

A systematic literature review of tacit knowledge in organizations in the past decade



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Abstract This study aims to conduct a systematic review of the existing literature related to tacit knowledge in various organizational contexts. Tacit knowledge, which refers to knowledge that is difficult to express and document, is considered an important asset in creating competitive advantage and innovation in organizations. This review is based on 18 articles published by Scopus database. The selection of literature papers was based on literature articles published in the last ten years between 2014 and 2023. The PRISMA statement template was used to describe the entire selection process as well as the rejection of articles relevant to the topic. The results show various effective strategies in capturing and managing tacit knowledge, as well as the challenges faced by organizations in the process. This research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of tacit knowledge in organizations and provides practical recommendations for managers and researchers in an effort to improve the use and transfer of this hard-to-explain knowledge. The study also uncovered relevant articles, journals and the most cited authors. The author concludes this paper by arguing that although much research has been done in the context of tacit knowledge there is still a need to provide valuable insights for policy makers and managers in designing effective strategies for tacit knowledge management in organizations context.

Keywords: knowledge sharing, organizational development, innovation strategies, strategic management

1. Introduction

The significance of tacit knowledge in organizations has been increasingly acknowledged in recent years (Adesina, 2024). Tacit knowledge, often acquired through personal experience and challenging to articulate, plays a critical role in enhancing productivity, fostering innovation, and retaining valuable expertise (Ibidunni et al., 2023). This type of knowledge is considered one of the most valuable assets an organization can possess because it underpins unique skills and insights that are difficult for competitors to replicate (Alves and Pinheiro, 2022).

Effective management and transfer of tacit knowledge can substantially improve organizational learning and performance. Recent research indicates that organizations that effectively manage tacit knowledge can facilitate superior decision-making and cultivate a culture of continuous learning (Lee and Lee, 2023). However, capturing and sharing tacit knowledge presents unique challenges due to its experiential nature and often undocumented form (Saini et al., 2019). These challenges necessitate the development of robust knowledge management strategies that can effectively leverage this intangible asset (Adesina and Ocholla, 2024)

Research has shown that tacit knowledge sharing can foster innovation and address complex organizational problems (Lee and Lee, 2023). By facilitating the exchange of tacit knowledge, team members can gain access to diverse perspectives and alternative approaches, which leads to creative insights and innovative solutions (Ogink et al., 2024). This process underscores the critical role of tacit knowledge in problem-solving and decision-making processes (Zheyu et al., 2021).

However, several barriers, such as organizational culture, trust, leadership, and management philosophy, can hinder the effective utilization of tacit knowledge (Lartey et al., 2022). Overcoming these barriers requires a comprehensive understanding of the nature of tacit knowledge and the implementation of effective knowledge management practices (Oliveira et al., 2022). Addressing these issues can enhance the organization's ability to capitalize on tacit knowledge, thereby contributing to sustained competitive advantage and improved performance (Osobajo and Bjeirmi, 2021)

A supportive environment for sharing tacit knowledge should encourage open communication, trust, and collaboration among individuals (Tee and Karney, 2010). Recent research indicates that such environments play a crucial role in enhancing knowledge sharing and organizational performance (Zia et al., 2023). Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (Zamiri and Esmaeili, 2024) suggest that communities of practice, mentorship programs, and the use of advanced information technology are critical mechanisms for promoting tacit knowledge exchange. These mechanisms not only facilitate the transfer of implicit skills and insights but also help build a sustainable culture of learning and innovation within organizations (Lee and Lee, 2023).

Although much literature has highlighted the importance of tacit knowledge, significant gaps remain in understanding and applying it in different organizational contexts (Zheyu et al., 2021). Previous research often focuses on specific case studies



or qualitative methodologies that do not always provide broad generalizations (Kothari et al., 2011). Therefore, a systematic literature review (SLR) approach can offer a more comprehensive contribution by integrating findings from various studies to provide a more holistic view (Thomas and Gupta, 2022).

The SLR approach allows for the identification of major research trends, the most frequently used methods, and areas that require further research in the field of tacit knowledge (Saini and Chitrao, 2023). Additionally, SLR can help identify new theoretical frameworks or conceptual models that can be used to better understand how tacit knowledge is formed, transferred, and utilized in various contexts (Asher and Popper, 2019). Thus, SLR not only provides theoretical contributions but also practical benefits for knowledge management within organization (Adesina, 2024).

Through a systematic analysis of existing literature, this research aims to provide new insights and relevant recommendations for practitioners and researchers in the field of knowledge management (Durst et al., 2024). By addressing the challenges associated with sharing tacit knowledge, organizations can leverage this valuable resource to foster innovation, enhance learning, and achieve sustainable competitive differentiation (Saini et al., 2019). Therefore, it is essential to develop approaches and environments that effectively support the sharing and use of tacit knowledge (Tee and Karney, 2010). The research questions posed in this SLR focus on:

1. How has tacit knowledge been identified and measured in previous research?
2. What factors influence the transfer of tacit knowledge within organizations?
3. What are the internal and external factors that influence the development of tacit knowledge within an organization?
4. What are the outcomes of tacit knowledge within an organization?

These questions are framed based on existing theoretical frameworks and issues identified in previous literature (Cooper et al., 2024).

Tacit knowledge encompasses the know-how, skills, and insights that individuals gain through personal experience and specific contexts, making it challenging to articulate or codify (Lee et al., 2021). Unlike explicit knowledge, which can be easily documented and disseminated, tacit knowledge resides within individuals and is deeply embedded in their actions and interactions within particular contexts (AlMulhim, 2020). This form of knowledge includes intuitive insights, subjective judgments, and practical skills that are often acquired through direct experience and observation (Baronian, 2022).

Tacit knowledge plays a critical role in enhancing organizational productivity by enabling employees to perform tasks more efficiently and effectively. It contributes to the development of unique capabilities and competencies that are challenging for competitors to replicate, thereby providing a significant competitive advantage (Khatun et al., 2021). Employees leverage their tacit knowledge to solve complex problems, make informed decisions, and adapt to new situations, which collectively enhances overall productivity (Bolade and Sindakis, 2020).

The role of tacit knowledge in fostering innovation is significant, as it often serves as the foundation for new ideas and creative solutions (Canonica et al., 2020). By sharing tacit knowledge through interactions and collaborations, employees can combine diverse perspectives and experiences to generate innovative concepts and approaches (Thomas and Gupta, 2022). Tacit knowledge facilitates the exchange of informal, context-specific insights that are essential for breakthrough innovations and continuous improvement (Işık et al., 2021).

Tacit knowledge is critical for retaining valuable expertise within organizations (Dutta and Rangnekar, 2024). Experienced employees possess a wealth of tacit knowledge that is not easily transferable through formal training or documentation (Issahaka and Lines, 2021). Organizations that effectively manage and transfer this knowledge can preserve essential skills and insights, ensuring continuity and stability even as workforce dynamics change (Alharbi and Aloud, 2024). Mentorship programs and communities of practice are effective mechanisms for facilitating the transfer of tacit knowledge from seasoned employees to newer staff (Shire, 2021).

Tacit knowledge significantly contributes to organizational innovation and competitive advantage (Thomas and Gupta, 2022). It enhances the ability of organizations to innovate by leveraging the unspoken, experience-based knowledge held by employees (Shuja and Shuja, 2023). This type of knowledge, which is often context-specific and deeply rooted in individual experiences, enables organizations to develop unique capabilities and insights that competitors cannot easily replicate (Serrat, 2023). Furthermore, the transfer of tacit knowledge within organizations fosters a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability, which is crucial for sustaining long-term innovation (Iddy, 2020).

The effective management and dissemination of tacit knowledge also play a critical role in improving organizational performance (Capestro et al., 2024). When tacit knowledge is shared effectively, it leads to better decision-making processes, as employees can draw on a richer pool of insights and experiences (Abubakar et al., 2019). This enhanced decision-making capability can improve operational efficiency, reduce errors, and increase the overall effectiveness of organizational strategies (López-Cabarcos et al., 2019). Additionally, organizations that excel in managing tacit knowledge are better positioned to respond to market changes and customer needs promptly, thus maintaining their competitive edge (AlRashdi et al., 2022).

Moreover, tacit knowledge contributes to the development of a strong organizational culture and employee engagement (Iqbal et al., 2023). When employees feel their knowledge and experiences are valued and utilized, it fosters a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization (Wu et al., 2021). This engagement not only boosts morale but also

encourages knowledge sharing, collaboration, and collective problem-solving, leading to a more innovative and resilient organizational environment (Beynon et al., 2021). Therefore, investing in mechanisms that support the capture and transfer of tacit knowledge, such as mentorship programs and communities of practice, is essential for nurturing a knowledge-rich and competitive organization (Smith et al., 2019).

2. Methods

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to comprehensively examine tacit knowledge in various organizational contexts (Thomas and Gupta, 2022). The SLR method is chosen for its ability to synthesize findings from a large number of diverse studies, providing a deeper and more holistic understanding of the researched topic (Sauer and Seuring, 2023). The primary objective of this methodology is to identify, evaluate, and interpret all relevant research related to tacit knowledge to develop conclusions based on empirical evidence (Shaffril et al., 2021). The use of SLR allows researchers to systematically and critically filter the existing literature, which is crucial for developing a robust theoretical framework and supporting practical implications in knowledge management (Thomas and Gupta, 2022).

2.1. Research design

The research design follows the guidelines suggested by recent literature on systematic reviews, encompassing stages such as identifying research questions, collecting literature, screening studies, extracting data, and synthesizing findings (Sauer and Seuring, 2023). The research protocol is designed to ensure that the SLR process is conducted systematically and transparently, allowing for replication by other researchers (Shaffril et al., 2021). In designing this protocol, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to determine which studies would be included in the review, ensuring that only relevant and high-quality studies are analyzed (Meline, 2006).

2.2. Literature collection

Literature collection was carried out through searches of electronic databases, primarily focusing on research articles indexed by Scopus (Bramer et al., 2017). Keywords used in the search included "tacit knowledge" and "knowledge transfer." Additionally, combinations of keywords and Boolean operators were employed to broaden or narrow the search as needed (Obembe and Obembe, 2020). This approach ensures a wide and relevant coverage of literature, enabling the identification of various perspectives and findings related to tacit knowledge in organizational contexts (Mallidou et al., 2018).

2.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria comprised studies published in reputable international journals, studies discussing tacit knowledge in organizational contexts, and studies available in English (Kelly et al., 2000). Conversely, the exclusion criteria included non-peer-reviewed articles, articles not providing empirical data, and duplicate articles (Sauer and Seuring, 2023). Establishing these criteria is crucial to maintaining the quality and relevance of the research findings and ensuring that only the most accurate and reliable empirical evidence is used in the final synthesis (Thomas and Gupta, 2022).

2.4. Screening process

As presented at Figure 1, the screening process was conducted in several stages. The initial stage involved screening titles containing the term "tacit knowledge" (Adesina, 2024). This was followed by screening publication dates, limiting the range to the last ten years, from 2014 to 2023 (Liu et al., 2022). The next stage involved screening the subject area, restricting it to business, management, and accounting. After screening the subject area, the document type was limited to articles on (Kou et al., 2021), followed by screening for the keyword "tacit knowledge" and including only articles written in English (Zhao et al., 2022). Subsequently, the articles were sorted by the number of citations, and only those with more than 100 citations were selected for this study (Liu et al., 2022). Each article meeting the inclusion criteria was downloaded and examined in full to ensure relevance and quality (Ha et al., 2022). Articles that did not meet the criteria were removed from the list. This process ensures that only the most relevant and high-quality studies are analyzed in this review, providing a strong foundation for the resulting conclusions and recommendations.

2.5. Synthesis of findings

The synthesis of findings in this study was conducted using the meta-synthesis method, which allows for the combination of results from various studies to produce a more holistic and in-depth understanding (Blacksmith and McCusker, 2024). This method is used to identify patterns, themes, and relationships among different studies, as well as to evaluate the strength of the available evidence (Nayar and Stanley, 2023). Meta-synthesis has proven effective in integrating findings from qualitative studies, offering richer and more detailed insights into the phenomenon being studied (Nardell et al., 2022). This process involves a comprehensive analysis of the data extracted from each study, enabling the identification of knowledge gaps and practical implications that can be drawn from the findings (Maeda et al., 2022). By combining findings from various

sources, this research not only confirms previous findings but also offers new perspectives and practical recommendations for knowledge management in organizations (Li et al., 2024). This approach also ensures that the conclusions drawn are supported by strong empirical evidence, enhancing the validity and reliability of the research findings (Hoon, 2013).

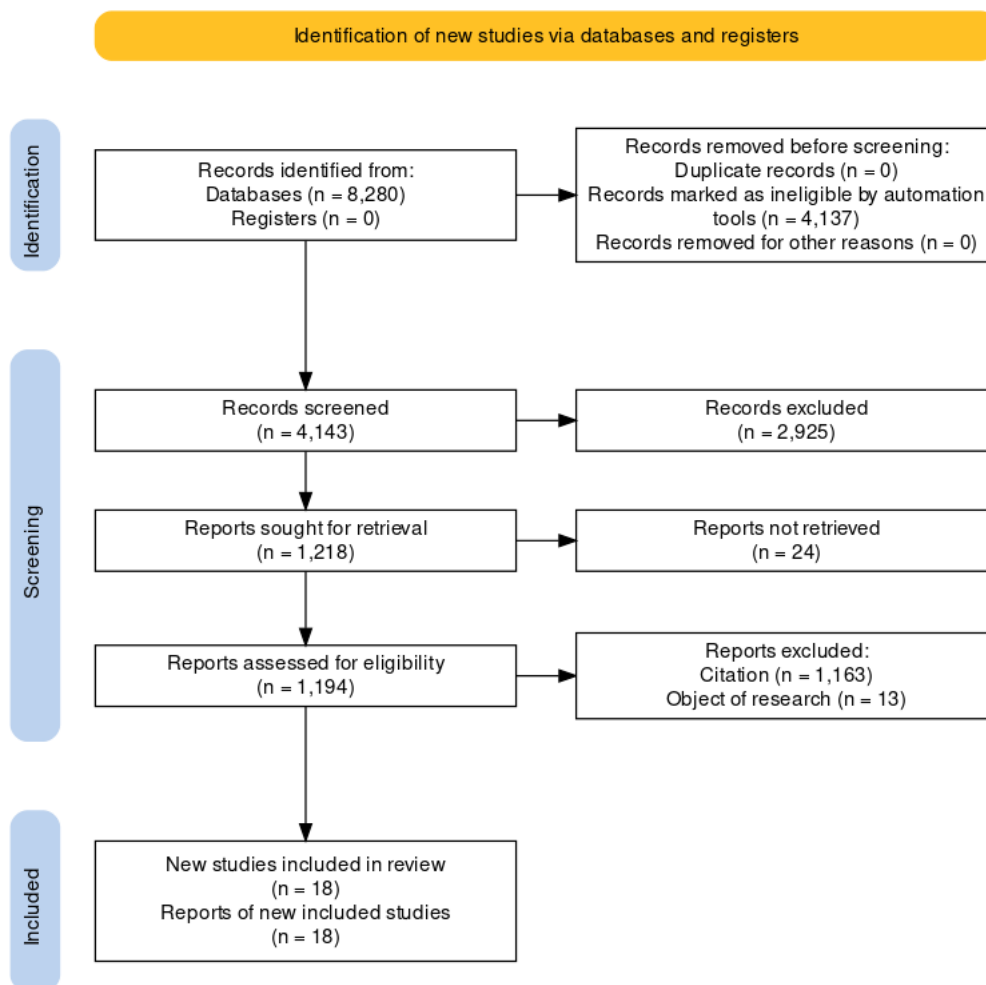


Figure 1 Prisma methods.

2.6. Re-examination study

The re-examination study in this research employed qualitative synthesis. For this study, a total of 18 publications published in Scopus-indexed journals between 2018 and 2023 were selected for review (Brown et al., 2020). After selecting the papers, the procedure continued with two sequential steps. The initial phase involved exporting relevant metadata from Scopus to Microsoft Excel to facilitate a descriptive literature study (Brown et al., 2020). This analysis focused on the distribution of publications by year and field, as well as the application of tacit knowledge in organizational contexts (Gentile-Lüdecke et al., 2020). An analysis was conducted to observe the number of publications and publication trends over the past decade, with a focus on year-by-year basis (Smith et al., 2019).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Analytical framework

The analytical framework for this study, titled "A Systematic Literature Review of Tacit Knowledge in Organizations in the Past Decade," is meticulously designed to structure the review process and ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature (Ha et al., 2022). This framework begins with a clear definition of tacit knowledge and highlights its critical role in organizational contexts (Brown et al., 2020). Tacit knowledge, often described as the know-how embedded in individual experiences and actions, is essential for innovation and competitive advantage within organizations (Yusr et al., 2022). Understanding this distinction is crucial for identifying and categorizing studies that delve into various aspects of tacit knowledge, ensuring the review encompasses a wide range of perspectives and findings (Li, 2020).

To systematically capture the breadth of research on tacit knowledge in organizations over the past decade, the framework incorporates a robust set of inclusion and exclusion criteria that displayed at table 1 below (Ha et al., 2022).



Inclusion criteria focus on peer-reviewed articles published in reputable journals, written in English, and specifically addressing tacit knowledge within organizational settings (Shabbir and Gardezi, 2020). Exclusion criteria filter out non-empirical studies, duplicate publications, and articles outside the defined timeframe (Kang et al., 2023). This structured approach allows for a focused and relevant dataset, enhancing the reliability and validity of the review (Hu et al., 2024). Additionally, the framework employees advanced search strategies using Boolean operators and specific keywords such as "tacit knowledge," ensuring a comprehensive and systematic literature search (Li, 2020).

Table 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria for used journal article.

Internal Factors	External Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational Culture and Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational Trust • Cognitive Social Capital • Knowledge Quality • People Management System • Empowering Leadership • Frequency of Team Meetings 2. Knowledge and Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indwelling • Personal Knowledge • Reflection and Experience • Personal Competition • Psychological Sense of Ownership 3. Social Interaction and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive Social Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Play • Internal Collaboration • Learning Through Practice • Capability Development 4. Operational and Experiential Decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-functional Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal Contacts • Experience and Observation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational Capacity • Motivation to Share • Involvement in the Value Chain 5. Manager's Role and HR Limitations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Social Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Personal Interaction and Communication • Source Motivation and Recipient Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Support • Learning and Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community of Practice • Technology Support Culture • Organizational Approach 2. Social Networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerial Support • External Network • Knowledge Community 3. Technology Integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Technology for Representation • Interaction with Technology Developers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardization and Automation 4. Collaborative Dynamics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Interdependence and Social Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and Extrinsic Incentives • Information Technology and Business Environment

The final stage of the analytical framework involves a detailed synthesis of findings using meta-synthesis techniques (Thomas and Gupta, 2022). This method integrates qualitative insights from various studies, identifying patterns, themes, and relationships to provide a holistic understanding of tacit knowledge in organizations (Hoon, 2013). Meta-synthesis is particularly effective for exploring complex, context-dependent phenomena like tacit knowledge, as it allows for the synthesis of diverse findings into coherent, actionable insights (Harvey et al., 2021). By applying this rigorous analytical framework, the study not only confirms existing theories but also uncovers new insights and practical recommendations for managing tacit knowledge, thereby contributing significantly to both academic literature and practical management strategies (Liu et al., 2022).

3.2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for a systematic literature review on tacit knowledge within organizations is grounded in the examination of how tacit knowledge is identified, shared, and utilized to enhance organizational performance and innovation (Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal, 2019). Tacit knowledge, being inherently non-codified and deeply embedded in individual experiences, poses unique challenges for organizational knowledge management (Inkinen, 2020). Recent studies emphasize



the role of social interactions and organizational culture in facilitating the sharing of tacit knowledge (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2019). Additionally, the integration of technology and digital platforms has been highlighted as a critical factor in capturing and disseminating tacit knowledge within organizational contexts (Withers, 2020). These elements collectively form the foundation of the theoretical framework, which seeks to explore the dynamic processes and mechanisms that support the management of tacit knowledge in organizations (Hadjimichael and Tsoukas, 2019). The resume of grand theory used at this research as displayed at table 2 below.

Table 2 Grand theory.

Grand Theory	Authors
Social Capital Theory	(Van Bakel and Horak, 2024)
Social Cognitive Theory	(Luszczynska and Schwarzer, 2015)
Knowledge and Learning Theory	(Giannoukos, 2024)
Cooperation and Competition Theory	(Ricciardi et al., 2022)
Grounded Theory	(Cepellos and Tonelli, 2020)
Social Capital Theory	(Aslam et al., 2013)
Organizational Knowledge Creation Theory	(Schulze and Hoegl, 2008)
Trust Theory	(Isaeva et al., 2020)
Affordance Theory	(Jorba and López-Silva, 2024)
Business Process Theory	(Szelągowski and Lupeikiene, 2020)
Knowledge-Based View Theory	(Stoian et al., 2024)
Resource-Based View Theory	(Arifin and Dionysus, 2020)
Resource-based View Theory	(Mailani et al., 2024)
Knowledge Management Theory	(Idrees et al., 2023)

Furthermore, the theoretical framework addresses the impact of leadership styles and organizational structures on the effectiveness of tacit knowledge management (Khan et al., 2024). Transformational leadership has been identified as a significant driver in promoting an environment conducive to tacit knowledge sharing (Ha et al., 2022). The framework also considers the influence of organizational learning mechanisms, such as communities of practice and mentorship programs, in fostering an atmosphere where tacit knowledge can be freely exchanged and leveraged for competitive advantage (Zhang et al., 2021). By synthesizing these perspectives, the framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that enable the effective management of tacit knowledge within organizations, offering a robust foundation for subsequent empirical investigations (Berraies et al., 2021)

Social Capital Theory is one of the theories most widely used in discussing tacit knowledge in organizations (Faraj et al., 2016; Ganguly et al., 2019; Hu and Randel, 2014). Social Capital Theory posits that the networks of relationships among individuals and organizations play a crucial role in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge (Göksel and Aydıntan, 2017). Tacit knowledge, which is deeply embedded in individual experiences and contexts, benefits significantly from the social interactions and trust that are central to social capital (Li et al., 2022). The theory suggests that robust social networks facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge by providing the trust, norms, and channels necessary for individuals to feel comfortable sharing their unarticulated insights and skills (Wang and Noe, 2019). Recent studies highlight that organizations leveraging high levels of social capital are more effective at harnessing and transferring tacit knowledge, thereby fostering innovation and maintaining competitive advantage (Brown and Duguid, 2019). This is because social capital encourages collaborative behaviors and open communication, which are essential for the exchange of implicit knowledge that is not easily codified (David et al., 2023). Moreover, the presence of strong social capital within organizations enhances employee engagement and loyalty, further promoting a culture of continuous knowledge sharing and improvement (Jiang and Xu, 2020).

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the importance of interactions among individuals, environment, and behavior in the process of learning and personality development (Chuang et al., 2016). SCT proposes that humans learn through observation, imitation, and modeling, where individuals observe and mimic behaviors of others they perceive as models. This process involves the formation of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior patterns through direct experience and social influence. Knowledge and Learning Theory complements SCT by exploring how individuals and organizations acquire, process, and apply knowledge (Pyrko et al., 2017). It encompasses various theoretical perspectives, including cognitive theories that focus on mental processes like memory, reasoning, and problem-solving, and socio-cultural theories that emphasize the social and cultural contexts shaping learning. This theory posits that learning involves both explicit (codified and formalized) and tacit (unarticulated and experiential) knowledge, which are acquired through interactions with others, experience, and reflection. Knowledge is seen as dynamic, evolving through continuous interaction between individuals, their environments, and social structures.

Cooperation and Competition Theory further extends these insights by examining the interplay between collaborative behaviors and competitive dynamics within organizational and societal contexts (Hernaus et al., 2019). It posits that while competition drives innovation and efficiency by incentivizing individuals and organizations to strive for superiority, cooperation fosters synergistic relationships that enable knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and collective problem-solving. This theory emphasizes that a balance between cooperation and competition is essential for sustainable development and organizational success, as cooperation mitigates the negative consequences of intense competition while harnessing its benefits.

Grounded Theory, a research methodology predominantly employed in the social sciences, aims to develop theories that are closely tied to systematically collected and analyzed data (Szalavetz, 2019). This innovative approach, introduced by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s, emphasizes the generation of theory through the iterative process of data collection and analysis, allowing for the emergence of patterns and concepts directly from the data itself. By continuously comparing data and refining categories, Grounded Theory ensures that the resulting theoretical frameworks are robust, contextually relevant, and grounded in empirical evidence, thus providing valuable insights and enhancing the understanding of complex social phenomena.

Organizational Knowledge Creation Theory, developed by Ikujiro Nonaka and his colleagues, explores how organizations generate, disseminate, and utilize knowledge to foster innovation and sustain competitive advantage (Bruyn et al., 2020). Central to this theory is the emphasis on the dynamic and continuous nature of knowledge creation, which involves an ongoing interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge through social interactions and processes within the organization. By facilitating the conversion of individual knowledge into organizational knowledge, and vice versa, this theory highlights the importance of a supportive organizational culture and structure that enables effective knowledge sharing and utilization. Ultimately, the theory underscores that an organization's ability to innovate and remain competitive hinges on its capacity to continuously create and leverage knowledge in response to evolving internal and external environments.

The Knowledge-based View (KBV) theory is an extension of the Resource-based View (RBV) in strategic management and organizational theory. It posits that knowledge is the most strategically significant resource of a firm, driving its ability to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Muthuveloo et al., 2017).

Trust theory is a term that encompasses various concepts depending on the context in which it is used. In aerospace engineering, it pertains to the principles and mechanisms by which engines generate thrust to propel vehicles, emphasizing the interaction between mass flow and exhaust velocity (Cooper et al., 2024). In the field of structural geology, thrust theory refers to the study of compressional tectonics, explaining the processes that cause large-scale crustal deformation and the formation of thrust faults. Additionally, in biomechanics, it may describe the forces and motions involved in the propulsion of organisms, such as the thrust generated by the limbs or fins during locomotion. This multifaceted nature of thrust theory underscores its interdisciplinary applications and the need for contextual specificity when discussing its principles and implications.

Affordance Theory, originally proposed by psychologist James J. Gibson in the 1970s, suggests that the environment offers various opportunities for action to an organism (Majewska and Szulczyńska, 2014). These opportunities, or "affordances," are directly perceived and do not depend on the individual's knowledge or experience. In other words, affordances are the actionable properties between the world and an actor (a person or animal).

Business Process Theory focuses on understanding, designing, analyzing, and improving the various processes that constitute the operations of a business (Oyadiwa, 2022). These processes are the sequences of activities or tasks that produce a product or service, often involving multiple stakeholders, resources, and systems. The theory aims to streamline these processes to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory is a framework in strategic management that focuses on the resources and capabilities of a firm as the primary determinants of its competitive advantage and performance (Szalavetz, 2019). This theory, popularized by scholars such as Jay Barney in the 1990s, posits that the unique resources and capabilities a firm possesses can be a source of sustained competitive advantage if they are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (often abbreviated as VRIN).

Knowledge Management Theory encompasses the strategies and processes designed to identify, capture, structure, value, leverage, and share an organization's intellectual assets (Смирнова and Smirnova, 2016). It aims to improve organizational performance by enabling individuals and teams to create, share, and apply knowledge more effectively. The theory is grounded in the understanding that knowledge is a crucial organizational resource that can provide a competitive advantage.

3.3. Descriptive analysis

This section analyzes the descriptive statistics of the selected papers during the review process (Zhang et al., 2023). The analysis examines factors such as the year of publication, industry focus, number of citations, publication journals, and research methodologies used in the selected studies (Zhang et al., 2022). Figure 2 illustrates the trajectory of tacit knowledge within focused organizations from 2014 to 2023. This data is derived from annual publication counts but is limited to studies that

received significant citations (Ha et al., 2022). The years 2016, 2017, and 2019 are identified as having the highest number of papers with high citation counts, defined as having more than 100 citations per article (Liu et al., 2022).

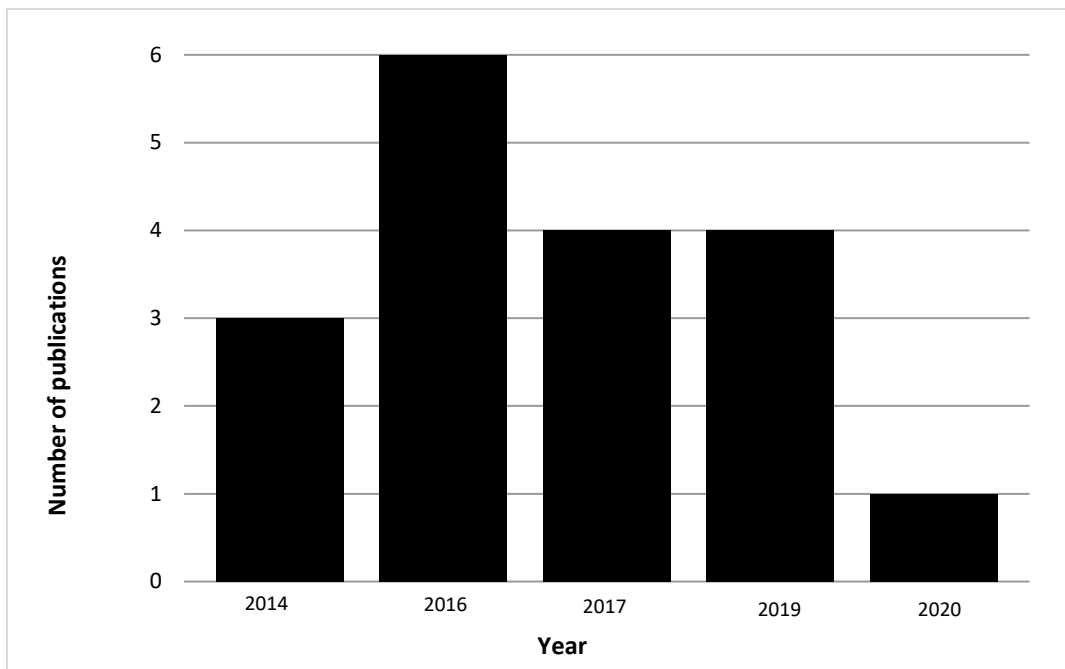


Figure 2 Tacit knowledge publications in organizations per year. Source: Scopus.

3.4. Organizational basis

The results of organizations implementing tacit knowledge are depicted in Figure 5. Organizations are categorized into seven sectors: manufacturing, SMEs, technology, mining, services, industry, and healthcare. Several articles are classified under the "others" category due to the unclear specification of the unit of analysis in the conducted studies (Xu et al., 2022). From the selected research, three studies cover organizations in the manufacturing and SME sectors (Wang et al., 2024). Additionally, two studies each cover organizations in the technology, mining, services, and industry sectors (Wang et al., 2020). Only one study pertains to the healthcare sector, and the remaining three studies cover sectors not specified in detail (Kucharska, 2017). Based on the graph shown in Figure 3, it can be concluded that the adoption of tacit knowledge is more prevalent in organizations based in the manufacturing and SME sectors compared to those based in the technology, mining, services, industry, and healthcare sectors (Thomas and Gupta, 2022).

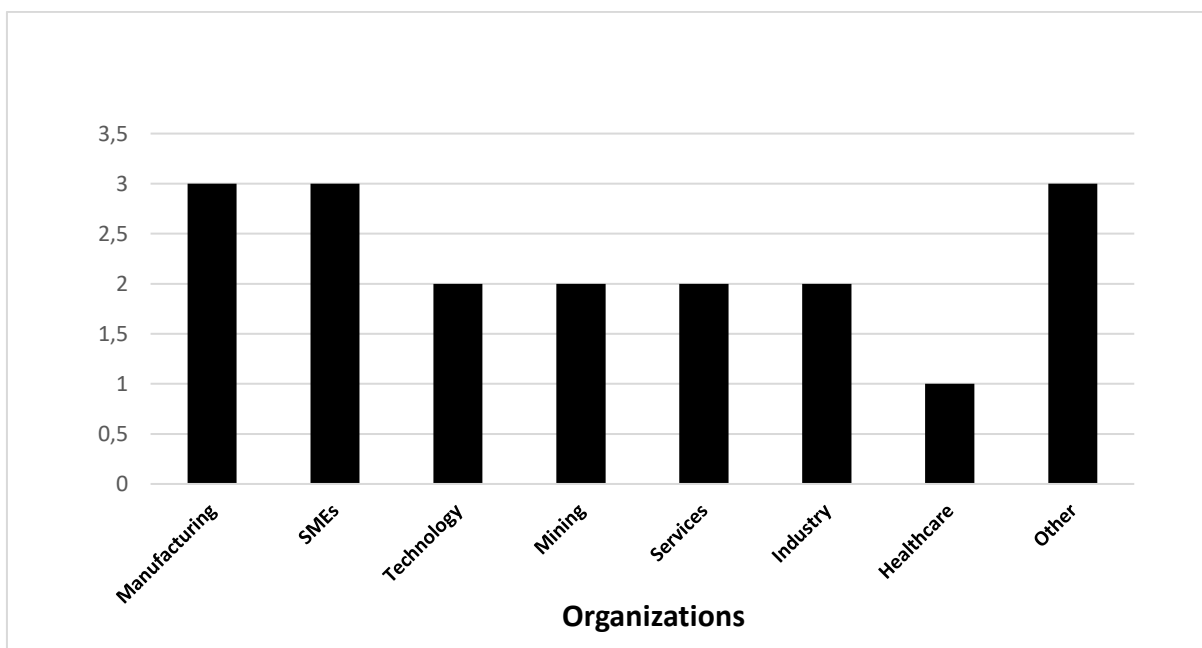


Figure 3 Tacit knowledge implementation in organizations. Source: Scopus.



Journal Basis. The "Journal of Knowledge Management" has had the highest number of publications in the last 10 years, with a total of four articles published related to the research theme of "tacit knowledge" between 2014 and 2023 (Ha et al., 2022). Following this, the "Journal of Business Research" ranks as the second-highest with a total of three published articles (Thomas and Gupta, 2022). Additionally, several other journals have each published one article, as detailed in Table 3 (Liu et al., 2022; Thomas and Gupta, 2022).

Table 3 Journal publication frequent.

Journal	No. of Publications
Journal of Knowledge Management	4
Journal of Business Research	3
Journal of Management	1
Human Relations	1
Information Systems Research	1
Technological Forecasting and Social Change	1
Journal of Interactive Marketing	1
Group and Organization Management	1
Asia Pacific Management Review	1
Organization Science	1
Strategic Management Journal	1
Journal of Business Logistics	1
Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development	1

Distribution of Research. An intriguing finding from this analysis is the distribution of studies related to tacit knowledge over the past decade, from 2014 to 2023, with the majority conducted in Europe, followed by Asia and America (Li and Zhao, 2023). Other studies did not specifically mention the objects of their research, as illustrated in Figure 4 (Ferreira et al., 2022). In categorizing the distribution of research, the authors chose to group the studies by continent rather than by country due to the large number of locations mentioned (Adesina, 2024). Consequently, the authors opted to describe the distribution using continental areas instead of specifying countries (Zhou et al., 2022).

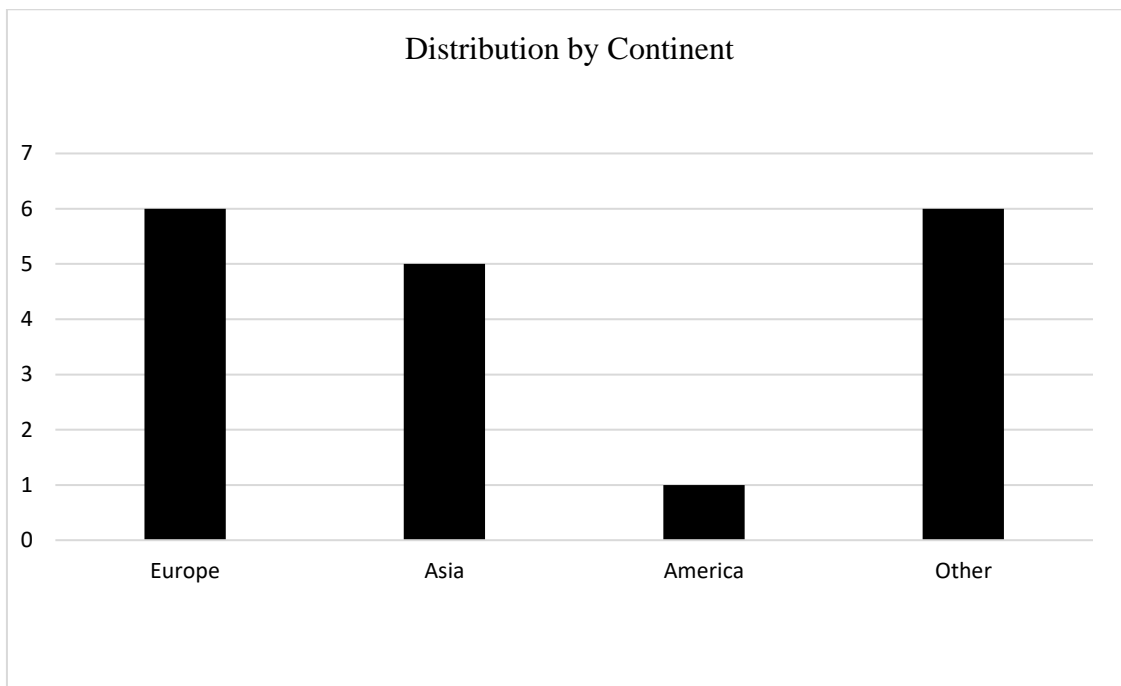


Figure 4 Distribution of articles by Continent.

3.5. Based on citations

The minimum threshold for selecting papers in this review was set at 100 citations per paper (Wang et al., 2022). The article authored by Ganguly et al. (2019) received the highest number of citations among the articles in the selected column, with a total of 305 citations (Choudhury and Routray, 2024). Table 4 provides a brief overview of the 10 articles that received the highest number of citations, including information about the authors and the year of publication (Liu and Zhu, 2020).



Table 4 Most often reference publications.

No.	Authors	Source Title	Cited by
1	(Ganguly et al., 2019)	Journal of Knowledge Management	305
2	(Chuang et al., 2016)	Journal of Management	283
3	(Pyrko et al., 2017)	Human Relations	267
4	(Hernaus et al., 2019)	Journal of Knowledge Management	204
5	(Faraj et al., 2016)	Information Systems Research	197
6	(Szalavetz, 2019)	Technological Forecasting and Social Change	174
7	(Bruyn et al., 2020)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	167
8	(Mirvis et al., 2016)	Journal of Business Research	161
9	(Hu and Randel, 2014)	Group and Organization Management	158
10	(Muthuveloo et al., 2017)	Asia Pacific Management Review	141

3.5.1. Topic 1: Tools and techniques

In the review of 18 selected studies, 12 studies, or approximately 67%, were categorized as quantitative research (Zhang et al., 2021). These studies predominantly utilized statistical analysis tools and software such as SPSS and AMOS to test hypotheses and conceptual models (Zhang et al., 2022). This quantitative approach enables researchers to collect and analyze large-scale numerical data, yielding findings that are generalizable and statistically valid (Wang et al., 2022). Additionally, methods such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and multiple regression are frequently employed to examine relationships between variables and identify determinants influencing specific phenomena within business and management contexts (Tian et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, only 33% of the data were qualitative, reflecting that although this approach is less dominant, it still plays a crucial role in providing deep insights into social contexts and individual behaviors. Qualitative research typically employs data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and content analysis, allowing researchers to explore respondents' subjective perspectives and interpretations (Pyo et al., 2021). Thus, the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in these studies offers a comprehensive and rich view of the researched topics, facilitating a more holistic understanding and cross-validation of findings (Florido-Benítez and Fernández, 2022). The visualization for summary of methodological approach used at the review are displayed at Figure 5.

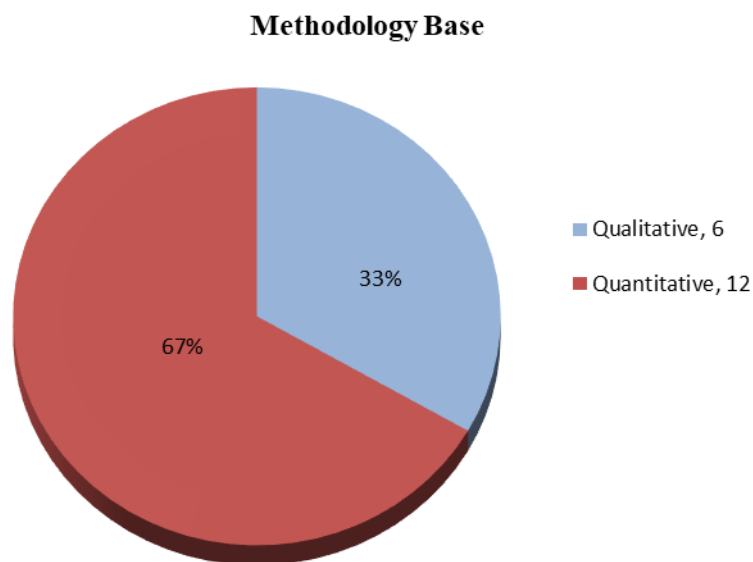


Figure 5 Articles categorized by research methodology distribution.

3.5.2. Topic 2: The influence of internal and external factors on tacit knowledge in organizations

Internal factors play a significant role in the formation and management of tacit knowledge within organization (Ma et al., 2021). An organizational culture that supports collaboration and collective learning can enhance the accumulation of tacit knowledge among employees (Ma et al., 2021). Additionally, inclusive and transformational leadership styles facilitate the sharing of implicit knowledge, as such leaders tend to encourage openness and innovation among their members 8/22/2025 9:30:00 AM. A flexible and less bureaucratic organizational structure also enables smoother knowledge flow, unimpeded by rigid hierarchies (Jia et al., 2022).



External factors also significantly influence tacit knowledge within organizations. Market dynamics and intense competition compel organizations to continuously adapt and innovate, thereby fostering the formation of tacit knowledge (Oh and Kim, 2022). Furthermore, interactions with suppliers, customers, and business partners enable the transfer of valuable implicit knowledge through collaboration and social networks (Nielsen et al., 2020). Government policies and regulations that support research and development also contribute to enriching tacit knowledge by providing incentives for organizations to explore and develop new knowledge (Gao and Zhang, 2023).

The interaction between internal and external factors often results in synergies that enrich tacit knowledge within organizations (Li et al., 2022). For instance, when an organizational culture that fosters innovation is combined with external pressures to adapt to market changes, organizations tend to be more effective in developing and applying tacit knowledge (Parente et al., 2022). Furthermore, visionary leadership can leverage external opportunities to integrate new knowledge into the organization, thereby strengthening the basis of tacit knowledge (Thomas and Gupta, 2022). Thus, both internal and external factors not only contribute individually but also interact to enhance the organization's ability to manage tacit knowledge effectively (Jiang et al., 2020).

Organizational support for tacit knowledge is crucial for creating an innovative and competitive work environment (Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2021). Tacit knowledge, which encompasses skills, experiences, and insights acquired through individual practices, is often challenging to articulate and transfer explicitly (Rodríguez-Aceves et al., 2023). To facilitate the sharing of tacit knowledge, organizations need to create a culture that supports collaboration and open communication (Liu and Zhu, 2020). Strategies such as mentoring, experiential training, and arrangements that encourage informal interactions can aid in the transfer of tacit knowledge (Ha et al., 2022). For example, structured mentoring programs enable senior employees to share their knowledge and experiences with new employees, thereby strengthening organizational learning overall (Cheng et al., 2022).

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Additionally, information technology and communication (ICT) also play a crucial role in supporting tacit knowledge within organizations (Liu and Zhu, 2021). Collaborative platforms such as intranet, knowledge management systems, and internal social media can extend the reach of tacit knowledge sharing across the organization. Research indicates that the use of ICT can enhance employees' ability to access and share tacit knowledge, particularly in geographically dispersed work environments (Wang et al., 2022). Management support for investment in this technology is paramount to ensure that employees have the necessary tools for effective knowledge sharing (Chen et al., 2015). Thus, the appropriate integration of ICT can strengthen an organization's capacity to manage and leverage tacit knowledge as a strategic resource (Zhou et al., 2022).

Tacit knowledge, or implicit knowledge, plays a crucial role in the development and growth of modern organizations. Tacit knowledge is often difficult to transfer due to its personal and contextual nature; however, its utilization can significantly enhance individual and organizational performance (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2019). The process of sharing (Boell and Cezec-Kecmanovic, 2019) tacit knowledge requires specific approaches, such as through social interactions and shared practices, which can foster innovation and competitive advantage (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2019).

The use of tacit knowledge can lead to increased innovation within organizations. A study by (Zhang et al., 2020) demonstrates that when team members share their experiences and intuitions, they can develop creative and innovative solutions that had not been previously considered. Furthermore, organizations that successfully create environments encouraging tacit knowledge sharing tend to be more adaptive to market and technological changes (Irfan et al., 2022).

In the context of leadership, tacit knowledge contributes to better decision-making. Leaders with a deep understanding of organizational dynamics and rich implicit knowledge can make more effective strategic decisions. Tacit knowledge enables leaders to anticipate challenges and capitalize on opportunities more effectively compared to explicit knowledge, which is often limited to open data and information (Chen et al., 2022).

Additionally, tacit knowledge plays a crucial role in developing employees' skills and competencies. Through mentoring and experience-based training processes, employees can absorb implicit knowledge that is unwritten yet essential for high performance. Research shows that employees involved in mentoring programs tend to exhibit improvements in problem-solving skills and decision-making abilities (Huang and Pham, 2023).

4. Final Considerations

The primary objective of this research was to systematically review the literature on tacit knowledge in organizations and address the research questions. This study answers the first research question by providing an overview of the current state of research on tacit knowledge in organizations through descriptive statistics. The second research question is addressed by classifying the internal and external factors that influence tacit knowledge within organizations. This study has gathered the 18 most cited papers on tacit knowledge in organizations published in the last decade. Overall, the amount of research on tacit knowledge is predominantly focused on the manufacturing sector and SMEs. Therefore, it can be concluded that research on tacit knowledge is highly relevant to organizations in the manufacturing and SME sectors.

Descriptive statistics reveal that most tacit knowledge research is applied in Europe. Although other continents have contributed, European researchers play a significant role, indicating a gap in the study of tacit knowledge in other parts of the world. Future research should consider investigating the application of tacit knowledge in other continents and identifying the associated challenges and ways to address them.

Research on tacit knowledge in organizations has largely focused on manufacturing and SMEs. Additionally, a small portion of the research has focused on technology, mining, services, and industry. Conversely, research in the healthcare sector has been largely neglected, as evidenced by the relatively small number of studies on tacit knowledge in this sector. Future research could consider this sector separately and observe its differences or similarities with previous literature. Organizations can play a crucial role in highlighting the importance of tacit knowledge to drive organizational improvement. Future studies could explore how organizations can contribute to developing the role of tacit knowledge in their operational processes.

This paper has identified internal and external factors that contribute to the development of tacit knowledge within organizations to answer the third research question. Internal factors include an organizational culture that supports collaboration, open communication, and appreciation for learning, which can create an environment where tacit knowledge can be easily shared and integrated. Inspirational leadership and policies that facilitate mentoring and experience-based training are also key elements in strengthening tacit knowledge. Externally, market dynamics and technological developments compel organizations to continuously adapt and innovate, prompting individuals to utilize and develop their tacit knowledge. Relationships with business partners, customers, and professional communities can also be valuable sources for the exchange of unwritten knowledge, enriching the organization's overall knowledge base. The fourth research question regarding the outcomes of tacit knowledge in organizations has been discussed.

Ethical Considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare no conflict of interest.

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