones that implement such changes. Social workers often have the perception what will someone from another profession do in a social work center. I regularly distribute</i></p>

	<p><i>surveys, questionnaires for my employees, how do they experience the reorganization, what is bothering them, which is a good indicator. Also with the reorganization the union gained some power as employees were concerned about their job safety, so they joined the union. There was fear because of changes, what will we have to do now, however, they are not well aware how little power in practice a manager has. They are the stronger ones in this relationship.” (Interviewee A)</i></p>
<p>The situation is worse, before: fear and uncertainty; after: disappointment, still dealing with organizational deficits, missing a reorganization in terms of content, a bit cautious in communication and a bit scared for their job at the beginning of reorganization, now no big changes are visible with employee behavior</p>	<p><i>“The situation has changed after the reorganization, unfortunately for the worse. The accompanying factors were fear and uncertainty what the reorganization will bring, now that six months have passed since the reorganization there is a sense of disappointment. The promises and expectations were not delivered, social work centers are still dealing mainly with organizational deficits, it was expected that this will go away with time, however, we are not there yet. As it was planned, we expected that we will be able to devote more effort into changes in terms of content, in practice it did not come to life, the slogan “closer to the people” in practice it did not come true and I have my doubts if it ever will. Employees were a bit more cautious with communication at the beginning of the reorganization (due to uncertainty), however, today the situation is better, so we can say there are no big changes here (in terms of trust, collaboration between employees). Maybe at the beginning they are a bit scared for their job, however, today I would say there are no big changes here.” (Interviewee B)</i></p>
<p>Behavior of employees changes out of anger, missing reorganization in terms of content, went to disappointment and apathy, no big changes in interpersonal relationships</p>	<p><i>“The behavior of employees has changed out of anger that they are not listening to professional social workers. Where is the reorganization of the content, the reorganization was more concerned with organizational aspects, they have not touched content up to today, I think that something more should be done. From anger it went to disappointment and in part to apathy. People are now fed up, we are battling with windmills. People come to work and to their job. In social work we are oriented towards helping each other, so I would say there were no big changes in interpersonal relationships. Maybe someone will say I will not do more than what I get paid, people are different. There is a lot of whining, no energy for being proactive, apathy is becoming visible. Regarding the safety of our job aspect, I believe that they cannot fire us all, however, everyone also thought about that aspect. Essentially, you are going to work to bring money home, to take care of the basic stuff. There was some fear, however, this is not the main reason for the existing state. (Interviewee C)</i></p>
/	/ (Interviewee D)
<p>Went from fear to disappointment, a lot of energy and knowledge from the manager to neutralize the situation, uncertainty regarding employment, no content related changes</p>	<p><i>“The same with us, it went from fear to disappointment (the transition was quite fast), when it became evident where this is going, it went to disappointment, things are like that, that we do not have a lot of influence, I would say it is worse. I have to devote a lot of energy and knowledge to neutralize the situation. Of course there was some uncertainty regarding job safety at the beginning, with us we lost some employees in the end. The way that they implemented the reorganization is not the way the employees deserved it. The human factor was lost. The reorganization yes, however, there are no visible professional changes or benefits, I do not see them and</i></p>

	<i>I wish they were noticeable. “ (Interviewee E)</i>
Not really uncertainty regarding employment, no fear of changes	<i>“I would not say there was any uncertainty regarding the employment, the information was distributed very up to date. We are a small unit. There was no real fear of changes. Of course, employees have some wishes that are evident from annual conversations and it is painful as you know you are not able to grant them their wishes.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Employees were constantly skeptical, comparison with other social work centers, no uncertainty regarding employment, we needed changes with our content, be closer to the people, some things are worse	<i>“Employees were constantly skeptical. Within our social work center things did not change. The problem is that now we have an overview to other units, who does what, when it was said that we have enough personnel, now you can see the databases, you see how much other social work centers do, how come that they are still within the standards, then you start comparing and you see that some have a lot more tasks than others and then you get in a bad mood. As a manager you have to calm things down and do the best that is possible. They were not afraid for their employment, it was clear that the job positions will remain the same. Changes or this centralization was preparing for years and years and in between they let it go as it became evident that it is hard to reorganize a social work center. Nevertheless we are needed on the field, in the environment with all our tasks, they centralized just some tasks (i.e. accounting). However, it soon became evident that it did not make things better, as the user will still come to their social work center due to proximity issues. So this centralization did not make sense, which I knew from the beginning. I always supported the reorganization, especially as the way things were done from 2012 on was not ok, there was too much for us to do. We needed changes within our field, however, more related to content, I am supporting this all the time, that we would indeed be able to be closer to the people. In addition to everything we have now, dealing with one situation is now two times longer (partially also due to “Krgan”,. sincerely I do not think someone could dispute this), things are not better on the field, we are not more present and we are simply not able to do more than we already do. (Interviewee G)</i>
We have less time, people are questioning if they will be able to keep up, change of profession is possible	<i>“Up to now I did not notice such a change. The difference is that our workload in terms of time is now higher, due to a number of changes, also organizational ones that are not that big. Something is happening, however, everyone has the same job as before, there are organizational changes. More time is necessary to do this. We do not even have time like we used to report every two months about seminars, after the reorganization this meeting did not happen in six months. People were not that much concerned if they will keep their job, they were concerned if they will be able to handle the workload or if they will change their job and go to another profession. This motive that they will not be able to do their work is ever more present in the last months.” (Interviewee H)</i>
More bureaucracy and more hierarchy, no changes in trust and knowledge sharing, some fear regarding employment, more emphasis on dividing the “financial” and “professional”	<i>“More bureaucracy, more hierarchy after the reorganization (before the manager was both the “professional” and “financial” leader, it did not matter what was his or her education. If you assign a social worker as a leader that never learned about management, human resources and accounting and if he or she is not proactive enough to learn, disasters have already happened. Now with the reorganization both functions are a bit more separated. There were no real changes in terms of trust and</i>

part of social work centers	<i>knowledge sharing. With the reorganization our manager is really more of a manager than before, he or she is covering personnel, accounting and regional offices, leaders are more professional managers (they have an influence, however they do not dictate final decisions). There was some fear regarding the employment status after the reorganization.”</i> (Interviewee I)
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Source: Own work

Transcript 28: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals on Knowledge Management Terminology

Category	Example from Interview
Employees completely understand terms, allergic to management – related to the economy, management structure and money	<i>“Employees completely understand terms such as tacit knowledge, employee empowerment, however, in social work we are allergic to management. Management is something that is bad, based on the economy, management structures and money – this is the general perception.”</i> (Interviewee A)
Familiar with the content of terms – possible that they use other expressions, management is in its essence foreign to employees - economy, management structure, negative perception – something primarily connected with money	<i>“Employees are familiar with the content of social networks, employee empowerment and other stuff, however, it is possible that they know its content under other expressions. At the end of the day this is also the terminology that is used in social work. Management in its essence is something that is foreign to employees, they see it as something from the economy, related to management structures. Also there is some negative perception towards management as something that is primarily connected with money.”</i> (Interviewee B)
Shortage of personnel potentially influences the negative perception towards other fields	<i>“Shortage of personnel, a lot of times we perceive employees from other professions as extra and unnecessary personnel. Give us personnel that is from social work and not personnel that will work on something else, we know what we would actually need. Shortage in personnel is maybe also the reason that takes some focus of the good aspects of management, every individual sees things from his or her own perspective, how much he or she can handle more in work, how heavy is his or her workload, maybe this blindsides other stuff and their potential. So we perceive employees that are not exactly social workers as what do we need them for?”</i> (Interviewee C)
No negative perception towards management, possibly due to the fact there were no cuts made	<i>“I would say that with us the perception about management (economy, management structure, money) is not true. Maybe it will change now that I am really a manager and I primarily delegate tasks and have very little social work left. There were no reductions from the management point of view, i.e. cuts in training. Possibly this is why they do not have a negative perception towards management, we even managed to add some new stuff, supervision, extra training.”</i> (Interviewee D)
Employees understand such topics, something from the economy, we do not identify as managers, at first glance the perception that the two fields do not belong together	<i>“Employees understand such topics, it is a lot related also to social work. The term is different (how you hear manager), however, the characteristics of a manager are similar in social work such as teamwork, communication, this is all present in social work. Management is something from the economy, if you do not devote enough interest you get the feeling that these are two fields that do not belong together. I would again emphasize that even we as managers do not identify as managers, however, the knowledge we need has to be similar. Nevertheless, it should include social work, how to gain trust and working with the user.”</i> (Interviewee E)
We do not understand some terms	<i>“I think that employees do not understand all of the terms related to management, I personally do not understand them. Simply we do not deal with them, at work there is no time and at home we do other things.”</i>

	(Interviewee F)
Social workers talk about social management, a lot of it is already present in social work, I cannot see social work without management, differences between employees about the understanding of terms	<p><i>“Social workers talk about social management. We had a more active training one year on this topic, however, I was not that much involved that year. In a way sooner or later you find out that there are a lot of management events in social work. It depends, someone that is a social worker is a bit more familiar with such topics as he or she had some basics, someone from other fields maybe is not that much familiar to be able to relate to this terms that you ask about. In a way I cannot see social work without management, it is not possible. This is not only about the financial aspect, also about how to develop working conditions in a way that it will be beneficial for both the user and social workers. There is a visible difference between employees regarding the understanding of such topics (i.e . social networks, tacit knowledge). Some are lacking, also with knowledge transfer, however, it is evident that we can give each other a lot within our collective and we can learn from each other. There are some stuff that with some individuals will never change, however, it is true that it is a lot dependent on personality.” (Interviewee G)</i></p>
Management concerns every social worker, people do not understand knowledge management as i.e. sharing knowledge when returning from training	<p><i>“I think that the term management is essentially something that concerns us, we are the public administration, we are social work. These things have some weird note about them, even the relationship towards them is a bit weird. I see a difference in the basic education, for someone from other fields the term management is much more broader and deeper. It implicates something that concerns everyone, on every job position (if we talk about employment and knowledge), this means it is related also to knowledge sharing. In social work maybe we see it as what knowledge management, what do they want from me? If we would explain to them that this is about attending a training course and them sharing your knowledge to your coworkers, they would see that they are already doing this. However, people do not imply knowledge management like that.” (Interviewee H)</i></p>
Weak understanding of terminology, the perception is true.	<p><i>“Understanding of terminology is rather weak, the perception is true. The perception of a multinational company is a good approximation what an average social worker understands as management.” (Interviewee I)</i></p>

Source: Own work

Transcript 29: Statements Expressing the Perception of Individuals Whether Previous Training Could Influence the Perception of Social Workers Towards (Knowledge) Management

Category	Example from Interview
Prior explanation – attitude would change, the manager cannot do everything	<p><i>“With prior explanation, their perception / attitude would change. We have a similar plan of promoting health at work, although the manager cannot do everything by himself or herself, there also has to be someone that besides his or her work develops suggestions, where it is possible to develop and which activities we could do. I monitor the field, however, I cannot delegate everything top-down, you would expect more from your employees, to name a specific working group, to work on a topic, however, employees will answer that they are overburdened even though we are talking about important things that could influence their future success.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee A)</p>
Broader sense management and knowledge management – different perception with prior training and explanation, already engage informally – other terms, not that structured, seen as an additional task, something extra	<p><i>“Definitely the broader sense of management and knowledge management would be perceived differently with prior training and explanation. Specifically management related to social work centers would be perceived differently, as it can be understood that we already informally engage in certain activities, however, they are labelled with other expressions and are not highly structured as in your proposed research. Definitely this is something that employees perceive as an additional task and something extra. Some employees might see it as something that is distant to them.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee B)</p>
Possible to connect the two fields, dependent on individuals, he or she sees potential, a part of people will definitely be opposed – we need more social workers	<p><i>“I think it is possible to connect the fields of social work and management, it is dependent on the individual how he or she accepts it. Even within social work it is the perception of specific functions (i.e. coordinators) that they are not doing something. As some did not gain an in-depth understanding, their perception is wrong. When i.e. a coordinator of social work appears, the first thing that others do is that they roll their eyes (which is not OK), again a lot is dependent on the individual, some can see it differently in a more positive manner. However, it is possible that three or four employees or someone in a higher position can transfer this perception on the whole collective. For knowledge management a lot would depend how much an individual is willing to gain an in-depth understanding, what does it mean, can it bring a lot of positives and what can it bring to the organization. I see that it could contribute, again it depends how others see it. Some will start with the opinion that they lack personnel and that we need social workers and not topics from other professions. Someone can see it as an additional task, “oh, now I have to do this as well.” Again, it depends how much would an individual be prepared to look from the broader perspective and learn.”</i></p> <p>(Interviewee C)</p>
/	/ (Interviewee D)
Possible influence, interdisciplinarity is important, every knowledge is added value, individuals that have interest and are proactive	<p><i>“It is possible that it would have an influence. I think that interdisciplinarity is important, that knowledge is intertwined, perhaps that you would understand something in a different manner, every additional knowledge is an added value for an individual, you get something, you learn something and you are able to use it later and you can decide what</i></p>

	<i>to do with this knowledge, it is welcome. Welcome for those that have interest and that are proactive.” (Interviewee E)</i>
Employees expect managers to manage knowledge and enable them professional growth	<i>“Employees expect that you as a manager will manage knowledge. That leaders will help when the legislation changes. It happens a lot of times, that the leader goes through a novelty and then goes through it again together with his or her employees. As a professional manager you are responsible for the professional functioning of the social work center, you have to know everything. Employees expect from the manager that he or she will enable them professional growth. I would say that I am in a way a guardian of knowledge. Besides directing the employees towards the work fields he or she must master, that you also give him a part of the things he or she wishes to know.” (Interviewee F)</i>
Perception could change, we do not talk about management nowadays, we already do some aspects – labelled with other terms	<i>“The perception could change. Within our training framework we do not talk directly about management, we mainly talk about existing legislation that in a way also limits us. In a way we always talk about legislation. Often we are not aware that we are actually talking about management, we are expressing with other terms what we already do. Even how to organize work in a time of crisis, when there are a lot of users that require services, this is part of management. Some do not feel it this way and cannot label it management.” (Interviewee G)</i>
Have to introduce more acceptable terminology	<i>“Maybe we will have to introduce more acceptable terms, in this form as presented I am not sure if it will cope well, regardless of the way you explain it to employees. This is only an expression for stuff we are already working on and I think the problem is general in our society as under foreign expressions as a whole country and society system we are learning some novelties even if in truth we were already doing this 30 or 50 years back. Of course this influences every single one individual in the system, if the society has a problem with this, then it is clear that also a social worker has it.” (Interviewee H)</i>
It would help, social workers are very flexible.	<i>“It would help, the initial reaction would be, “aha, I know what this is.” It could change, when you deal with someone that is employed in social work, social work is very dynamic, individuals employed have a wide spectrum of knowledge, the work demands it and you cannot function without it. People are very flexible.” (Interviewee I)</i>

Source: Own work

Transcript 30: Concluding Thought from Respondents

Example from Interview
<i>"That knowledge management in social work becomes more structured and has more meaning, so that employees can internalize it and consciously work on it. This would return to them in the future as they will be more successful and efficient." (Interviewee A)</i>
<i>"An extensive interview, however, the topic is still interesting. I think we should be more aware of the importance of management and knowledge. It is present in practice in a way, it is developing and is something that social work centers are working on, however, not systematically and deliberately enough." (Interviewee B)</i>
<i>"I hope I did not sound too pessimistic. I believe we are working well, responsibly according to objective criteria. We could work even better, for our users, for people if we were not so lacking in terms of personnel. I hope that someone from the government will become aware of this or that social workers will be proactive enough to fight for ourselves. If we can succeed, we will work good for the users as well. I am happy that I am working in such a collective, with my work and with my manager that sees that training, additional projects and additional knowledge we gain is positive and welcome. I hope that it will remain the same and that politics will not play too big of a part." (Interviewee C)</i>
<i>"The interview was wide enough, the idea is positive also for my own survey of employee satisfaction, communication and openness, how much they are willing to expose themselves in training." (Interviewee D)</i>
<i>"I would like to commend the responsiveness, communication and keeping up with agreements from the researcher's part." (Interviewee E)</i>
<i>"If the findings would be that we need more knowledge, potentially there are opportunities for more training." (Interviewee F)</i>
<i>"Open interview, which I think is good. If the researcher had some additional knowledge regarding social work it would be good, although he already has some overview." (Interviewee G)</i>
<i>"I would not add much, I do not feel that comfortable with this way of research as I am more of a practitioner. I find it nice that both qualitative and quantitative aspects are used, I think there is some deficit if you only use one approach. Regarding the topic for conclusions, I think we could do a lot more on the primary level, at the faculties. This is a topic that is underdeveloped. At the faculty there is not enough emphasis on the wider aspects. In the time when you are a student you would need to learn more about the actual stuff that is actually being done in practice. So that they are able to also see what they are lacking in terms of knowledge." (Interviewee H)</i>
<i>"Questions are subtle and in-depth. It is evident that the topic is interesting to the researcher. Some parallels are evident between the two fields. The researcher also has some knowledge about social work, if this is</i>

absent people tend to avoid collaborating in such research.” (Interviewee I)

Source: Own work