Influence of Standardised Knowledge Sharing Practices on Organisational Decision-Making at the Norwegian Refugee Council

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Abstract

Norwegian Refugee Council Somalia experiences 50% longer emergency response times than sector standards, with decision-making delays directly impacting 1.2 million beneficiaries due to deteriorated knowledge-sharing systems where 40% of sharing attempts fail. This study investigated how standardised knowledge-sharing practices influence organizational decision-making effectiveness at NRC Somalia. Guided by Social Exchange Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Information Processing Theory, the research examined systematic knowledge exchange mechanisms' impact on decision outcomes. The study was conducted at NRC Somalia offices in Mogadishu, South Central Somalia, Puntland, and Somaliland using a cross-sectional survey design. The target population comprised 100 staff across five organizational levels. Census sampling eliminated sampling error. Data collection utilized structured questionnaires, achieving 89% response rate (n=89), semi-structured interviews with 18 key informants, and 67 organizational documents. Content validity was established through expert review, and reliability through Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha>0.70$). Analysis employed descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation using SPSS v27. Findings revealed that only 14.6% agreed that tracking mechanisms existed, 28.1% confirmed effective digital platform utilization, while 57.3% reported delayed critical decisions, and 66.3% experienced bureaucratic delays. Correlation analysis demonstrated a strong positive relationship between knowledge sharing and decision-making effectiveness (r=.72, p<.001). The study concludes that informal WhatsApp networks compensate for failed formal systems while hierarchical filtering prevents critical knowledge from reaching decision-makers. Recommendations include: NRC management implementing unified mobile-optimized platforms; IT department establishing direct field-to-management channels; operations unit developing security-compliant protocols; monitoring unit creating tracking mechanisms; HR streamlining decision protocols. The study's novelty lies in quantifying knowledge sharing's predictive power in humanitarian contexts, demonstrating that addressing sharing deficiencies could improve decision-making effectiveness by 52%, ultimately enhancing humanitarian response capabilities for vulnerable populations.

Keywords: *Knowledge sharing, decision-making effectiveness, humanitarian organizations, organizational performance, Somalia*

1. Introduction

Organizational decision-making constitutes a fundamental cognitive and administrative process through which institutions systematically evaluate alternatives, assess consequences, and select optimal courses of action to achieve predetermined objectives within resource constraints and environmental uncertainties (Simon, 1997). In contemporary humanitarian operations, the complexity of decision-making processes has intensified exponentially due to the convergence of multiple factors, including operational volatility, stakeholder multiplicity, resource scarcity, and temporal urgency that characterize crisis response environments (Comes et al., 2020). The theoretical foundations of organizational decision-making draw from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including cognitive psychology, organizational behavior, systems theory, and information sciences, each contributing unique insights into how organizations process information, evaluate alternatives, and implement choices under conditions of bounded rationality (Kahneman, 2011).

Within humanitarian contexts, decision-making effectiveness transcends traditional organizational performance metrics to encompass life-critical dimensions including response timeliness, resource optimization, beneficiary impact, and adaptive capacity in dynamically evolving crises (Van Wassenhove, 2006; Altay & Labonte, 2014). The multidimensional nature of humanitarian decision-making requires sophisticated integration of strategic alignment, evidence-based assessment, stakeholder participation, contextual adaptation, and rapid execution capabilities that collectively determine intervention success or failure (Kovács & Spens, 2007). Empirical evidence from complex humanitarian emergencies demonstrates that decision-making effectiveness directly correlates with mortality reduction, morbidity prevention, and community resilience enhancement, establishing it as a critical determinant of humanitarian outcome achievement (Sphere Association, 2018).

The emergence of standardised knowledge sharing practices as catalytic enablers of organizational decision-making represents a paradigmatic shift in understanding how institutions leverage collective intelligence to navigate complexity and uncertainty (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Grant, 1996). Standardised knowledge sharing practices encompass systematically designed organizational mechanisms, including formal protocols, technological platforms, structural arrangements, and cultural norms that facilitate the capture, codification, transfer, and application of both explicit and tacit knowledge across organizational boundaries (Argote & Ingram, 2000; Alavi & Leidner, 2001). These practices transform fragmented individual expertise into accessible organizational capabilities through structured processes that reduce information asymmetries, minimize knowledge redundancies, and accelerate learning cycles (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

Contemporary scholarship establishes robust empirical linkages between standardised knowledge sharing practices and enhanced organizational decision-making capabilities across diverse operational contexts. Meta-analytical evidence from 217 multinational organizations demonstrates that institutions with mature knowledge sharing infrastructures achieve 27-35% improvements in decision accuracy, 31-42% reductions in decision cycle times, and 23-29% enhancements in decision implementation success rates compared to organizations with ad-hoc

sharing approaches (Ahmad & Karim, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). In humanitarian-specific contexts, the relationship intensifies further, with systematic knowledge sharing practices correlating with 31% faster emergency response initiation, 38% improved resource allocation efficiency, and 44% enhanced inter-agency coordination effectiveness (UNOCHA, 2022; ICRC, 2021). These quantitative improvements translate into tangible humanitarian outcomes, including expanded beneficiary reach, reduced duplication of efforts, and strengthened operational resilience in volatile security environments characteristic of contemporary crisis response operations.

1.1 Problem Statement

Humanitarian organizations operating in complex emergencies require decision-making capabilities characterized by rapid response, evidence-based assessment, and adaptive implementation to effectively serve vulnerable populations (UNOCHA, 2023). International humanitarian standards mandate 48-hour emergency response cycles, 90% program implementation efficiency, and systematic knowledge utilization to optimize resource allocation and maximize beneficiary impact. However, the Norwegian Refugee Council Somalia demonstrates critical deviations from these benchmarks, with emergency response decisions averaging 72 hours, representing a 50% degradation from sector standards, directly compromising service delivery to 1.2 million beneficiaries across five operational regions experiencing acute humanitarian needs. The deterioration of NRC Somalia's standardised knowledge sharing infrastructure constitutes the primary impediment to effective decision-making, manifesting through fragmented information systems, inadequate knowledge exchange protocols, and technological failures affecting 40% of sharing attempts. Field teams cannot access operational insights from other regions, program sectors operate in information silos, and hierarchical filtering distorts critical knowledge before reaching decision-makers. These systemic deficiencies create decision-making bottlenecks where managers lack timely access to contextual information, forcing choices based on incomplete data that compromise intervention effectiveness. Despite theoretical recognition of knowledge sharing's criticality in humanitarian operations, empirical evidence quantifying its specific influence on decision-making effectiveness in volatile operational environments remains absent, necessitating systematic investigation to develop evidence-based interventions.

1.2 Research Objective

To investigate the influence of standardised knowledge sharing practices on organizational decision-making effectiveness at the Norwegian Refugee Council, Somalia.

2. Literature Review

Knowledge sharing represents deliberate exchange of information, skills, and expertise among organizational units to create collective intellectual capital, encompassing both explicit (codified) and tacit (experiential) knowledge (Holste & Zuo, 2023; Vătămănescu et al., 2021). Ahmad and Karim (2020) examined 217 multinational organizations, finding that robust knowledge sharing infrastructures led to improved decision outcomes with a significant positive correlation (r=0.68, p<0.001) between sharing practices and decision quality metrics. Wang et al. (2021) documented that formal knowledge sharing protocols improved decision accuracy by 27%, while Sivarajah and Irani (2022) found AI-enabled knowledge management systems improved decision speed by 64% while maintaining quality standards.

African contexts reveal unique considerations for knowledge-sharing practices. Osei-Kyei and Chan (2021) surveyed 126 organizations across Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya, finding that flatter organizational structures facilitated 37% more cross-functional knowledge flow than hierarchical structures (Omotayo & Babalola, 2020; Asiedu & Ndlovu, 2022). Cultural dimensions significantly influence sharing patterns, with collectivist cultures showing higher spontaneous exchange rates but lower documentation rates (Mutambo & Weru, 2022; Mboya & Juma, 2021). Research on Somalia remains limited but emerging. Hassan and Sheikh (2021) studied 23 Mogadishu organizations, finding that informal knowledge networks played more significant roles than formal documentation systems (Ahmed et al., 2023; Farah & Ibrahim, 2022; Abdullahi, 2022). These studies highlight unique considerations, including oral traditions, clan-based networks, and regional variations in knowledge exchange practices, providing valuable insights for humanitarian organizations operating in Somalia.

2.1 Theoretical Review

Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) provides a foundational framework for understanding standardised knowledge sharing as a reciprocal exchange where individuals share based on cost-benefit calculations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Cook et al., 2013). Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 1988) emphasizes that sharing depends on trust-based social relationships and network connections (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). Information Processing Theory (Galbraith, 1973) conceptualizes organizations as information processing systems requiring standardised sharing to match processing capacity with requirements (Burton & Obel, 2004). These frameworks collectively explain motivational, relational, and systematic dimensions of knowledge sharing in complex operational environments.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to examine relationships between variables at a specific point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). The target population consisted of 100 NRC Somalia staff across five organizational levels: country management (10), program specialists/managers (20), support units (20), operation managers/coordinators (20), and field staff (30). Census sampling was employed to eliminate sampling error and ensure comprehensive representation. Data collection utilized structured questionnaires with 5-point Likert scales measuring standardised knowledge sharing practices (12 items) and decision-making effectiveness (13 items). Content validity was established through expert review, while reliability testing achieved Cronbach's alpha coefficients of $\alpha=0.88$ for knowledge sharing and $\alpha=0.91$ for decision-making effectiveness, exceeding the 0.70 threshold. Quantitative analysis employed descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation using SPSS v27, with significance set at $p<0.05$. Semi-structured interviews with 18 key informants and analysis of 67 organizational documents provided qualitative data analyzed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2021) framework.

4. Results and Discussion

The reliability of data collected was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure internal consistency before analysis. Standardised knowledge sharing practices achieved $\alpha = 0.88$, while organisational decision-making effectiveness demonstrated $\alpha = 0.91$, both exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Field, 2020), confirming data reliability for subsequent analysis. Of the 100 questionnaires administered to NRC Somalia staff, 89 were returned, yielding an 89% response rate. This high response rate enhanced confidence in the

representativeness of findings, consistent with similar humanitarian studies (Ahmad & Karim, 2020; Hassan & Ali, 2021).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 key informants, including country management (4), program specialists (5), support unit staff (4), operation managers (3), and field staff (2). Interviews averaged 45 minutes and were conducted using encrypted video conferencing to accommodate security constraints and geographic distribution. The interview guide focused on four thematic areas: knowledge sharing mechanisms, organizational culture around information exchange, barriers to effective sharing, and decision-making processes.

Document analysis examined 67 organizational documents spanning the past three years, including policy documents (15), meeting minutes (23), operational reports (18), and communication records (11). Documents were selected based on relevance to knowledge sharing practices and decision-making processes, authenticity verification through organizational endorsement, and temporal currency within operational contexts.

Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2021) framework identified five primary themes: fragmented sharing ecosystems, security-driven compartmentalization, hierarchical knowledge filtering, informal network adaptation, and technology-culture misalignment. Member checking with 12 participants verified thematic accuracy and interpretive validity, while triangulation across interviews, documents, and quantitative data enhanced credibility.

4.1 Background Information of Respondents

Gender distribution showed balanced representation with 46 male staff (51.7%) and 43 female staff (48.3%), contrasting with Li and Thompson's (2023) findings that most humanitarian organizations were female-dominated, but aligning with Ahmad et al.'s (2020) documentation of increasing gender balance in humanitarian organizations.

Educational qualifications revealed high professional competency levels, with 37 staff (41.6%) holding Master's degrees and 34 (38.2%) possessing Bachelor's degrees. Four staff (4.5%) held doctoral qualifications, while 13 (14.6%) had diplomas and one (1.1%) held certificates. The finding that 83.4% possessed bachelor's level or higher qualifications indicates strong professional development initiatives and educational standards consistent with Hameed et al.'s (2021) findings in similar humanitarian organizations, suggesting these institutions embrace career advancement and in-service training.

Organizational tenure analysis revealed a relatively young workforce requiring mentoring support. Twenty staff (22.5%) had less than one year experience, 28 staff (31.5%) had 1-3 years' experience, 25 staff (28.1%) had 4-6 years' experience, 12 staff (13.5%) had 7-10 years' experience, and only 4 staff (4.5%) had more than 10 years' experience. This pattern indicates that 54% of staff were relatively new to the organization (less than 3 years), while only 18% possessed extensive experience (over 7 years). These findings contrast with Ibrahim et al.'s (2023) and Hassan and Sheikh's (2021) research documenting adequate working experience in humanitarian organizations, but align with Osei-Kyei and Chan's (2021) emphasis on securing experienced staff for effective knowledge management.

4.2 Organisational Decision-Making Effectiveness at NRC Somalia

Organizational decision-making effectiveness, measured across multiple dimensions including decision quality, timeliness, and outcomes, revealed significant challenges requiring attention. The construct was assessed using 13 indicators measuring strategic alignment, evidence-based

approaches, stakeholder inclusion, alternative consideration, emergency responsiveness, and resource allocation efficiency. The findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Organisational Decision-Making Effectiveness

Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Mean	Std. Dev
Decisions are strategically aligned with organizational goals	3 (3.4%)	18 (20.2%)	34 (38.2%)	28 (31.5%)	6 (6.7%)	3.18	0.96
Decision-making is based on available evidence	5 (5.6%)	24 (27.0%)	30 (33.7%)	25 (28.1%)	5 (5.6%)	3.01	1.02
Stakeholders are adequately included in decision processes	8 (9.0%)	31 (34.8%)	24 (27.0%)	22 (24.7%)	4 (4.5%)	2.81	1.08
Alternative options are thoroughly considered	9 (10.1%)	33 (37.1%)	22 (24.7%)	20 (22.5%)	5 (5.6%)	2.76	1.13
Emergency decisions are made promptly when needed	6 (6.7%)	22 (24.7%)	32 (36.0%)	25 (28.1%)	4 (4.5%)	2.99	0.98
There is a good balance between thoroughness and speed	11 (12.4%)	34 (38.2%)	23 (25.8%)	18 (20.2%)	3 (3.4%)	2.64	1.06
Critical decisions are made within appropriate timeframes	15 (16.9%)	36 (40.4%)	17 (19.1%)	17 (19.1%)	4 (4.5%)	2.54	1.16
Bureaucratic delays are minimized in decision processes	19 (21.3%)	40 (44.9%)	14 (15.7%)	13 (14.6%)	3 (3.4%)	2.34	1.11
Decisions adequately address beneficiary needs	4 (4.5%)	26 (29.2%)	31 (34.8%)	24 (27.0%)	4 (4.5%)	2.98	0.96
Intervention success rates are satisfactory	6 (6.7%)	28 (31.5%)	26 (29.2%)	24 (27.0%)	5 (5.6%)	2.93	1.04
Decisions show good adaptability to local contexts	7 (7.9%)	29 (32.6%)	25 (28.1%)	23 (25.8%)	5 (5.6%)	2.88	1.07
Organizational objectives are consistently achieved	9 (10.1%)	33 (37.1%)	22 (24.7%)	21 (23.6%)	4 (4.5%)	2.75	1.09
Resource allocation decisions are efficient	12 (13.5%)	38 (42.7%)	18 (20.2%)	17 (19.1%)	4 (4.5%)	2.58	1.12

The findings reveal concerning patterns in decision-making effectiveness across multiple dimensions. Strategic alignment showed mixed results, with 34 staff (38.2%) remaining neutral and only 34 (38.2%) agreeing that decisions were strategically aligned. Evidence-based

decision-making demonstrated gaps, with 29 staff (32.6%) disagreeing and 30 (33.7%) remaining neutral about evidence utilization.

Qualitative data revealed systemic information access barriers aligning with established humanitarian research. A senior program manager explained: *"We often make decisions in information vacuums because accessing relevant data requires navigating multiple disconnected systems."* This corroborates Comes (2016) and Altay and Labonte (2014), who identified information fragmentation as critical to humanitarian decision-making failures.

Stakeholder inclusion showed significant weakness, with 43.8% of staff disagreeing that stakeholders were adequately included, echoing Sandvik and Lohne's (2014) critique of top-down structures. An operations coordinator noted: *"Security protocols limit our ability to conduct extensive community consultations,"* paralleling Fast's (2014) findings on security-created participation barriers.

Decision timeliness revealed the most severe challenges: 57.3% disagreed about critical decision timeframes, while 66.3% cited bureaucratic delays. These findings support Bharosa et al.'s (2010) framework linking information fragmentation to decision delays. Participants described *"decision paralysis cycles"* where incomplete information triggers cascading delays, aligning with Gralla et al.'s (2016) findings that pursuing information completeness results in suboptimal timing.

The emergence of informal networks as compensatory mechanisms corroborates Ramalingam et al.'s (2013) and Stephenson's (2005) work. A senior field coordinator explained: *"Experienced staff know who to call and how to get critical information quickly through personal relationships."*

These findings extend Sturridge et al.'s (2023) by revealing specific mechanisms through which knowledge sharing inadequacies translate into decision-making challenges. Information fragmentation forced decisions without adequate evidence (52.8% affected), while systemic delays from multi-level approvals disconnected decision-makers from operational contexts (66.3% affected). Person-dependent informal networks partially compensated but remained unsustainable, confirming that humanitarian organizations lack adequate knowledge-sharing processes despite recognizing their critical importance.

These findings strongly align with recent humanitarian operations research. Sturridge et al. (2023) demonstrated that while humanitarians recognize knowledge sharing as essential for organizational efficiency, knowledge management processes in many humanitarian organizations remain inadequate. The qualitative findings extend this research by revealing specific mechanisms through which system inadequacies translate into decision-making challenges in volatile operational contexts.

4.3 Standardised Knowledge Sharing Practices and Organisational Decision-Making

The study sought to assess the current state of standardised knowledge sharing practices at NRC Somalia by examining five critical dimensions: regular knowledge sharing meetings, emergency protocols for critical information exchange, digital platform utilization, cross-regional knowledge exchanges, and tracking mechanisms for knowledge flow. These dimensions were selected based on established knowledge management frameworks that identify systematic sharing mechanisms as fundamental to organizational learning and adaptive capacity in complex operational environments (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Alavi & Leidner,

2001). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements describing the presence and effectiveness of these standardised practices using a five-point Likert scale. Table 2 presents the distribution of responses, means, and standard deviations for each dimension of standardised knowledge sharing practices.

Table 2: Standardised Knowledge Sharing Practices

Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Mean	Std. Dev
Regular knowledge-sharing meetings are conducted	5 (5.6%)	16 (18.0%)	26 (29.2%)	32 (36.0%)	10 (11.2%)	3.19	1.09
Emergency protocols for critical sharing exist	7 (7.9%)	18 (20.2%)	29 (32.6%)	28 (31.5%)	7 (7.9%)	3.11	1.05
Digital platforms are effectively utilised for sharing	11 (12.4%)	28 (31.5%)	25 (28.1%)	21 (23.6%)	4 (4.5%)	2.76	1.12
Cross-regional knowledge exchanges occur regularly	13 (14.6%)	32 (36.0%)	24 (27.0%)	16 (18.0%)	4 (4.5%)	2.62	1.08
Tracking mechanisms for knowledge flow are present	18 (20.2%)	35 (39.3%)	23 (25.8%)	11 (12.4%)	2 (2.2%)	2.37	1.06

Regular knowledge sharing meetings emerged as the strongest performance area, with 42 staff members (47.2%) agreeing that such meetings were conducted systematically. Emergency protocols received similar support, with 35 respondents (39.4%) agreeing these existed. However, qualitative investigation revealed significant disconnects between formal meeting structures and actual knowledge transfer effectiveness. A program manager explained: *"We have regular meetings scheduled, but they often become performance rituals where people present sanitized updates rather than sharing real operational insights or lessons learned."* Document analysis of meeting minutes corroborated this observation, showing that most meetings followed standardized agenda formats with limited time allocated for substantive knowledge exchange or critical reflection on operational experiences.

Digital platform utilization revealed critical gaps, with only 28.1% agreeing that platforms were effectively utilized, while 43.9% disagreed. Multiple incompatible systems created user frustration, driving staff toward informal alternatives. An information management officer noted: *"We have six different platforms for various purposes, none of which communicate with each other. Staff end up using WhatsApp because it's the only system that works reliably."* This emergence of WhatsApp as the primary knowledge-sharing platform aligns with Sandvik's (2019) findings on humanitarian technology adoption and Raymond and Card's (2015) work on informal digital networks in crisis response.

Cross-regional exchanges performed poorly, with only 22.5% agreeing that exchanges occurred regularly, while 50.6% disagreed. Security constraints and logistical challenges

created information silos, corroborating Bharosa et al.'s (2010) multi-agency coordination barriers. An operations manager stated: *"Each region operates in its own information bubble... we lack systematic mechanisms for sharing across geographic boundaries."*

Tracking mechanisms received the poorest ratings, with only 14.6% agreeing that such mechanisms existed, while 59.5% disagreed. This aligns with Altay and Labonte's (2014) findings on information visibility challenges in humanitarian operations. Knowledge sharing occurred through informal channels invisible to organizational monitoring, creating what Stephenson (2005) termed *"shadow coordination systems."*

Hierarchical filtering emerged as a systematic barrier, with field insights losing contextual nuance at each organizational level, supporting Comes' (2016) work on information distortion in humanitarian chains. Security-driven compartmentalization created additional *"knowledge black holes,"* reflecting tensions identified by Fast (2014) between operational security and information sharing requirements.

Bivariate correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships between standardized knowledge sharing practices and decision-making effectiveness ($r = .72$, $p < .001$), with 51.8% of variance explained. This confirms Sturridge et al.'s (2023) assertion that systematic knowledge exchange mechanisms strengthen organizational decision capabilities in humanitarian contexts.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that standardised knowledge sharing practices at NRC Somalia exhibit paradoxical relationships between formal and informal mechanisms, with official processes existing but failing to facilitate genuine knowledge transfer, while informal WhatsApp networks emerge as the primary sharing infrastructure. Hierarchical knowledge filtering creates fundamental barriers preventing critical operational knowledge from reaching decision-makers, while security-driven compartmentalization creates tensions between protection requirements and evidence-based decision-making. The strong correlation ($r=.72$) between knowledge sharing and decision-making effectiveness confirms that effective humanitarian operations require hybrid approaches integrating formal accountability structures with informal network flexibility.

6. Recommendations

NRC Somalia management should implement unified, mobile-optimized knowledge sharing platforms that formalize successful WhatsApp-based networks while adding oversight capabilities. The operations unit must establish horizontal communication channels bypassing hierarchical filtering, enabling direct field-to-management knowledge flow. The IT department should deploy AI-powered search capabilities addressing the fragmented systems problem. The monitoring and evaluation unit must develop tracking mechanisms to assess knowledge flow effectiveness. The security department should create protocols balancing operational security with knowledge accessibility, preventing "knowledge black holes" while maintaining protection standards. Human resources should implement streamlined decision-making protocols with clear timeframes, while the programs department establishes systematic stakeholder inclusion mechanisms adapted to security constraints.

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