

**FACILITATING KNOWLEDGE RETENTION IN CROSS-BORDER MERGERS IN THE
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OF LESOTHO**

by

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SUMMARY

Knowledge should be retained because it is an organisational asset. The management of knowledge, particularly knowledge retention, has been widely researched by several scholars. However, little research has been done on facilitating knowledge retention in the organisational cross-border mergers of the telecommunication industry in Lesotho.

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the process of knowledge retention in the context of organisational cross-border mergers in Lesotho, particularly in the telecommunication industry. This is a quantitative case study research that triangulated interviews and questionnaires as instruments of data collection. Quantitative data were gathered from all 14 the staff members of Econet telecom Lesotho who went through the merger process as well as 14 former employees of the organisation who left the organisation for different reasons during the merger. Qualitative data, on the other hand, were gathered by means of interviews from selected staff members who held managerial positions. The aim was to check for consistency and corroboration of the findings. Quantitative data analysis was done with the assistance of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis.

The responses from the questionnaires retained 75% and four participants were interviewed. The findings of the study indicated that although there were no formal policies in place that guided the retention of knowledge, somehow knowledge was retained during the merger process. On the other hand, a considerable amount of valuable knowledge may have been lost because employees who either left the organisation during the process or those who were apparently forced to resign just left the organisation with no proper knowledge retention arrangement. The results of the study also showed that the Econet Telecom Lesotho merger was accompanied by a high staff turnover resulting from both forced and voluntary resignations.

Moreover, the results showed that there were visible cultural differences between the two organisations. The cultural differences appeared noticeable even at the managerial level. Furthermore, the findings also pointed to the fact that those cultural variations tended to

impede knowledge retention between staff members as they had different cultural backgrounds.

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations: it is important to have a knowledge management policy in place to guide all knowledge management activities in organisations, including those in the telecommunications industry, and this study therefore recommends the development of a knowledge management system at Econet Telecom Lesotho. This study also recommends a thorough cultural due diligence exercise for future cross-border mergers. The study also proposes a framework for knowledge retention in the organisational cross-border mergers.

Key terms: Knowledge management; knowledge retention; mergers and acquisitions; telecommunications industry; organisational culture; staff turnover; pre-merger; post-merger; knowledge retention strategies; human resources management practices

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DEDICATION

Facilitating knowledge retention in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho is dedicated to the all the “Tseoles” (Bahlakoana) who stood by me throughout this toughest journey with the hope that one day ‘something big’ will come out of their family. Particularly, my late grandparents who, at a very early age in my life would constantly say to me “hlooho e telele ena e ts’etse thuto fela”. My late uncle, Mafifi, who used to say to me, “monna e kholo ntho eo o e batlang, mme o khutle le eona”.

DECLARATION

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Facilitating knowledge retention in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

SIGNATURE

DATE

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Knowledge should be retained because it is an asset. This study investigates knowledge retention (KR) in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho in order to develop a framework for its retention. Knowledge retention, also known as knowledge continuity, refers to the storing of knowledge within the organisation so that it can be retrieved and used at the later stage (Motshegwa 2017; Sumbal, Tsui, See-to and Barendrecht 2017; Wikström, Eriksson, Karamehmedovic and Liff 2018; Sumbal, Tsui, Cheong and See-to 2018; Sumbal, Tsui, Durst, Shujahat, Irfan and Ali 2020). It is an aspect of knowledge management (KM) and is concerned with ensuring that the organisation does not lose the knowledge that is embedded in the minds of employees who leave the organisation. Knowledge retention begins with the engagement of individuals with the accurate skill sets, attitudes and know-how. It also involves the thoughtful and obstinate retention of these employees so that competitors cannot get hold of them (Dube and Ngulube 2013; Fahim 2018; Butt, Lodhi and Shahzad 2020; Yamin 2020).

The knowledge-based view of the firm states that the key to an organisation's competitive advantage lies in its inimitable amalgamation of physical, organisational and human assets (Wernerfelt 1984; Castro, López-Sáez and Delgado-Verde 2011; Chen, Jiao and Zhao 2016; Farooq 2019; Butt et al. 2020; Issah 2020; Safari and Saleh 2020). Specifically, for an asset to qualify to be a source of sustained competitive advantage, it needs to be valuable, exceptional and complex to surrogate. A number of researchers have maintained that organisational knowledge or capabilities meet these requirements and, therefore, should be regarded a strategic asset (Lado and Wilson 1994; Spender 1996; Nanda 1996; Castro et al. 2011; Mat Nor, Mat Khairi, Rosnan, Maskun and Johar 2020). Furthermore, Wenger and Schneider (2000) and Safari and Saleh (2020:636) add that the knowledge-based view of the organisation proposes that intellectual resources are a key organisational asset that facilitates a sustainable competitive advantage. In fact, there is a myriad of recent

literature that is related to the importance of organizational knowledge (Schmitt, Borzillo and Probst 2011; Agarwal and Islam 2015; Chang and Lin 2015; Mohamad and Mat Zin 2019; Issah 2020). According to this view, those firms that successfully deal with their knowledge resources can anticipate garnering an ample array of benefits, including reduced workforce and infrastructure.

However, the surge of knowledge loss and attrition that companies are experiencing in a world that is faced by high rates of layoffs, retirement, staff turnover and mergers and acquisitions presents a threat and a challenge to organisations that do not retain their knowledge (DeLong and Davenport 2003; Hana and Lucie 2011; Levallet and Chan 2019; Su, Bai, Sindakis, Zhang and Yang 2020; 2020). DeLong and Davenport (2003:55) refer to this problem as “operational and institutional amnesia imperil”.

Organisations need to put in place different mechanisms aimed at retaining critical knowledge before people possessing it can leave. Tung-Ching Lin, Christina Ling-hsing Chang and Wen-Chin Tsai (2016) concur with Peterson (2012) and suggest that due to the importance of knowledge in affording organisations a competitive edge, organisations have a duty to identify, secure, manage, transfer, exploit, diffuse, and retain important knowledge.

The retention of knowledge is even more important in knowledge-intensive organisations (Meulenaere, Winne, Marescaux and Vanormelingen 2019:8). Similarly, McKinney, Shao, Shao and McInerney (2017:42) state that knowledge retention is critical for knowledge-based organisations undergoing mergers and acquisitions (M&As). A knowledge-intensive organisation is described by Mazorodze and Buckley (2019:1) as the one whose services and operations are heavily dependent on professional knowledge. For Meulenaere et al. (2019:8) a knowledge-based organisation is the one that mostly depend on the tacit knowledge possessed by its workforce. Intellectual human capital constitutes an important component of a successful knowledge-intensive organisation. More importantly, knowledge-intensive organisations must cultivate a culture that stimulates organisational learning, and that inspires innovation and the advancement of innovative

systems, processes, products and services (Miller, Chen and Waller 2017; Grossi, Kallio, Sargiacomo and Skoog 2019; Lombardi, Trequattrini, Cuzzo and Paoloni 2020).

If experienced employees start to leave the organisation, they take with them their knowledge, skills, and other treasured job-related information and the organisation's memory that may become unreachable to the organisation (Hana and Lucie 2011; Sumbal et al. 2020). Consequently, this loss may interrupt organisational memory structures, as these components are part of organisational knowledge that may be disseminated across actors, systems, and collaborations in organisations (Scalzo 2006; Hana and Lucie 2011). Globalisation also contributes to the increase of knowledge attrition, and organisations are losing portions of their valued personnel over time (Mamun and Hasan 2017:63). Preventive measures, including knowledge retention, become important in retaining this critical knowledge (Peterson 2012:1). The retention of talent and knowledge is significant for an organisation post-merger, as the development of a new organisation requires considerable knowledge retention by critical employees during integration (Walsh 1998; Vieru and Rivard 2015; Issah 2020). Walsh (1998) and Hana and Lucie (2011) as well as Sumbal et al. (2017) highlight that if key employees leave the organisation prior to sharing knowledge or expertise, momentous information and knowledge could be lost, resulting in delays, inefficiencies or expensive errors affecting organisational performance. In the milieu of mergers and acquisition, knowledge retention is strongly linked to the success of integrating the acquired organisation with the acquiring firm (Larsson and Finkelstein 1999; Ahammad, Tarba, Liao and Glaister 2016; Wang, Xi, Xie, and Zhao 2017; Issah 2020). Knowledge retention in the context of mergers and acquisitions is also about harnessing skills and capabilities of merging organisations.

Integration refers to the period in which both the merging organisations are combined, and resolutions are made about the extent of that unification, its direction, content and areas of integration (Haspeslagh and Jemison 1991; Oberg and Tarba 2013; Bodner and Capron 2018; Jain, Kashiramka and Jain 2019). In order to realise synergies or alignment between the merger organisations, some degree of assimilation is required. The intention for the integration process is said to be an enduring extensive communication and,

therefore, knowledge retention between firms takes place (Bresman, Birkinshaw and Nobel 1999; Vieru and Rivard 2015). Koi-Akrofi (2016:46) refers to the integration stage of mergers and acquisition as a “make or break period of mergers and acquisitions”.

However, Dube and Ngulube (2013:1) caution that even though knowledge retention is important to organisational success, not all knowledge in an organisation is worth retaining. They argued that knowledge that is worth retaining is that which is valuable in terms of affording the organisation’s competitive edge because of its rarity, relevance, heterogeneity or non-substitutability. It is acute knowledge, normally embodied in experience, skills, knowledge and competencies of people and groups that are worth retaining.

In order to remain cutthroat, numerous organisations around the world have merged with each other in order to expand their business, to access innovative technologies and to increase their profits (Vazirani 2015:3). A merger is defined as the amalgamation of more than one organisation, whereby the assets belonging to those organisations are immersed (Scott 2003; Berriategortua, Olasagasti and Florencio 2018). After the merger, these organisations become one legal entity (Scott 2003; Alao 2010). According to Tang (2016:8), M&A activities have been clustered throughout numerous waves or epochs. An acquisition happens when one organisation buys the assets of another organisation, a division or even the whole organisation (Scott 2003; Tang 2016). DePamphilis (2009:10) opines that six M&A waves took place starting from the 1980s and each wave lasted between two to eight years.

In most studies, including in this study, the terms ‘mergers’ and ‘acquisitions’ are mentioned together. However, it is worth mentioning that the focus is on mergers. Tang (2016:2) notes that during mergers and acquisitions, knowledge transfer and retention are important because it ensures that knowledge is retained, and it remains with the organisation when employees leave. Nonetheless, and Zander (1992) and Sumbal et al. (2018) maintain that for knowledge to create value, this knowledge must circulate in an organisation. The ability to absorb and exploit knowledge is what transforms knowledge

into value. This ability, referred to as absorptive capacity has been suggested as the most critical determinant of organisational knowledge flows.

Absorptive capacity is generally described as the ability to identify new external information, integrate and apply it profitably (Cohen and Levinthal 1990; Engelman, Fracasso, Schmidt and Zen 2017; Muraliraj, Kuppusamy, Zailani and Santha 2020).

Broadly stated, Zahra and George (2002) and Noblet, Simon and Parent (2011) list the following four dimensions of absorptive capacity: acquisition, which refers to an organisation's ability to obtain exterior knowledge; assimilation, which is described as an organisation's capacity to appreciate and process the newly obtained knowledge; transformation, which refers to the organisation's ability to improve management practices to incorporate new knowledge with its existing knowledge base; and exploitation, which relates to an organisation's ability to significantly use the new knowledge for commercial ends. Cohen and Levinthal (1990); Chaudhary (2019); Ahmed, Guozhu, Mubarik, Khan and Khan (2019) and Muraliraj et al., (2020) argue that absorptive capacity is fundamentally a function of the organisation's level of previous related knowledge. They argue that accrued prior knowledge augment both the ability to add new knowledge into organisational memory and the ability to recall and use it.

Other determinants that will be in this study include human resources management (HRM) practices, knowledge retention strategies, information and communication technologies (ICTs) and organisational culture. Knowledge retention is significantly imperative for value creation, both for the acquirer and for the target of a cross-border M&A (Birkinshaw, Bresman and Hakanson 2002; Jain et al. 2019). Karim and Mitchell (2000:1067) argue that mergers allow the organisation to benefit from valuable capabilities enjoyed by the acquired organisation in a shorter time than would be needed to develop them internally. In fact, whenever M&As take place in the cross-border milieu, they afford organisations even better prospects to fortify their central capabilities as they have direct admittance to knowledge from diverse geographic, socio-cultural as well as institutional milieu that other domestic competitors may not (Ozgo and Brewster 2015; McKinney et al. 2017). In the

cross-border perspective, organisations are confronted with the additional challenge of ensuring the effectiveness of knowledge retention process because of cultural variations. According to Chang and Lin (2015:436), organisational culture is defined as a set of suppositions that a group embraces and that establishes how it distinguishes itself from others.

Due to the growing significance of HRM practices for the competitive advantages of organisations in the hastily varying knowledge-based economy, some researchers decided to pay attention to the adoption of HR practices (Minbaeva 2005, Chen and Huang 2009; Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle 2012). The management of human resources for the attainment of superior knowledge-related results means retaining the workforce, building their know-how into the organisational routines through learning processes, and instituting means for the sharing of benefits arising from the exploitation of this expertise (Kamoche and Mueller 1998:1036). This study identified the following HR practices: job design, teamwork, staffing, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation.

For the potential of the mergers to be realised, the capabilities and knowledge regarded as decisive must be transferred to the organisation that does not have them (Casal and Fonthela 2007:58). However, the transfer and retention of knowledge should be an ongoing process because organisational merger processes are usually characterised by high levels of uncertainty, leading to staff turnover. Frantz (2015:108) lists five major integration issues in mergers and acquisitions, which include as individual uncertainty and ambiguity, organisational politics, voluntary departure of key people and cultural resistance, which are said to be problematic. Mergers and acquisitions also affect the employees' career plans because they lead to forced dismissals, relocations and loss of influence (Rodríguez-Sánchez, Ortiz-de-Urbina-Criado and Mora-Valentín (2019:650). Knowledge retention is therefore vital in ensuring that the knowledge of employees leaving the organisation as a result of these challenges of M&As is not lost.

1.2 Contextual setting

The *Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2003:337) explains context as the state, actions, of information that is associated with something and that aids in comprehending it.

To understand how to facilitate knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho, the researcher conducted a study of the private sector telecommunications industry in Lesotho as licensed and regulated by the Lesotho Communications Authority (LCA). The LCA is a legislative body, established in June 2000, for regulating the communications industry in Lesotho (Communications Act 2012:197). Among other duties, the LCA is mandated to perform the following functions: facilitating new entries into the Lesotho market and providing new communications services, including converged communications services; ensuring the efficient and equitable allocation of finite resources necessary for the provision of communications services; promoting and preserving competition in the market for communications services; and protecting the interests of consumers of communications services (Communications Act 2012:197). The case companies used for this study are Econet Ezi-Cel Lesotho and Telecom Lesotho.

Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) emerged after the merger between Telecom Lesotho, which was owned by the government of Lesotho, and Econet Ezi-Cel Lesotho in April 2008. Econet Ezi-Cel Lesotho was a diversified telecommunications group of companies owned privately and it operated in different continents, including Africa, Europe, South America, North America and the East Asia Pacific Rim. It offered products and services in the areas of mobile and fixed telephone services, broadband, internet, satellite and fibre optic networks. Furthermore, the business was not only restricted in the traditional telecoms industry, but it also provided other services such as financial services, insurance, e-commerce, renewable energy, education, Coca-Cola bottling, hospitality and payment gateway solutions (Gillwald, Deen-Swarray and Mothobi 2017). Econet companies include Econet Global, Econet Wireless International, Econet Wireless Africa, Econet Enterprises, Econet Media and the Liquid Telecom Group (Gillwald et al. 2017).

The merger between Telecom Lesotho and Econet Ezi-Cel Lesotho has consequently

permitted ETL to provide both fixed and mobile services using a single licence (Gillwald et al. 2017). The merger has also allowed ETL to enhance customer contentment by offering the newest services at affordable rates and to draw new clientele with groundbreaking product offerings (Gillwald et al. 2017). It has been acknowledged that organisations achieve competitive edge if they are able to develop and share their knowledge within their various organisational structures (American Productivity and Quality Centre 2002).

1.3 Statement of the problem

Organisations in the telecommunications industry, like many other organisations, are faced with the risk of knowledge loss as a result of mergers and acquisition. Specifically, tacit knowledge is easily lost because organisational mergers and acquisitions involve complex processes, where critical decisions need to be made, but yet this takes place relatively seldom (Milton 2010; Martins and Martins 2011; McKinney et al. 2017; Durst and Zieba 2019; Sumbal et al. 2020).

Prior research indicates that employee turnover as a result of M&As is a major driver of knowledge loss within organisations (Winkelen and McDermott 2008; Martins and Meyer 2012; Massingham 2018; Durst and Zieba 2019; Sumbal et al. 2020). Knowledge is usually lost when older employees leave their job because of M&As (Joe, Yoong and Patel 2013; Sumbal et al.; Levallet and Chan 2019).

The result of losing these employees is that the organisation will also lose the much-needed and much-valued knowledge, the basis of which affords an organisation the competitive edge. The knowledge these departing workers have is significant, because it could lead to organisational memory deterioration when these personnel leave. This may ultimately make retrieving this knowledge very difficult (De Massis, Frattini, Kotlar, Petruzzelli and Wright 2016:95). Madsen, Mosakowski and Zaheer (2003), Ranucci and Souder (2016) and Zebal, Ferdous and Chambers (2019) opine that because tacit knowledge is important to the organisation, and the way in which staff mobility affects

organisational behaviour has become increasingly important.

In line with the review of literature above, little is known about knowledge loss, resulting, for instance, from resignations, voluntary or mandatory resignation and retirements as result of M&As. Buchholtz, Ribbens and Houle (2003) investigated staff turnover; particularly top management, and found that about 75 per cent of top managers left the organisation by the end of the third year after the merger. Additionally, Krug (2009:4) undertook a study to determine staff turnover patterns in M&As. The study involved an analysis of turnover patterns among more than 23 000 executives in 1 019 firms over a 17-year period. Hassan (2014:55) expresses the same view regarding staff turnover in Pakistan's telecommunications industry. Staff turnover has become a serious problem, particularly in the knowledge-intensive industries such as telecommunications where the resulting knowledge loss affects process safety and quality of work (Hassan 2014:55). It is, therefore, evident from this study that M&As may result in a high turnover rate.

Knowledge management, and particularly knowledge retention, is a well-researched area, but there is little knowledge about the context of cross-border mergers (CBM&As) (Oberg and Tarba 2013; McKinney et al. 2017). Hassan (2014:55) also expresses the same view regarding knowledge retention in the telecommunications industry. Although there have been studies related to knowledge retention in the cross-border context in the developed world, the available literature does not mention any study undertaken in the southern African region, including Lesotho. It seems that until now, research on knowledge retention in cross-borders mergers has mostly focused on the developed countries. Cryer (1997) suggests that one criterion, which may merit the originality, is repeating the study in other context such as a different country. This assertion is consistent with that of Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2010:47) who argue that as studies are replicated at different times and in various places with the findings supported in each research, we can have growing confidence in the legitimacy or validity of the results. This study, therefore, extends the previous research not only in the southern African region, but also in its context – Lesotho.

Therefore, the focus of this study is on knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers of the telecommunication industry of Lesotho.

1.4 Purpose of the study

According to Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (2007) and Creswell and Creswell (2018), the purpose statement indicates why the study is undertaken and what the researcher aims to achieve. The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the process of knowledge retention in the context of organisational cross-border mergers in Lesotho, particularly in the telecommunication industry.

1.5 Research objectives

The study will make use of the following objectives:

- To identify knowledge management strategies in place at ETL
- To find out which knowledge retention strategies were adopted to capture and protect knowledge during the merger process at ETL
- To establish the role of ICTs in the knowledge retention processes
- To identify the role of organisational culture as an organisational change factor in the successful cross-border merger in relation to knowledge retention
- To identify the role of human resources management (HRM) practices in knowledge retention at ETL
- To identify key factors in retaining knowledge in organisational mergers
- To identify challenges in retaining knowledge in the aftermath of organisational mergers
- To develop a knowledge retention framework in the context of cross border M&As.

1.6 Research questions

The following research questions are used in this study:

- Which knowledge management strategies were implemented post the integration process (PIP)?
- Which knowledge retention strategies were adopted to capture and protect knowledge during the merger process at ETL?

- What role do ICTs play in the knowledge retention process?
- What is the role of radical organisational change factors such as learning culture in the successful cross-border merger in relation to knowledge retention?
- Which HRM practices are used at ETL in relation to knowledge retention and retention?
- Which factors are key in retaining knowledge in organisational mergers?
- What challenges are there in retaining knowledge in the aftermath of organisational merger?
- What framework can be developed regarding knowledge retention at ETL?

The research dashboard for this study is presented in table

Table 1: Research dashboard

Objective	Research question	Construct from theoretical/conceptual framework	Data source
To identify knowledge management strategies in place at ETL	Which knowledge management strategies were implemented post the integration process (PIP)?	Knowledge retention strategy	Interviews and questionnaire
To investigate which knowledge retention strategies were adopted to capture and protect knowledge during the merger process at ETL	Which knowledge retention strategies were adopted to capture and protect knowledge during the merger process at ETL?	Knowledge retention strategy	Interviews and questionnaire
To establish the role of ICTs as knowledge retention devices in the knowledge retention process	What is the role of ICTs in the knowledge retention processes?	ICT Tools	Interviews and questionnaire
To identify the role of organization learning culture as an organizational change factor in the successful cross border merger in relation to knowledge retention	What is the role of radical organizational change factors such as learning culture in the successful cross border merger in relation to knowledge retention?	Learning culture	Interviews and questionnaire
To identify the role of Human Resources Management (HRM) practices in knowledge retention and retention at ETL.	Which HRM practices are used at ETL in relation to knowledge retention and retention?	Human resources practices	Interviews and questionnaire
To identify key factors in transferring and retaining	Which factors are key in transferring and retaining knowledge in organizational mergers?	Key factors in knowledge	
To identify challenges in retaining knowledge in the aftermath of organisational mergers	What challenges are there in retaining knowledge in the aftermath of mergers	Knowledge retention challenges	Interviews and questionnaire

1.7 Study significance

This section provides the rationale for undertaking any research study (Leedy and Ormrod (2010; Creswell 2018). The study advances the practical and theoretical understanding of the knowledge retention process in the context of cross-border mergers. Additionally, being the first study on organisational mergers in Lesotho, the findings of this study may effect policy and legislation on how future mergers could be handled.

This study could also induce interest from information professionals to further increase research productivity in the area covered by this study. Furthermore, ETL may incorporate the recommendations from this study into their overall operations strategy. Future mergers may also learn for this study regarding how they can improve their process as far as knowledge retention is concerned.

1.8 Originality of the study

Gill and Dolan (2015:11) opine that the issue of originality is vital in a doctoral research. In fact, Gelling and Rodriguez-Borrego (2014:6) remark that without originality, a doctoral degree cannot be awarded at all. Cryer (2006) and Gill and Dolan (2015) define originality as a contribution to knowledge in a particular area of study. The natural sciences explain originality as producing new study results, while social sciences and humanities define it largely as employing a different approach, doing a study a new topic, conducting a study in an under-researched field or generating original results. Research originality may also be defined as the level of 'newness' that the thesis displays (Wellington 2010:85). Phillips and Pugh (2005:60) identify several ways in which a study may be original, including:

- When the researcher produces a paper showing original evidence in writing for the first time.
- When the researcher continues a previous original piece of work.
- When the researcher carries out original work designed by the supervisor.
- When the researcher provides a particular unique technique, opinion or outcome in an imitative but proficient piece of research.

- When the researcher displays originality in testing somebody's idea.

Gruber (2014:4) argues that even though the term 'mergers and acquisitions' has been researched now for over 30 years, there still seems to be under-studied aspects, such as knowledge management in terms of acquiring organisations. This, therefore, infers that there is a gap in terms of knowledge management in the context of M&As. It is from this aspect that the originality of this study stems, in the understudied field. The study also develops a framework for knowledge retention, specifically for cross-border mergers and acquisitions. Similarly, Oberg and Tarba (2013:473) opine that knowledge management, and particularly knowledge retention, is a well-researched area; however, in the context of cross-border mergers there is limited literature. However, this study differs from that of Oberg and Tarba in that while they looked at knowledge retention in the cross-border merger during the post-merger integration (PMI), the focus of this study is on knowledge retention during the merger process as well as after the process. The originality of this study also stems from the understudied area of knowledge retention in the context of cross-border mergers.

Furthermore, the study will add value to the existing body of literature by looking at the impact of cultural differences on mergers and acquisitions. Notwithstanding the growing significance of cross-border mergers and acquisitions in a globalising world, research into the relationship between cultural differences and performance is both incomplete and inconclusive (Bhagat, Kedia, Harveston and Triandis 2002; Denison, Adkins and Guidroz 2015; Farsi 2017; McKinney et al. 2017).

1.9 Scope and delimitations of the study

The study's focus is on the knowledge retention in a cross-border merger and will be based only on the merged entity of former the Econet Ezi-cel Lesotho and Telecom Lesotho, called Econet telecom Lesotho. Other organisational cross-border mergers have taken place in Lesotho such as the one between the former Lesotho Bank and Standard Bank of South Africa, but because they are not in the telecommunications sector, they will

not be covered. However, it would be interesting to also cover this other merger to find out if the results from one merger would actually be general to cover the other merger as well.

1.10 Research methodology

Creswell (2014:30) argues that research methodologies may be differentiated in several ways, and one of those is through categorising in terms whether it is quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods research (MMR). MMR is particularly preferred by numerous scholars who desire to embrace a general method to arrive at the results of the enquiry (Romm and Ngulube 2015; Shorten and Smith 2017; Ngulube and Ukwoma 2019; Ngulube 2019; Askun and Cizel 2020).

Creswell (2014:31) argues that the decision in choosing which research methodology to use in a study is based not only on the philosophical assumptions or on worldviews that the researcher brings to the study, but the research designs, the specific research methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The selection of a research methodology is also based on the nature of the research problem, the researcher's own experiences and the study's target audience (Creswell 2014:31).

The current study employed a quantitative methodology with multi-methods at the technique level. Questionnaires and interviews were used with the purpose improving reliability and validity of data. Social research usually uses one research method and as result, may be prone to flaws related to that method. Therefore, using multi-methods provides improved confidence in the study (Yeasmin and Rahman 2012:15). Similarly, Marutha (2020:404) argues that the use of multi-method in research reduces bias and closes some gaps that left some questions unanswered. The idea was not to use a mixed methods research methodology as this study does not use any specific mixed methods research design. This research methodology provided an overall picture as far as knowledge retention in the cross-border in the telecommunication industry is concerned. A detailed depiction of research methodology is provided in Chapter Three of this thesis.

1.11 Ethical considerations

Adherence to ethical considerations appears to be very important in undertaking any research (Ary et al. 2010; Kaewkungwal and Adams 2019). Kawulich and Ogletree (2012) and Sobočana, Bertottib and Strom-Gottfried (2019) echo similar sentiments, arguing that ethics must be taken into consideration at each stage of research, from design to implementation. This study was approved and cleared consistent with the University of South Africa's (Unisa) ethics policy by the Department of Information Science's research ethics review committee on 30 November 2017 before it was undertaken. Dooly, Moore and Vallejo (2017:360) discuss four ethical considerations that need to be adhered to, including the right to privacy, informed consent, involvement of the researcher and protection from harm. A detailed discussion of ethical considerations is found in Chapter Three.

1.12 Definition of terms

Ikoja-Odongo and Mostert (2006:145) discuss the importance of fully explaining concepts when doing research because concepts may have diverse connotations contingent on the contexts they are applied in (Ikoja-Odongo and Mostert 2006:145). This section, therefore, defines key terms as they appear in this study:

Knowledge

Kebede (2010:417) explains that knowledge embodies internalised information in the form of experience, insight, and expertis.

Knowledge management

According to Yee, Tan and Thurasamy (2019:2), knowledge management is the systematic process of creation, storage, sharing and application of knowledge to attain organisational

objectives.

Knowledge retention

Knowledge retention, according to Agarwal and Islam (2015:153), entails capturing knowledge in the organisation so that it can be used later. Knowledge retention is a sub-discipline of knowledge management and is concerned with ensuring that the organisation does not lose its knowledge held by knowledge workers who leave the organisation.

Tacit knowledge

Tacit knowledge, according to Scalzo (2006) and Okuyama (2017), is knowledge embedded in the individual mind that is personal, undocumented, learnt through experience, intuitive and difficult to articulate or codify.

Explicit knowledge

Explicit knowledge represents content that has been captured in some tangible form such as words, audio-recordings or images (Dalkir 2005; Zebal et al. 2019).

Merger

According to Tang (2016:7), merger is defined as the amalgamation of two or more organisations, whereby the possessions of the selling organisation (s) are immersed by the acquiring organisations.

Organisational knowledge loss

Organisational knowledge loss is explained as the inability or failure to capture knowledge that was intended to remain in the organisation; it is the opposite of knowledge retention (Daghfaous, Belkhodja and Angel 2013:639).

1.13 Organisation of the thesis

This study is made up of six chapters. Chapter One comprises the study background and the statement of the problem. The study purpose is also explained in this chapter. Chapter Two provides the conceptual framework together with literature review for the current study. Chapter Three discusses the methodology that the study embraces, together with the design employed. Chapter Four analyses and presents the study results, while the interpretation of data follows in Chapter Five. Chapter Six completes the study by summarising the major findings, conclusions recommendations.

1.14 Summary of Chapter One

This chapter presented the study and raised critical issues relating to knowledge retention in the context of cross-border mergers and acquisitions. In particular, the problem statement, study purpose, study objectives and questions related to the current study were stated. Because the focus of the study is on knowledge retention, the introduction emphasised the need and made a case for retaining knowledge, particularly after the merger. The context of this study is also presented in the current chapter. The contribution of this study to the already existing scholarly knowledge has been highlighted in the form of study originality. A very brief depiction of research methodology and ethics relating to the study were stated. The next chapter reviews literature and provides the conceptual framework that the current study is anchored on.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

“No research happens in the vacuum” (Punch 2000:42)

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One launched the study by raising issues regarding knowledge retention and organisational mergers. In particular, the study’s problem statement, the purpose statement, study objectives and the research questions were stated. This chapter reviews the literature about knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho.

2.2 Rationale for literature review

Fink (1998) and Mishra (2019) describe literature review as an organised, overt and consistent technique for the identification, assessment and interpretation of the literature already produced.

According to Randolph (2009) and Mishra (2019), literature review is one of the ways the author shows his knowledge of a specific area of study. This knowledge includes vocabulary, theories, key variables and phenomena, as well as its methods used. Literature review is central to the research study because it helps the researcher to be acquainted more regarding the investigations and perspective linked to the topic being investigated (Leedy and Ormrod 2010:66). Literature review also helps in determining if the topic being studied is worth studying and provides insight into ways in which the researcher can limit the required scope of the study (Creswell 2013:57).

In addition, Kumar (2010) and Mishra (2019) opine that going through a literature review informs the researcher if others have used procedures and methods similar to the ones being proposed, which procedures and methods have worked well for them and what problems they may have encountered with them. By becoming aware of such problems and pitfalls, the researcher will be better placed to select a methodology that can provide

valid answers to the research questions (Kumar 2010:33). Randolph (2009:2) proposes the reasons for reviewing the literature including:

- delimiting the research problem
- seeking new lines of inquiry
- avoiding fruitless approaches
- gaining methodological insights
- identifying recommendations for further research
- seeking support for grounded theory
- distinguishing what has been done from what needs to be done
- discovering important variables relevant to the topic
- synthesizing and gaining a new perspective
- identifying relationships between ideas and practices
- establishing the context of the topic or problem
- rationalizing the significance of the problem
- enhancing and acquiring the subject vocabulary
- understanding the structure of the subject
- relating ideas and theory to applications
- identifying the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used
- placing the research in a historical context to show familiarity with state-of-the-art developments.

The review of literature assisted this study in many ways. Firstly, the literature review helped to identify research approaches, research methods as well as tools that have been used in carrying out similar studies. Secondly, literature review assisted in identifying the information sources and informed the researcher of the methodological characteristics and content that have been used by others in finding answers to their research questions (Kumar 2010; Ngulube 2003). Methodological characteristics of a study refer to the research methods used in a study such as the design, data collection and data analysis.

Content, on the one hand, refers to the study objectives, the study findings and the conclusions (Ngulube 2003:29).

2.2.1 Map of literature

According to Creswell (2009), and Creswell and Creswell (2018), one of the first tasks for a researcher working with a new topic is to organise the literature. This literature organisation makes it possible for the researcher to understand what the planned study adds to, extends, or replicates research already done. A useful technique for this step is to design a literature map (Creswell 2009:34). A map of literature as suggested by several authors, including Locke et al. (1993), Ngulube (2003), Maluleka (2017) and Creswell and Creswell (2018). A map of the literature for this study was developed and is presented in figure2.1.

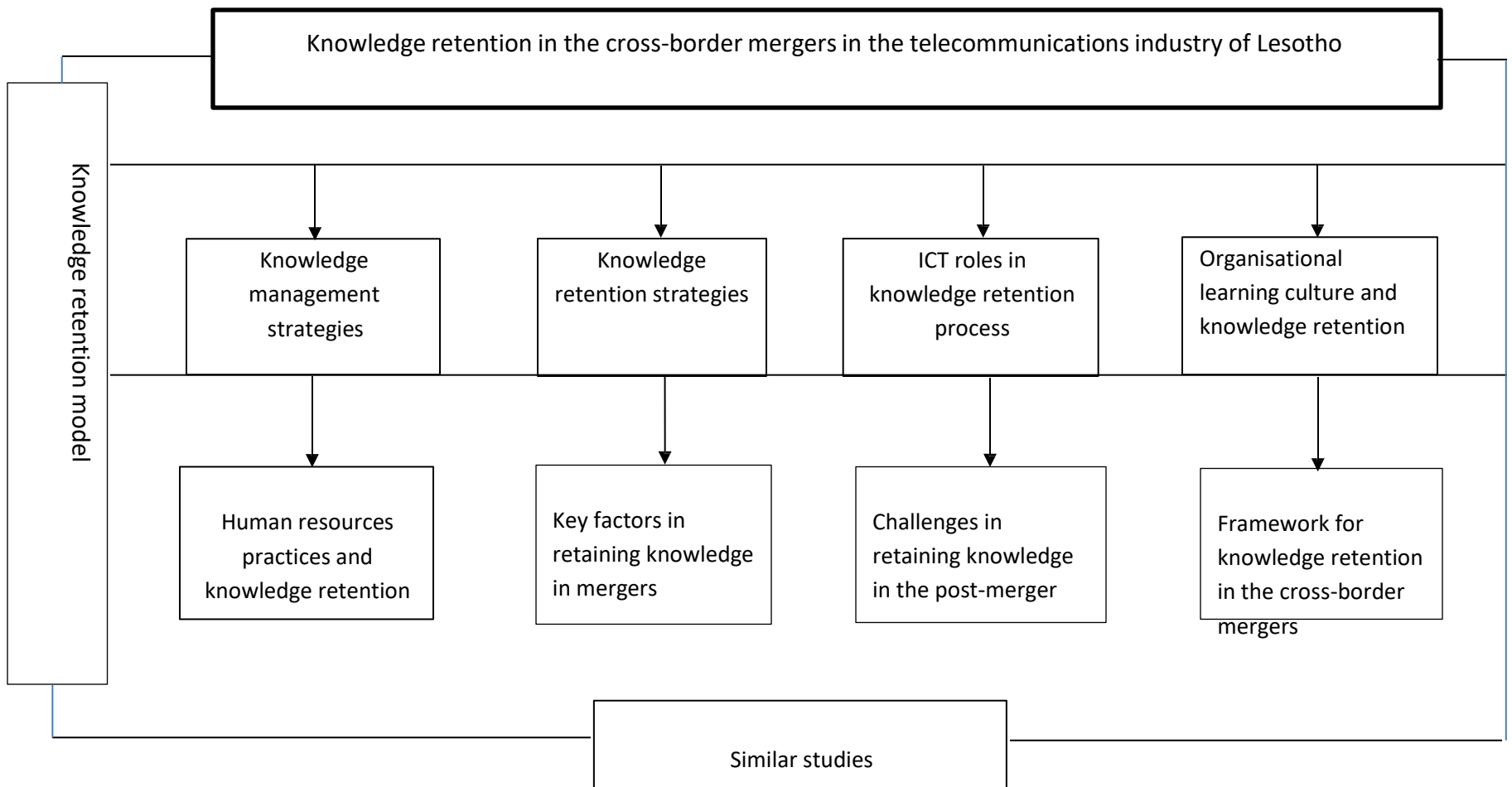


Figure 2.1: Map of Literature

2.3 Conceptual framework

As a point of departure in facilitating knowledge retention in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho, the researcher found it important to discuss all the concepts of a knowledge retention model this study has adopted. Scholars of social and management sciences do not have a culture of fully explaining both the conceptual and theoretical frameworks and, as a result, their application by researchers becomes inadequate and poor (Ngulube, Mathipa and Gumbo 2015:43). In fact, several scholars do not even appreciate what it means to espouse them in their studies (Ngulube et al. 2015; Ngulube, 2018; Ngulube 2020).

Furthermore, Imenda (2014) and Van der Waldt (2020) opine that the conceptual or theoretical framework is the soul of every research project. It establishes how a researcher formulates his research problem, how he intends to investigate the problem, and what meaning he attaches to the data collected for the purpose of that investigation. Ngulube (2018:1) reiterates that the incorporation of a theoretical framework or development of a conceptual framework in any study acts as a glue that binds the different components of research, and without which, the research design collapses. Ngulube (2018:1), therefore, concludes that theory and research are inseparable and that conducting a study without incorporating either a theoretical framework or a conceptual framework is unimaginable. Ngulube (2020:18), therefore, concludes that any research conducted without incorporating either a theoretical or a conceptual framework is meagre and lacks a sound base.

Because of the importance of these concepts, it becomes imperative to explain them and further clarify which one of the two this study is anchored on. There seems to be differences as far as defining conceptual and theoretical frameworks is concerned. For instance, Ngulube (2018:28) notes that the nomenclature applied to the concepts “tends to be loose, inconsistent and sometimes contradictory”. Some researchers refer to theoretical frameworks as conceptual frameworks (Van der Waldt 2020; Kivunja 2018; Maxwell 2013; Ngulube 2018; Ngulube and Ukwoma 2019). However, other scholars pointed to the fact that the two concepts have different origins (Jabareen 2009; Maxwell

2013; Ngulube et al. 2015; Kivunja 2018). Theories explain, predict, prove or disprove phenomena, and they lead to theoretical frameworks (Jabareen 2009; Ngulube et al., 2015). On the other hand, conceptual frameworks have been described broader and they include concepts, models, theories, documents, interviews, practices and researchers' experiences (Jabareen 2009; Maxwell 2013; Ngulube 2020). Moreover, a conceptual framework is defined because of bringing together various related concepts with the aim of understanding a research problem (Imenda 2014:189).

Imenda (2014:189) further notes that just as a theoretical framework is derived from a theory, a conceptual framework is derived from concepts. Conceptual framework is defined by Maxwell (2013:39) as a developed "tentative theory" which the investigator employs to explain a phenomenon under investigation.

The concept presents a lens through which the issue being studied can be observed. Therefore, it becomes critical that the sources of these concepts should be carefully selected in line with the purpose of the study. Several theories and models have been developed and used around the globe to guide the implementation of knowledge management. However, this study is based on the knowledge retention model by Doan, Rosenthal-Sabroux and Grundstein (2011), thus representing a conceptual framework (Jabareen 2009; Ngulube and Mathipa 2015; Ngulube 2020).

The adoption of the knowledge retention model assisted the researcher in understanding knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers in the telecommunication industry of Lesotho as well as in refining the research questions guiding the study. The next section interrogates the constructs of this conceptual framework as presented in figure 2.2.

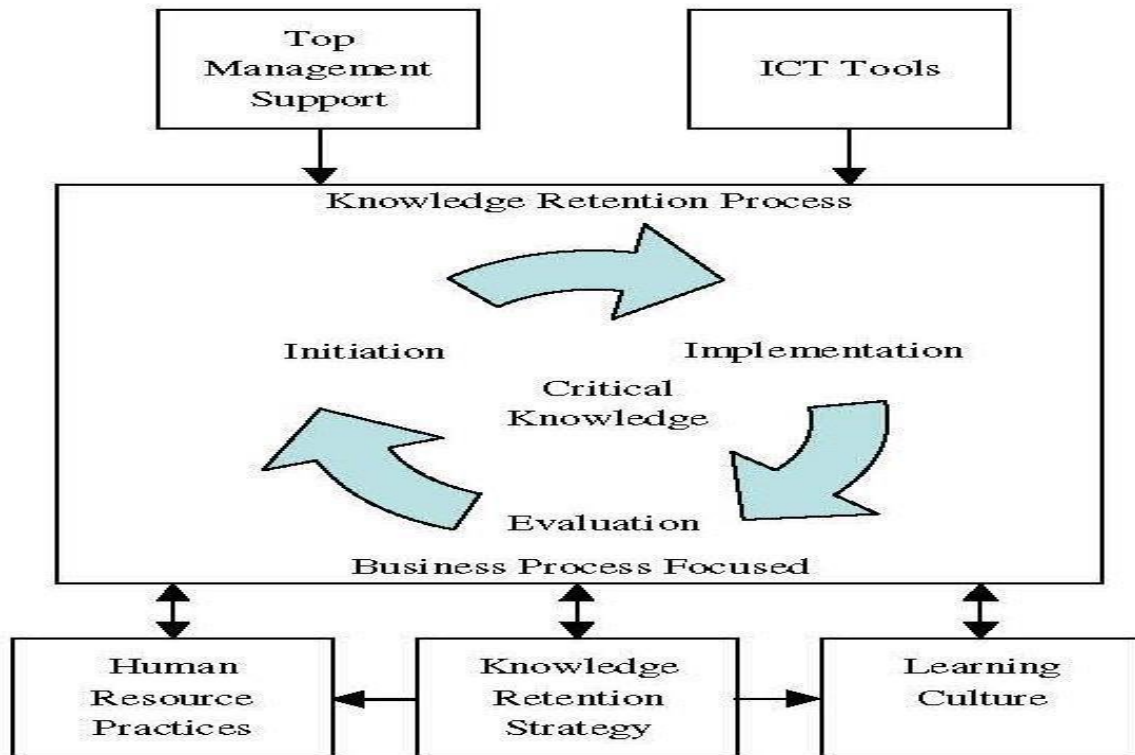


Figure 2.2: Knowledge retention model (source: Doan et al. 2011).

The main constructs of this model, being knowledge retention process, top management support, KR strategy, learning culture, HR practices and ICT tools, are presented and discussed below. However, not all the constructs for this model have been applied to this study.

2.3.1 Top management support

Top management has an imperative role to play in the process of knowledge management and particularly knowledge retention, which is the focus of this study. Particularly, for knowledge retention to be successful, top management needs to have qualities and capabilities that allow for conditions of creating, circulation and use of knowledge within an organisation (Micic 2015:47). Najmi, Kadir and Kadir (2017:519) define top management as those individuals in an organisation who have been trusted to lead the organisation. These individuals could influence other's decision-making capabilities in

order to achieve organisational objectives.

Top management support for knowledge retention is perceived to be correlated with the worker's understanding of a knowledge retention culture as well readiness to share knowledge (Connelly and Kelloway 2003; Al Saifi, Dillon and McQueen 2016). Top management support refers to the degree to which the senior management as role models can provide the necessary support relating to all knowledge retention activities (Doan et al. 2011; Singh, Gupta, Busso and Kamboj 2019; Okour, Chong and Asmawi 2019). Al Saifi et al. (2016:125) mention three ways in which top management show their support for knowledge management. Firstly, they must establish an organisational culture that is conducive to knowledge retention. Secondly, organisational policy must be written in such a way that it includes the vision of top management. Finally, top management must strategically support efforts to encourage and develop knowledge retention and then follow that strategy.

Knowledge retention requires the buy-in from senior management and without any commitment from the top management, the management of knowledge assets remains a challenge (Moore 2009 Dewah and Mutula 2016). Similarly, Lwanga and Ngulube (2019:1) identified a lack of management support as one of the challenges to knowledge management. Additionally, Moore (2009:1) notes that organisational leadership needs to understand knowledge retention as a change, and that change management needs resources.

2.3.2 Knowledge retention strategy

Knowledge retention strategy is defined as a thoughtful facilitation of knowledge circulation between employees to circumvent its loss through various forms of attrition (Al-Hakim and Hassan, 2013). It consists of four main constructs: alignment with business strategy, transparency, feasibility, and flexibility. Alignment with business strategy refers to the degree to which knowledge retention strategy is supporting business strategy. Transparency refers to the extent to which the objectives, goals, and action plans for the knowledge retention process are expressed clearly. Feasibility refers to degree of success

when implementing knowledge retention plans based on the existing resources and culture of organisations, and finally, flexibility refers to the extent to which knowledge retention strategy can be adapted when there is a change in the business environment (Lee and Choi 2003:186).

2.3.3 Learning culture

Schmitza, Rebeloa, Graciac and Tomásc (2014:114) define learning culture as the type of organisational culture that is oriented towards learning. Learning culture promotes the sharing of knowledge with the aim of development and organisational success. Learning culture is characterised by four main constructs, namely teamwork, collaboration, adaptability, and solidarity (Lee and Choi 2003; Nabong 2015), where teamwork refers to the extent to which employees in an organisation work together harmoniously (Katzenbach and Smith 1993; Lee and Choi 2003; Lim and Klein 2006; Khangahi 2014); collaboration can be defined as the extent to which people in a group actively assist one another to perform their duties (Kumaraswamy and Chitale (2012:310); adaptability refers to the extent to which individuals express their attitude toward learning, take risk and create change (Fey and Denison 1999; Sunarsih and Mashithoh 2016); and solidarity refers to the degree to which members of an organisation share goals and tasks (Goffee and Jones 1996; Ling 2011).

2.3.4 Human resources practices

Human resource practices symbolise the policies, procedures, systems and actions used to outline and influence behaviour, abilities and employees' attitudes to realise organisational objectives (Minbaeva 2005; Rana and Malik 2017). Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle (2013:29) suggest that the conjecture in the correlation between knowledge retention and HRM means that the organisational ability to produce new knowledge and attain a competitive edge is dependent on the ability and drive of employees to acquire and share their knowledge within an organisation.

HRM can augment KM in two different ways. Firstly, organisations can employ HRM

practices to find and stimulate workers with learning abilities. Secondly, HRM can establish the organisational culture that inspires the acquisition and sharing of knowledge. This study will focus on the following HRM practices: performance appraisal, job design practices, compensation, training and development as well as teamwork (Minbaeva 2005; Doan et al. 2011; Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle 2013).

2.3.5 Information and communication technology tools

Information and communication technologies in the context of KM refers to the degree to which knowledge management is supported using ICTs. Lee and Choi (2003:189) suggest that IT influences knowledge in different ways. Firstly, IT facilitates speedy collection, storage, and exchange of knowledge on a scale not imaginable previously, thus helping the knowledge creation process. Secondly, well-developed technology assimilates fragmented flows of knowledge and this assimilation can then remove barriers to communication between organisational sections. Thirdly, ICT advances all modes of knowledge creation and is not limited to the transfer of explicit knowledge, but to the tacit knowledge as well (Lee and Choi 2003:189).

2.4 Understanding knowledge management

This study is about facilitating knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho. This section first provides a brief background of KM and then an explanation of the concepts 'knowledge' and 'knowledge management' as knowledge retention rests on them.

The history of KM dates as far back as the writings of Peter Drucker in the 1970s, Sveiby in the late 1980s, and Nonaka and Takeuchi in the 1990s (Nair and Munusami 2019; Farooq 2019). Nair and Munusami (2019) note that KM began when the concept of a knowledge company was first introduced in the published literature. However, although Dalkir (2005:12) does not mention different years from the authors above, he argues that even

though the phrase 'knowledge management' gained notice and usage in the late 1980s, librarians, teachers and writers have long been using the same techniques. Shutt (2003:451) put it differently and pointed that in the 1960s, Peter Ducker conceived the expression "a knowledge worker". He further posited that there were some discussions about knowledge management, although they were mostly driven by sociologists such as Amitai Etzioni in the 1970s. Although it seems there is no general agreement on the exact year that KM got conceived, there is an agreement that its theoretical background was introduced by the Japanese professor Ikujiro Nonaka (Shutt 2003; Farooq 2019). Nonaka wrote an article regarding information construction in Japan and from the year 1991, he employed the label "knowledge creation". His 1991 editorial with the title 'The Knowledge creating Company' in *Harvard Business Review* provided more clarification. However, the real breakthrough was made in 1995, when he published his book, jointly with Hirotaka Takeuchi, under the same name (Shutt 2003:451).

Yee et al (2019:1) define knowledge as a "fluid mix of framed experiences, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information". For Conger (2015:114), knowledge has to do with an individual's ability to make a decision and can relate to declarative (know-what), procedural (know-how), causal (know-why), conditional (know-when), or relational (know-with) types of knowledge. Knowledge can be acquired from the experiences and actions of individuals (Nair and Munusami 2019; Ugwu and Ekere 2019). People can also acquire knowledge from education.

Safari and Saleh (2020:637) define knowledge as significant organisational resource that improves organisational performance and provides a competitive advantage. According to the resource-based view of the firm, the most important characteristics of knowledge are its uniqueness and originality (Deshpande 2018:206). Once created, knowledge cannot be imitated or substituted, which makes it a key strategic asset resource to all businesses (Cabrera and Cabrera 2002; Farooq 2019). Knowledge is important in the life of a person. It is the tool used to tackle difficulties in life as well as to provide effective solutions to difficulties (Nair and Munusami 2019:573). Kennedy (2016:14) concurs with

Nair and Munusami (2019) and argues that knowledge is the greatest human gift; therefore, how humans use it to develop the society is the major responsibility we have to future generations. Based on the above, Christie (2017:1) is of the view that the time has come for organisations to manage knowledge with the same care as other organisational assets in order to reap the greatest return on investment.

In fact, there is a myriad of explanations pertaining to knowledge and knowledge management. Hislop (2009:109) argues that because different firms have different objectives for achieving knowledge management, and the fact that there are different approaches that organisations employ to manage their organisational knowledge, there are bound to be different ways to define knowledge management. These varying perceptions about knowledge consequently led to different views of knowledge management.

Yee et al. (2019:1) define knowledge management as all the processes involved in the creation, storage and transfer of organisational assets with the purpose of creating value and meeting tactical and strategic requirements. Mtega and Ngoepe (2019:2) remark that knowledge management involves various activities intended to augment accessibility and use of information. Knowledge management also means sharing knowledge with colleagues to ensure that the knowledge is not lost in the case of the employee leaving the organisation without sharing knowledge. If this happens, the whole process of knowledge management becomes fruitless.

In consideration of the fact that there are different views of knowledge management, several researchers including Jashapara (2011), Oliva and Kotabe (2019), and Nair and Munusami (2019) provide a dimension which they thought was encompassing and interdisciplinary. They defined KM as a learning process linked with knowledge sharing knowledge (both tacit and explicit) and this includes a conducive cultural environment and appropriate technology. Given the definitional debates surrounding knowledge management, the current study uses the definition given by Alavi and Leidner (2001) and Sayyadi (2019). These authors define knowledge management as the “basic activities of

KM as a process involved in creating, storing/ retrieving, sharing and applying knowledge”. The main objective of knowledge management is the constant supply of knowledge across the entire organisation for easy decision-making.

2.4.1 Knowledge types

The following discusses the different types of organisational knowledge currently available.

2.4.1.1 Explicit knowledge

Farooq (2019:145) defines explicit knowledge as knowledge articulated officially through a system of symbols, which can be simply transferred. Holste and Fields (2010:129) add that explicit knowledge is easily articulated or reduced to writing, is often impersonal and formal in nature, and frequently takes the form of documents, reports, “white papers”, catalogues, presentations, patents, formulas, and more. Hislop (2009:23), refers to explicit knowledge as codifiable knowledge, declarative knowledge or objective knowledge. Explicit knowledge is knowledge that is expressed in print and in electronic media, corporate procedures and best practices. This means that explicit knowledge can be embedded in a code or a language, and as a result it can be communicated easily in form of words, numbers or symbols, such as those used in music’s notation system (Hall and Andriani 2003; Magnier-Watanabe, Benton and Senoo 2011).

2.4.1.2 Tacit knowledge

The study of tacit knowledge can be traced from the year 1966 to the work of Polanyi who set the basis and invented the frequently used expression, “we know more than we can tell (Taylor 2007; Kothari, Rudman, Dobbins, Rouse, Sibald and Edwards 2012). Using the work of Ryle (1949), Polanyi held the view that there are two types of knowing – “knowing what” and “knowing how” – and that these two aspects of knowing are always both present in any instance of a person’s knowledge.

Tacit knowledge is defined as the undocumented and unarticulated knowledge held by practitioners (Astorga-Vargas, Flores-Rios, Licea-Sandoval and Gonzalez-Navarro 2017; Zebal et al. 2019). In the context of organisations, this type of knowledge is regarded as that which employees use to execute their daily activities (Choo, 2000; Ganguly, Talukdar, Chatterjee 2019). Tacit knowledge obtained through long periods of experience doing a task (Ganguly et al. 2019:26).

Furthermore, Nonaka and Konno (1998:43) argue that tacit knowledge such as abilities, developed skills, experience, undocumented processes, “gut-feelings”, and others is highly personal and difficult to reduce to writing. Tacit knowledge is rooted in an individual’s experience and values. Given the specific contexts and non-transferable or inimitable sets of competencies embedded in those contexts, the role of tacit knowledge has been identified as a key source of new organisational knowledge production (Roy and Mitra (2018; Ganguly et al. 2019). Kothari et al. (2012:2) concur with Roy and Mitra (2018) and add that tacit knowledge is multifaceted and specific in context, and while it is often rooted within organisational routines, it is highly practice related. The main difference between explicit and tacit knowledge is that the former is embedded in the mind of individuals while the latter is documented in physical contexts such as reports, policies, and other documents. Therefore, tacit knowledge is more important than explicit knowledge because it resides in the minds of employees who may leave the organisation at any time and this makes knowledge retention a priority for organisations.

2.5 Understanding organisational M&As and CBM&As

In today’s increasing globalisation and rivalry force, organisations look for new and creative ways to perpetuate their businesses and possibly make a profit. Mergers and acquisitions are one of those ways (Appelbaum, Lefrancois, Tonna and Shapiro 2007; Marks 2019). A merger refers to the amalgamation or disposal of the resources of two or more organisations following an acquisition (Allahar 2015; Nderitu and Ndiritu 2018).

A merger represents the amalgamation of several organisations whereby the possessions

of the selling firm are immersed by the acquiring organisation (Scott 2003; Allahar 2015; Nderitu and Ndiritu 2018). Although the buying firm may be a considerably different organisation after the merger, it preserves its initial identity. After the merger, the merging organisations become one surviving body (Scott 2003; Nderitu and Ndiritu 2018). It is important to note that mergers usually take place between organisations that are almost equal in terms of size and resources. Cavusgil, Knight and Riesenberger (2008) however, regard mergers as a special type of acquisition in which two firms unite to form a new, larger organisation. This new organisation can bring the following opportunities: economies of scale, inter-partner learning reduced costs through elimination of duplication; a variety of products and services; and broader market power (Cavusgil et al. 2008; Nderitu and Ndiritu 2018).

One of the biggest mergers that was aimed at and resulted in the economies of scale was the one between HP and Compaq, which created the largest personal computers company in India. This merger was aimed at putting pressure on IBM, another personal computer company, and therefore enjoying the market dominance as much as possible (Nderitu and Ndiritu 2018:848).

Tang (2016:8) purports that in M&A actions, there are two primary tactics for administering transactions, namely a friendly approach and a hostile approach. A friendly acquisition refers to the case where both organisations in the deal carry out due diligence and discuss freely (Miller 2011:105). Often, the negotiation requires companies to choose who will run the executive positions (DePamphilis 2009:650). Traditionally, M&A waves are triggered by uncertainties in the business environment such as: deregulation actions; the introduction of new technologies, distribution channels, or substitute products; or increases in commodity prices (Filipovic, Vrankic and Mihanovic 2014). As evidenced from the extant literature, six M&A waves took place (DePamphilis 2009; Yaghoubi, Locke and Gibb 2016; Nderitu and Ndiritu 2018). These waves of mergers mostly took place in the United States of America beginning from the 1980s and their duration varied from two to eight years.

However, Allahar (2015:410) notes that during the times of these waves, the main feature recorded is that M&A normally fails despite its fame. The first wave started in 1897 and lasted until 1904. Activities that took place during the first wave primarily focused on the horizontal consolidation. Competitors in the transportation, mining, and primary metals industries merged with each other to increase market power (Vazirani 2015:10; Locke and Gibb 2016). The second merger wave happened between 1916 and 1929 (Allahar 2015; DePamphilis 2009; Tang 2016). These authors argue that as a result of World War I as well as the post-war economic boom, most M&A events happened during this wave and they focused on the horizontal industry consolidation.

Horizontal industry involves rival firms operating in the same industry at the same stage in the process. Vertical industry mergers, on the other hand, involves organisations at different stages of the production chain, and conglomerates where firms in unrelated industries merge (Raff 2009; Reddy 2014). The third wave occurred between 1965 and ended in 1969 and was called the Conglomerate merger period. Activities during this wave were intensely influenced by the inclination towards expansion. This trend was a result of the U.S. antitrust law, which had just been enacted at that time (Vazirani 2015:15). Organisations consequently decided to merge with companies in different industries with the aim of broaden their horizons.

The fourth wave started in 1981 and lasted until 1989 and was characterised by co-generic-mergers and hostile takeovers. Tang (2016) and Yaghoubi et al. (2016) underscore that during the fourth wave, numerous external firms started to acquire US firms since US companies had innovative technology and because there were fewer restrictions on the takeover.

The fifth merger wave began in 1992 and ended in 1999. In this wave, the volume and number of M&As reached a record high in history owing to the technological revolution as well as deregulation. The sixth wave began in 2003 and ended in 2008 and was influenced by globalisation and leveraged buyouts (LBO). An LBO happens when the acquiring

organisation with a weaker capital foundation acquires a loan and uses it to acquire the target company. Because of low interest rates, LBOs were more popular during the sixth merger wave. Another factor that increased the volume of cross-border M&As was the government support and private equity funds (Degbey, Eriksson, Rodgers and Oguji 2020:10). Abor and Agbloyer (2012:10) noted that:

The value of all cross border completed M&A rose from less than \$100 billion in 1987, to \$720 billion in 1992 with the value of the cross-border M&As reaching over 80% of World Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows in 1999.

Just like in the other parts of the world, the M&A activity in Africa increased in the period between 2007 and 2008 (Kimberly, Bruce, Taco, Reus and Faifman 2015:138). However, Sadeque (2018:1) states that the value of M&A transactions published in 2017 fell to \$32.4 billion, down from \$42.5 billion in 2016 and \$64.9 billion in 2015, and according to the investment banking analysis, this is said to have been the highest in the last decade. However, unlike in the global platform, M&A activity in Africa confronted and challenged the global economic recession of 2010 by nearing its record levels of 2007 in terms of deal value (Mergermarket 2012; Thomson Reuters 2012). Literature on M&A activity in the African context is said to be scarce and few studies that do exist tend to focus mostly on local deals, particularly, in the banking and financial services sectors of South Africa and Nigeria (Akinbuli and Kelilume 2013:50).

Additionally, it is also reported that the key factors behind M&As in Africa presented to be different from those in the global context. For instance, Adegoye and Oladejo (2012:170) note that the driving force behind M&As in Africa seems to be the need for organisations to comply with government directives and regulatory reforms. For example, almost all the banks M&As were necessitated by increased minimum capitalisation levels set by the respective central banks. Such transformations, it is argued are planned to save the countries 's banking systems from collapse and to reposition the existing organisations for them to become more competitive, efficient, and profitable. Likewise, mergers of

colleges and universities in South Africa resulted from the government mandate following the end of its apartheid policy (Sehoole 2005; Van Vuuren, Beelen and De Jong 2010). Furthermore, mergers were motivated and completed in African markets mainly to create a conducive environment for national economic development (Maude and Okpanachi 2012:10).

2.6 Knowledge management strategies

Currently, knowledge management strategies (KMSs) turned out to be vital for organisations. According to Rhodes, Hung, Lok, Lien and Wu (2008:60), knowledge is a significant resource for strategic organisation in improving innovation and organisational performance (OP). Knowledge management strategies have been explained as the process involved in collocating, organising and transmitting knowledge types between employees. Hansen, Nohria and Thomas (1999) and Andriani, Samadhi, Siswanto and Suryadi (2019) identify two strategies for managing an organisational knowledge – codification and personalisation. These strategies are further discussed below.

2.6.1 Codification strategy

Codification strategy, according to Choe (2012:225), assumes that explicit knowledge can be attained by doing a collation of knowledge through information technology by way of person-to-documentation approach. Codification strategy refers to extorting explicit knowledge for storage in knowledge repositories, where it can be accessed and revisited minimally by staff members in the organisation. Choe (2012:225) opines that information technology infrastructure like databases, electronic repositories, search engines and intelligent filters support the codification strategy implementation. Whereas personalisation strategy is very much connected with staff members who develop the knowledge and shared it regularly through direct employee-to-employee interaction. The aim of this type of codification strategy is to attain the finest informal transfer of tacit knowledge at individual level in an organisation (Al-Hakim and Hassan 2013:59).

However, Kumar and Ganesh (2011:120) note that codification has a downside. Schulz

and Jobe (2001) and Ding, Liu and Song (2013) state that codification strategy can result in the challenge of information overload in the form of huge directories of raw or unprocessed documents or unread mails. Additionally, it is not unusual in an organisation to locate large databases of documents that never experience a second reading but occupy storage space and slow down search and retrieval processes (Jasimuddin, Klein and Connell 2005; Chai and Nebus, 2012). Furthermore, given that explicit knowledge is easily imitable and vastly mobile, the involuntary transfer of strategic know-how such as blueprints and databases to competitors is very likely (Schulz and Jobe 2001 and Jasimuddin et al. 2005). Moreover, Mukherjee (2005:35) holds the view that in the rapidly changing industries like information technology, explicit knowledge has a short lifespan and quickly becomes obsolete. He notes that knowledge that is pertinent today might be useless next year. Mukherjee (2005:36) therefore suggests that codification requires exceptional investments in information technology for creating and maintaining repositories, the expert systems and web pages.

2.6.2 Personalisation strategy

Personalisation strategy, according to Liu, Chai and Nebus (2013:756), is a “people-to-people” approach where there are undeviating interactions between knowledge producers and users. Personalisation is also referred to as network models by some literature (Liu et al. 2010: 756).

According to Greiner, Böhmman and Krcmar (2007:10), the aim of the personalisation strategy is to use IT to assist people to share their knowledge. This strategy seeks to transfer knowledge through knowledge networks such as communities of practice. In contrast to the codification strategy, the personalisation strategy requires a reasonably low degree of IT infrastructure usage for the sharing and communication of tacit knowledge (Choe 2012:227). Because of the wasted investment in databases and the proliferation of social networks, personalisation strategy, which focuses on connecting people, is receiving more attention (Liu et al. 2012:40).

Several authors have identified the benefits associated with tacit knowledge that is embedded in the personalisation strategy. For instance, Spender (1996:60) argues that tacit knowledge detained by the organisation appears to be the most secure and tactically important knowledge because other organisations would have difficulty to understand and duplicate it. Another benefit that comes with an organisation making use of tacit knowledge is because of its ambiguousness in nature (McEvily, Das and McCabe 2000:295). However, tacit knowledge does not come without complications. Ambrosini and Bowman (2001:826) feel that an organisation may not assemble tacit knowledge outside the individual mind.

However, the most severe and typical problem faced by an organisation using tacit knowledge is the risk associated with losing such knowledge because of staff turnover. As Boiral (2002:296) remarks, the movement of people equates to organisational tacit knowledge loss.

2.7 Organisational knowledge retention strategies

Levallet and Chan (2019:178) remark that knowledge retention takes place when knowledge held by an individual in an organisation is transferred from a knowledge owner to the organisation through a variety of means and can be used again by a knowledge seeker. For Agarwal and Islam (2015:153) knowledge retention involves capturing organisational knowledge for future use. These authors argue that knowledge retention is a sub-discipline of knowledge management and is concerned with ensuring that the organisation does not lose its knowledge held by knowledge workers who leave the organisation. When KR has taken place, the initial knowledge holder is no longer the sole owner of that knowledge in the organisation (Levallet and Chan 2019:178).

Organisations are confronted with the challenge of losing knowledge because of several factors, including M&As, which may negatively affect their performance. This challenge therefore, compels firms to establish and implement knowledge retention programmes in order to lessen the loss of significant knowledge (Liebowtiz 2009; Massingham 2018). The primary step in knowledge retention includes the discovery of significant knowledge that is

at risk (DeLong and Davenport 2003). Organisations' ability to collect, store and use knowledge it has generated through experience can have significant ramifications for its performance (Olivera 2000; Massingham 2018). These authors further argue that storing knowledge and using such stored knowledge successfully can protect the firm from the disruptive effects of turnover, facilitate coordination, contribute to the development of innovative products, and may even serve to remodel an organisation.

According to Dube and Ngulube (2013:2), employees depart from their organisations for numerous reasons including career improvement, retrenchments and retirements. Therefore, Liebowitz (2009) and Levy (2011) propose that several knowledge-retention strategies may be employed in the organisation from the beginning, as early as three months from the time that the employee is recruited into the organisation because it may not be easy to determine when an employee will leave the organisation or take early retirement (Levy 2011). This debate on when the retention of knowledge should start results in three knowledge retention strategies namely: 'Reactive', 'Containment' and 'Preventive' knowledge retention strategies (Baguma 2016:63).

Reactive knowledge retention strategy is defined by Liebowitz (2009) and Daghfous et al. (2013) as an instantaneous strategy that involves arresting knowledge from staff members, particularly retirees, when they leave by carrying out the exit interviews.

The time for conducting the exit interviews may differ between a day up to three months. Nonetheless, because of the limited time in which to capture knowledge that has accumulated over long years of work, this strategy may prove to be ineffective. Sometimes even the exit interviews are not conducted, and the organisation later responds by engaging the same retirees as consultants to help fill the knowledge gap (Liebowitz 2009; Daghfous et al. 2013). Containment, on the other hand, is proposed by Liebowitz (2009) and Levy (2011) as a better strategy than the reactive strategy. In a containment strategy, knowledge is captured from employees in period of two to three years before they qualify for retirement (Liebowitz 2009; Levy 2011). The last strategy is called the preventative strategy, and this is where knowledge retention begins from day one, when an employee

joins the organisation and lasts until the day, he or she leave the organisation. (Levy 2011:23). Butler and Roche-Tarry (2002) and Levy (2011) argue that preventative strategy is a purposeful facilitation of knowledge flow between the employees and it is intended avoid its loss.

Malinski (2002) and Levallet and Chan (2019) mention that the approach to retain knowledge can take on a variety of forms and the strategies include communities of practice (CoPs), storytelling, job rotation, job shadowing and exit interviews, illustrated in table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Knowledge retention strategies (Source: Compiled by the researcher)

Knowledge retention	Retention level	Strategy
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strategies	Individual	Group	Organisational	Reactive	Containment	Preventative
Mentoring/coaching/ apprenticeship (Liebowitz 2009; Beazley et al. 2002; DeLong 2004; Liebowitz 2009; Massingham 2018)	√	-	-	-	-	√
Job shadowing (Hackert 2013; Roney, Lubis and Ryzkita 2019)	√	-	√	-	-	√
Job rotation (Wagner, Grigg, Mann and Mohammad 2017)	√	-	-	-	-	√
Communities of practice (Bardon and Borzillo, 2016; Mabery, Gibbs- Scharf and Bara 2013; Sartori, Melen and Pinaridi 2018; Jain 2011)	√	√	√	-	-	√
Storytelling (Sole 2002; Mohammad 2013; Whyte and Classen 2012; Leblanc and Hogg 2006; Chigada and Ngulube 2016)	√	√	√	-	√	-

2.7.1 Mentoring

Flick (2015:330) opines that mentors and mentorship are concepts that have the historical roots in the Ancient Greece. According to Read, Fisher and Juran (2019:12), mentorship is defined as a process of unofficial knowledge transfer from an experienced individual to the

novice and is understood as relevant to work and career development of the mentee. The mentee may be a recently hired person and the focus of this programme should be on the development of the mentee (Allen and Poteet 2011:103). Allen and Pottet (2011) further remark that mentorship represents several strategies of knowledge sharing. In the process of mentorship, Al Makhamreh and Stockley (2019:10) argue that mentors listen, motivate and share their knowledge with their mentees. They further state that mentoring has a positive effect on the mentees, not only at the time of the programme, but it is helpful long after the programme's conclusion. Mentorship seems to have a positive impact on several factors, such as increased job satisfaction for both parties, organisational socialisation, career commitment and dwindling turnover (Hansen and Rasmussen 2016:180).

2.7.2 Job shadowing

According to Service, Dalgic and Thornton (2016:255), job shadowing is defined as a process where a new employee is made to work closely with a skilled employee for the purpose of knowledge sharing. Knowledge being transferred is normally related to daily problems. This knowledge retention strategy provides an employee the opportunity to discover how his or her colleagues perform their duties as well as their full job descriptions. Job shadowing also builds up a bottomless knowledge and appreciation of added tasks in a firm (Hackert 2013:21). According to Roney, Lubis and Ryzkita (2019:389), job shadowing can also be used to obtain the know-how field. An example of this is when a subordinate shadow his senior at a labour discussion; the subordinate might shadow a high-ranking person at the labour discussions with the purpose of gaining experience in the process. Likewise, an expert may shadow a more senior individual with the purpose of learning more about technical capabilities.

These shadowing assignments usually last for a specified period, only happening until the necessary knowledge is shared or transferred. This is the difference between mentoring and job shadowing, where mentorship continues to take place beyond the specific period long after the programme has been completed. The significance of job shadowing relates to its effectiveness, whereby a staff member gets to appreciate their task within a short

space of time (Roney et al. 2019:388).

2.7.3 Job rotation

According to Tan, Smyrnios and Xiong (2014:325), job rotation is defined as an act of alternating employees across functional departments for a given period with the aim of affording them opportunities to gain valuable skills. Al-Romeedy (2019:1005) emphasises the importance of job rotation as being a tool that improves organisational effectiveness. Furthermore, Al-Romeedy (2019:1003) argues that job rotation is an excellent training instrument used to acquire knowledge with no additional cost to the organisation and, therefore, it ameliorates employee's performance (Charity 2015:87). Organisations that use job rotation as a training tool have been referred to as high-performance organisations (Earney and Martins 2009:220). In the context of mergers and acquisition specifically, Bahramfard and Khaderpoor (2017:6) opine that the implementation of job rotation can minimise the risks emanating from cultural variations.

Job rotation can be used as a learning mechanism, not only on the side of the employee, but also on the organisation's side where an organisation is able to identify an individual's abilities and skills (Wagner et al. 2017:488).

2.7.4 Communities of practice

Communities of practice (CoPs) are defined as a group of people working together with a clear topic of knowledge. Bardon and Borzillo (2016:15) describe CoPs as the group of people sharing a similar interest in a topic and gain knowledge pertaining relating to that topic.

The communities of practices are characterised by the domain, community and practice. The domain is described as the area of interest that the community wishes to pursue. The community consisting of members with a common interest in the domain in which they exist. Community indicates the activities that the community find important in attaining their objectives. According to Farnsworth, Kleanthous and Wenger-Trayner (2016:150),

the general objective of CoPs is to enhance knowledge creation by sharing resources.

The significance of a CoP results from the realisation that knowledge may not be reflected externally to the context of formation. Different kinds of knowledge activities and knowledge contributors need a community to share knowledge with other people carrying out similar activities (Sartori, Melen and Pinardi 2018:40). Jain (2011:10) is of the opinion that because it is not easy to share implicit knowledge, the implementation of CoPs facilitates knowledge sharing from experts to the newly hired employees.

2.7.5 Storytelling

Organisational knowledge retention may also be achieved using storytelling. Storytelling is a primeval and a conventional mode of sharing intricate, multi-faceted knowledge mechanism and story-telling narrative (Sole and Wilson 2002; Mohammad, 2013). Whyte and Classen (2012:955) suggest that storytelling is perhaps the finest way to transfer tacit knowledge, because an individual can transmit information and context in a form that is simple for people to understand. According to Leblanc, Leblanc and Hogg (2006:5), stories make information meaningful, make tacit knowledge more explicit and permit information to be organised into learnable chunks. Stories are significant for sharing knowledge and for collaboration, because those who receive the messages or who listen have a chance to pose questions and seek clarifications, which then puts the story into perspective (Chigada and Ngulube (2016:223). Snowden (2002) and Whyte and Classen (2012) identify two types of storytelling – storytelling as a knowledge finding in order to generate sense and comprehension, and storytelling as an apparatus for unveiling knowledge may be a significant instrument to acquire essential knowledge from the organisational members. It produces a successful, low-cost way through which knowledge can continually be retained. Storytelling for production of meaning and comprehension generates metaphors to share knowledge in a clear manner (Snowden 2002; Whyte and Classen2012).

2.8 The role of ICTs in knowledge retention

ICTs provide a multiplicity of functions, such as storing huge amounts of information, making information reachable to individuals, providing means for communication,

generating records of interactions and transactions, and automating processes (Olivera 2000; Mishra, Kishore and Shivani 2018; Mat Nor et al 2020). Furthermore, Holbeche (2005) and Hamad (2018) argue that knowledge is processed through IT systems. Additionally, Cabrera and Cabrera (2002) and Hamad (2018) state that one of the greatest ways to reduce the ostensible cost of knowledge retention is to have a well-designed, intelligible technological instrument that abridges the task and lessens the time necessary for sharing one's ideas with others. Training in the use of these tools can assist people to exploit the systems more competently and thus further lessen the perceptions of cost. Nevertheless, even though information technology plays a central role in facilitating the flow of knowledge in organisations, in numerous instances, the introduction of new technology fails because inadequate attention is given to the human factors, which are critical determinants of the effectiveness of the new systems (Cabrera and Cabrera 2002).

In the context of knowledge management, Martelo-Landroguez and Cegarra-Navarro (2014:342) suggest that ICTs support knowledge management practices by facilitating knowledge acquisition/creation, dissemination, conversion, and use. The primary role of new ICTs in the context of knowledge management specifically is to assist employees to share knowledge through the common platforms and electronic storage. With proper training and education, new ICTs can aid organisations to acquire, store or circulate knowledge (Palacio-Marques, Merigo and Soto-Acosta 2015:1910). Soto-Acosta, Colomo- Palacios and Popa (2014:110) note that social web technologies have not only turned out to be a primary tool for information and knowledge management within organisations, but also an essential tool for competition and interaction with customers across many industries. The social web is defined as the second generation of community-driven web services, including social networking sites, blogs, wikis, and others where everybody can connect, contribute, work together and improve the information space (Colomo-Palacios 2010; Palacios-Marqués et al. 2015).

Furthermore, Mezher (2007:110) opines that ICTs and global networks have transformed and modernised learning and knowledge sharing by means of communication, integration,

collaborative working, online meetings and training. Powell (2003:120) affirms that the application of ICTs in organisations can greatly enlarge the volume and types of potentially valuable information that can be stored, searched, and simply retrieved and reused. “ICTs are vital because they improve access to information, make knowledge production and exchange easier and remain a crucial knowledge management facilitator in addition to other factors like culture, storytelling, people, processes, communities and organisational learning” (Kaniki and Mphahlele 2002).

In addition, the study by Averweg (2008) on how an intranet is used to assist knowledge sharing in the eThekweni Municipality in South Africa found that the intranet was a valuable platform to share and access interdepartmental information, an efficient way to perform organisational interaction and the fastest focal point to propagate and receive organisational communication. Wagner (2008) argues that organisational knowledge is embodied in databases, records, portals, infrastructure, accounting and financial systems, human resource systems, and others. Likewise, Corral (1999), Van de Weide, Omona and Lubega (2010) hold the view that knowledge intensive organisations have some or more of the following knowledge-based resources: knowledge databases and repositories (explicit knowledge); knowledge route-maps and directories (tacit and explicit knowledge); and knowledge networks and discussions (tacit knowledge).

Dewah (2012:14) notes that although ICTs are significant to knowledge management, they are only restricted to the transfer of explicit knowledge and not of tacit knowledge, which happens to be vital in any organisation. For most knowledge management systems, the use of a suitable and user-friendly information technology is somewhat primary and is significant to ensure that new technology is used effectively. This is so because technology aids knowledge management and knowledge retention. Ramirez (2007:9) argues that ICT only acts as an enabler of knowledge building and sharing leading to retention, but it does not in any way motivate employees to share knowledge.

2.9 The role of learning culture in knowledge retention

Culture is often cited as one of the key determining factors of knowledge retention (Froese, Pak and Chong, 2008; Stojanović-Aleksić, Erić Nielsen and Boskovic 2019; Adeinat and Abdulfatah 2019). Dube and Ngulube (2012:72) define organisational culture as the common norms espoused by the firm by learning to create a unique culture that identifies itself over time, both tangibly and intangibly. Culture is also characterised by the beliefs, norms and values espoused by the organisational community to identify themselves (Krajcsák 2018:401). Culture originates to form whenever a group has shared enough conjoint experience with each other (Schein 2009:27). On the organisational level, culture occurs if there is adequate communal history. To make organisations more efficient and effective, the facets and the role that culture plays in the organisational life must be properly decided on (Schein 2009; Frantz 2015; McKinney et al 2017).

Hofstede's (2010) theory on cultural characteristics states that countries value behaviours in various ways. This theory abridged six cultural elements that significantly steer people's values and behaviour namely: power distance index, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance index, long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint. Among all these dimensions, scholars found that collectivism was related to knowledge transfer activities amongst the employees (Peltokorpi 2006; McKinney et al 2017). Peltokorpi further opines that in countries that value collectivism, knowledge sharing activities are widely accepted and are deemed a collective norm. On the other hand, in countries that value individualism, employees may be hesitant to share their knowledge with others. Another mixed influence that institutional collectivism might have on knowledge transfer is that it could lessen employees' drive to share knowledge if the knowledge recipients are not considered part of their communal group (Peltokorpi 2006; Frantz 2015).

M&A researchers have argued that acquisition failures are often due to problems in combining the different cultures and workforces during the integration phase (Bhagat et al. 2002; Björkman, Stahl and Vaara 2007; Schoenberg 2015; Shi, Liu, Yang, Yao and Liu 2017; Farsi 2017; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al. 2019). Björkman et al. (2007:2) argue that clashes amid various organisational values and practices, and 'us vs them' thinking

amongst the employees in the merging organisations, may lead to a lack of cooperation and failed opportunities for inter-unit learning. Culture is seldom considered until after the MandA process, once the deal is finalised. Nonetheless, because 'culture clashes' are repeatedly blamed for the collapse of M&As, it is essential that organisations should have a unambiguous understanding of their own culture at the commencement of this process when MandA is a prime component of their expansion strategy (Denison et al. 2015:103).

Oberg and Tarba (2013:473) caution that organisational cultural variations that accompany CBM&As encumber the capacity to amalgamate organisations and affect the transfer and retention of knowledge. The loss of this knowledge can be particularly harmful for mergers and acquisitions in countries where personal relationships are highly valued (Child 2012:336). However, despite this undependable spat that cultural differences impede organisational amalgamation and affect knowledge retention, the empirical research findings are contradictory (Datta 1991; Schoenberg 1996; Stahl and Voigt 2008; Sarala and Vaara 2010). For instance, Morosini et al. (1998), Daniel, Denison and la Ko (2016) note that:

Mergers and acquisitions in culturally distant countries are more helpful, because a greater cultural distance makes it more likely that the target firm will have capabilities that are considerably diverse from the acquirer's own set: thus, *Ceteris paribus*, complementarities are more likely to exist.

Rotting (2007:104) observes that the permutation of various cultures in CBM&As primarily takes place in the post-acquisition integration stage when the firms involved are expected to work together. Before an acquisition, an acquiring organisation typically conducts financial due diligence to determine the proper transaction price and payment method. Even though financial aspects of CBM&As are normally perceived as of great importance, a large number of acquirers do not attach the same importance to cultural issues as part of due diligence (Rotting 2007:104).

Due diligence is defined by Daniel et al. (2016:53) as a comprehensive process of scrutinising and assessing business opportunities in relation to M&As. The financial due diligence normally conducted in the early stage involving strategic assessment should be done at the same time with organisational culture. For Rotting (2007:104), cultural due diligence has to do with the verification of cultural compatibility in CBM&As. Cultural compatibility does not necessarily mean cultural similarity, but somewhat refers to whether two cultures are “combinable” (Rotting 2007:104). Daniel et al. (2016:54) mention that cultural due diligence naturally happens immediately before main decisions are taken or soon after the deal is promulgated. Farsi (2017:1) opines that notwithstanding the increasing importance of cross-border mergers and acquisitions (CBM&As) around the globe, research into the correlation between differences in culture and organisational performance is both incomplete and inconclusive. Cultural variations themselves may not be perceived as a problem to the success M&As and, therefore, to knowledge transfer, but how the employees of both the acquiring and the target company become a problem.

A learning culture refers to the culture that is oriented towards the promotion and facilitation of learning by its employees (Schmitz et al. 2014:114). Kumar (2007:31) remarks that learning in an organisation is concerned with acquisition, development, and storage of individuals’ knowledge and with availing information to everyone in the organisation. Furthermore, managing knowledge, therefore, becomes essential for any learning organisation that seeks to improve its financial and knowledge performance in order to maintain a competitive advantage. A learning culture permeates in an environment where teamwork, collaboration, creativity, and knowledge processes exist that have a collective meaning and value (Eid and Nuhu 2011:51). Learning culture promotes the sharing and spreading of knowledge that are aimed at the development and success of the organisation (Schmitz et al. 2014:114).

According to Kumar (2007:28), developing a learning culture may be helpful in gathering, organising, sharing, and analysing the knowledge of individual staff members and groups throughout the entire organisation in ways that directly affect its performance. Kumar (2007:28) further alludes to the fact that a learning culture benefits the entire organisation

and certain teams within the organisation, and that is imperative in moving the organisation that is said to support knowledge sharing.

2.10 The role of human resources practices in knowledge retention

The organisational context is changing and has become more competitive in the recent decades. Consistent with the latest developments in technology, Gope, Elia and Passiante (2018:649-677) argue that human resources professionals have been facing the “talent crunch” to attract skillful and talented employees who will add value to the organisation.

Human resources practices (HRPs) are about the policies, practices and systems that an organisation can use to sway employees’ behaviour, attitudes and performance (Gloet and Berrell 2003; Wang and Noe 2010). For Turulja and Bajgoric (2018:258) HRMP is defined as all decisions done in an organisations that are aimed at attracting and retaining personnel. The connection between HRMPs and knowledge management is based on the conjecture that the firm’s ability to create new knowledge resides in their employees’ abilities to learn and in their motivation to share their knowledge with their colleagues (Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle 2012; Gope et al. 2018). Furthermore, Sammarra, Profili, Maimone and Gabrielli (2017:162) remark that HR systems should focus not only on the provision of lifelong learning education, but the focus should also be channelled to ensuring that all organisational HRM policies and practices work to improve employees’ knowledge retention behaviours.

Moreover, Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle (2012:30) underscore that human resources management practices can augment KR via two different directions. Firstly, ETL may use HRM practices to obtain and inspire a workforce with learning capabilities. Secondly, HRM practices can cultivate an organisational culture that inspires the acquisition and knowledge sharing amongst ETL staff members. Additionally, HRM practices facilitate the shaping of employees’ skills, abilities, values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours through hiring,

socialising and developing a firm's pool of human (Fong, Ooi, Tan, Lee and Chong 2011). For example, providing training and development to employees through different knowledge retention strategies, including on-the-job training, job rotation, coaching, and others can help to improve the knowledge, skills, experience, abilities and motivation of employees.

Several studies have previously been undertaken with the aim of establishing the relationship between HRM practices and KR. For instance, Gupta and Singhal (1993), Sammarra et al. (2017), and Gope et al. (2018) listed the following HR practices: HR planning, which refers to staff recruitment; performance appraisal, which encompasses the generation of new responsibilities and peer evaluation; reward systems, which include pay raises, career tracks, promoting and other methods of employee motivating; career management, which comprises staff development planning. Minbaeva (2005), Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle (2013), and Noopur and Dhar (2019) identify staffing, appraisal, compensation, promotion, and training as practices affecting knowledge receivers' absorptive capacity and motivation to share knowledge.

Although they preferred using the term 'people management practices, Cabrera and Cabrera (2005), Turulja and Bajgoric (2018) and Otoo (2019) identified the following practices: work design, staffing, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation. Common to all these studies is the fact that a connection exists between HRM practices and KM. In other words, they share the common view that certain HRM practices can foster a knowledge-oriented HR system that contributes to intra-organisational knowledge retention at personal and organisational levels (Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle 2013; Turulja and Bajgoric 2018; Noopur and Dhar (2019).

This study discusses five HRM practices that are related to knowledge sharing and retention identified by Fong et al. (2011) and Gope et al. (2018) and they include: training and development, teamwork, recruitment and selection, compensation and reward, and performance appraisal. The above selected HRM practices are now discussed below:

2.10.1 Recruitment and selection

According to Fong et al. (2011:715), recruitment and selection are two HRM practices carried out in order to attract the correct personnel. The authors further note that during the process, the hiring organisation usually will match the candidate's skills to the specifications of the position advertised. In order to facilitate the integration of knowledge from various resources, the identification of potential employees with the relevant skills and attitudes ought to be identified as a critical activity (Scarborough 2003; DeVaro and Morita 2009). Although results are mixed on which hiring practices facilitate knowledge the most between internal and external recruitment, it is argued that staffing ameliorates knowledge retention in different ways (Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle 2013:30). Lepack and Snell (1999) and DeVaro and Morita (2009) argue that the recruitment of external people offers the organisation new knowledge held by new employees. Internal recruitment, on the other hand, inspires the existing employees to study so that they can be promoted and, therefore, supports the development of knowledge-oriented culture (Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle 2013: 30).

For an organisation that prioritises the retention of knowledge, the person-organisation (P-O) fit is also regarded as a significant. Original value and characteristics of the new employee should also value knowledge retention in order to underpin the dominant culture of knowledge retention focused in an organisation (Zarraga and Bonache 2003; DeVaro and Morita 2009). Currie and Kerrin (2003:1030) show the evidence of an erroneous selection process in improving the complexity of sharing knowledge between employees from various units or departments. Because the selection of the right candidate, who have the same perception of knowledge retention, is of high importance and the recruitment methods deployed should enable the firm to attract those with knowledge retention inclination (Currie and Kerrin 2003; Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle 2013).

2.10.2 Compensation and reward

Compensation and reward are key HRM practices. Depending on the task

interdependence, compensation and reward can be tailored towards either individuals or teams (Ahmad, Allen, Raziq and Rehman 2019:7). Rewarding employees' behaviour affords them an opportunity to make sense of what is important to the organisation. Therefore, to encourage staff members to share knowledge, organisations have to recognise knowledge-sharing behaviour through direct evaluation and reward because, in this case, employees are more likely to see knowledge retention as an essential part of their job responsibilities (Cabrera and Cabrera 2005; Iqbal 2016). An active reward system is vital in motivating employees to share knowledge because in the absence of such a system, some employees may hoard their knowledge for fear of losing it (Islam, Ahmed, Hasan and Ahmed 2011; Lwanga and Ngulube 2019). According to motivation theories, compensation and reward enhance the motivation for improved individual performance by employees (Robbins and DeCenzo 2008:145). Thus, organisations utilise compensation and rewards to educe, augment and maintain the preferred knowledge retention behaviour of employees. Prior studies have shown the direct relationship between reward system and sharing of knowledge with the aim of retaining it (Zarraga and Bonache 2003; Oliver and Kandid 2006). On the other hand, compensating and rewarding employees may also obstruct performance, where employees may feel they need to be rewarded each time they need to perform a task. Therefore, compensation and reward should be entrenched as part of employee's responsibilities and should be appraised.

2.10.3 Performance appraisal

Mondy (2010:245) defines performance appraisal as an official system of review and evaluation of individual or team task performance. According to Chen and Huang (2009:107), performance appraisals and compensation are the principal strategic HR practices that organisations can apply to improve the employees' behaviours and encourage them to comply with organisational goals. Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle (2013:36) opine that for performance an appraisal to be knowledge driven, it should be systematic, a long-term practice and not be targeted at individuals only, but also at the group (Minbaeva 2005; Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle 2013; Otoo 2019). Performance should also be intended to offer relevant feedback and planned to improve the

participation of employees in the process. In a case where employees believe the performance appraisal is impartial, the perception of these employees towards the firm improves and, consequently, also their commitment to the organisation (Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle 2013). It is equally imperative that performance appraisal results are divulged to the employees and that the correctional remedies are taken in case of underperformance (Jaw and Liu 2003:230). Thus, a performance appraisal system may act as a motivation to share and retain knowledge (Chen and Huang 2009:108).

2.10.4 Teamwork

Khanghahi (2014:125) defines a work team as:

A group of interdependent individuals who solve problems or complete tasks within an organisational context, share responsibility for the results and are perceived by themselves and by others as an intact social entity belonging to a larger social system, and which manages its relationship within the confines of the organisation.

Because knowledge retention is about sharing ideas and information from one team member to another, the retention of knowledge can be achieved through the formation of working teams in an organisation. Lim and Klein (2006:410) contend that in the milieu of knowledge retention, organised teams with knowledge retention value might consider knowledge retention as their “code of conduct”. This self-regulated behaviour in the team permits the team members to freely share their knowledge with one another. For sharing of knowledge to take place in an organisation, the working environment should be made up of people who are cooperative (Goh 2002:25).

2.10.5 Employee training and development

Zhao, Qi and Pablos (2014:569) suggest that training as an HR practitioner is a valuable way of sharing and exploitation of knowledge throughout the entire firm in view of the fact that it provides staff members with an opportunity to acquire and contextualise new knowledge. Cabrera and Cabreara (2005), Aktarand and Pangil (2018), and Rodríguez-

Sánchez et al. (2019) state that training and development can be used to improve self-efficacy among organisational employees. Therefore, self-efficacy can be defined as an individual's believe in his or her capacity to achieve the set goals. For Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2008), and Saifalislam, Osman and AlQudah (2014), training refers to an effort planned by the organisation to assist its employees in the learning process of job-related competencies, such as knowledge, skills, or behaviours that are important for the success of the individuals' job performances. Consequently, the use of extensive training and development programmes should aid to improve the general levels of self-efficacy among organisational employees. Subsequently, employees will feel more confident in their abilities and will be more likely to exchange their knowledge with others (Noe et al. 2008; Naidu and Chand 2014).

Furthermore, Jerez-Go´mez, Ce´spedes-Lorente and Valle-Cabrera (2005) and Sweis, Ghalion, El-Mashaleh, Amayreh, Niveen and Al Balkhi (2019) indicated a correlation between training and knowledge retention. They purport that training plays a significant role in developing employees' skills and learning-oriented organisational culture. Cabrera and Cabrera (2005:730) also note the importance of a comprehensive application of training in order to develop learning capabilities and a shared vision that encourages knowledge sharing amongst employees an organisation. In line with this, Jerez-Gomez, Cespedes-Lorente and Valle-Cabrera (2005) and Sweis et al. (2019) argue that continuing training improves organisational learning capabilities, on account that it favours the acquisition and generation of new knowledge, and also because it enhances knowledge sharing and retention. Moreover, training is considered to facilitate employees' skills to be deciphered into organisational routines (Kamoche and Muller 1998; Rahmani, Doshmanziari and Asgari 2018).

In addition, Cabrera and Cabrera (2005), and Aragón, Jiménez-Jiménez and Sanz-Valle (2014) prefer multi-skill training to a targeted training to improve learning because it has a positive impact on the extent of openness and acquisition of knew knowledge and on the extent of knowledge sharing and retention. Another distinguishing factor of training is

that it improves knowledge retention because it is a long-term process (Rahmani et al. 2018:145). Notwithstanding the multiplicity of the RHM practices described above, Minbaeva (2005) and Aragón et al (2014) argue that their benefits to knowledge retention are amplified when they are implemented jointly as a system of communally reinforcing practices.

2.11 Key factors in transferring and retaining knowledge in mergers

Tang (2016:10) notes that among the various steps in mergers and acquisitions, the one that is mostly linked to knowledge retention is the integration process. Tang (2016) argues that this is the time that teams of the merged organisations start to establish a connection and work together. The relations embrace several dimensions, including recognition of each other, tie strength, distance, shared vision, as well as trust (Tang 2016:10). Integration in the context of M&As refers to the multifaceted process in which previous individual organisations are combined. Integration involves combining the original socio-technical systems of the merging organisations into one newly combined system (Goh 2001; Vaara, Sarala, Stahl and Björkman 2012). Integration, particularly post-merger integration, is critical for synergy between merging organisations. Post-merger integration (PMI) refers to the process of actual merger value-creation that will confidently materialise when the firms are amalgamated (Vieru and Rivard 2015:1). Tang (2016:10) observes that this is the period in which employees of merging companies start to establish relationships and work together. However, Weber and Tarber (2011:210) state that the loss of independence that is related to the integration process can sometimes be harmful to the performance of the firm. For instance, Puranam, Singh and Chaudhuri (2009:318) state that the levels of integration may lead to the destruction of the acquired firm's knowledge-based resources because of turnover and the disruption of organisational practices. Some scholars have noted various features of the integration process of knowledge transfer in M&As. Among these are the different factors, and the interactions between organisations in M&A process are considered to have a considerable influence on knowledge transfer. The interactions include many components, such as the identification with each other, tie strength, distance, shared vision, and trust (Van Wijk,

Jansen, Marjorie and Lyles 2008).

The knowledge-based view (KBV) of firms (Reus and Fifman 2015), which stresses the need to develop and incorporate knowledge, proposes the need for specific capabilities in the post-merger integration period. Weber and Tarber (2010:207) define the knowledge integration capability as the ability to manage acquisitions and achieve their strategic goals by taking advantage of synergies through resource sharing and deploying and transferring resources and capabilities from one company to the other. Capabilities can be transferred in several ways: handed to the new sister firm, shared for common use, or taught to members of the other firm.

Furthermore, previous studies revealed that trust, which is the organisation's belief that the other organisation is loyal and adept in taking responsibility, is particularly significant to knowledge transfer in M&As (Inkpen and Tsang 2005; Oberg 2008; Mishra, Pradhan and Bisht 2018). Stronger trust ensures that staff members in one organisation are more eager to communicate, discuss and share their fundamental skills with employees of the other organisation. With a high degree of trust, the procedure becomes easier because colleagues need not worry about possible complications (Inkpen 2005; Mishra et al. 2018).

Apart from trust, shared vision is also assumed to be of great importance in knowledge transfer. Same vision ensures that employees have a greater understanding of the benefits they may derive from sharing their knowledge (Bratianu and Anagnoste 2011:320). To create a high trust environment and amplify employees' shared vision, regular communication is significant. In accordance with this view, Minbaeva, Pedersen, Bjorkman, Fey and Park (2003), Bratianu and Anagnoste (2011), Rodríguez-Sánchez et al. (2019), and Jain et al (2019) posit that internal communication might certainly affect the motivation of employees and consequently certainly also the knowledge transfer process. Weber and Tarba (2010:207) add that the ability for knowledge integration involves coordination across units of both organisations. It depends on communication between managers and employees of the acquiring company, and between these

managers and those of the acquired company.

In addition, the relationship between the merging organisations was examined. In line with this, Junni and Sarala (2013:280) state that the strategic relationship between the merging organisations can underpin knowledge transfer by easing knowledge transfer. Again, the social relationships among the two organisations' employees can manipulate knowledge transfer by influencing the employees' readiness to participate in knowledge transfer (Junni 2011:310). In the CBM&As context, it has been found that characteristics of knowledge, including tacit knowledge (Junni 2011), vagueness (Junni and Sarala 2013) and cultural variations (Javidan et al. 2005) can encumber M&A knowledge transfer.

Another key factor in transferring and retaining knowledge during CBM&As is the retaining of valued personnel during the M&A integration process. Casal and Fonthela (2007:60) describe valuable employees as those in whom the core knowledge is embedded. Nonetheless, the study results in this regard are contradictory. For example, Ranft and Lord (2000:300) allude to the fact that retaining valuable personnel is one of the principal factors of knowledge transfer in the M&As process. In contrast, Casal and Fonthela (2007:60) established no major connection between the retaining key employees and knowledge transfer.

Bresman et al. (2010:10) provide a scenario where the buying organisation may have better knowledge or skills that it desires to share with the target firm with the intention of ensuring that it becomes effective and responsive. They concluded that communication, visits and meetings may enable the sharing of that knowledge (Bresman et al. 2010:15).

2.12. Challenges in retaining knowledge in the aftermath of a merger

Troyer (2013:1) argues that one of the serious problems associated with the people-side of mergers is employee turnover. Turnover is a critical organisational factor and it presents both positive and negative aspects. Turnover is defined as the inward and outward movement of individuals in an organisation (Goecke, Michaelis and Schweizer 2018:170). Arshad and Puteh (2015:1) propose that in the competitive business environment, employees are becoming significant assets in the organisation. Employees'

commitment, therefore, determines organisational performance and survival. In line with that, Abassi and Hollman (2000), and Butler, Perryman and Ranft (2012) suggest that organisational management must recognise that staff members are the primary contributor to the proficient achievement of the organisation's success. Goecke et al. (2018:167) posit that, normally, a high-top management turnover has a negative impact on overall the M&A's success because the top management is vital for a smooth integration and knowledge retention between the merging entities. Although there is a recognition that top management turnover is relevant for M&A's success, Buono and Bowditch (2003), and Goecke et al. (2018) are of the opinion that the general employee turnover may likewise disturb the acquisition and integration processes. Specifically, in the high-technology sectors such as the telecommunications, staff members are a firm's most important resources because they are the carriers of organisational knowledge (Goecke et al. 2018:167). The level of turnover in the acquiring firm is influenced by the nature of the merger negotiations (Walsh 1989; Concept of Mergers and Acquisitions 2014). More hostile negotiations result in greater turnover in the acquired firm after completion of the acquisition. One of the keys to a successful acquisition, therefore, is to circumvent a win-lose context that may ultimately lead to high levels of turnover among the most valuable managers and employees (Walsh 1989; Concept of Mergers and Acquisitions, 2014).

In general, employee turnover is negatively connected to organisational performance and is financially costly (Allen, Bryant and Vardama 2010; Park and Shaw 2013). This is even more significant in acquisition processes, as employees are the primary holders and transmitters of knowledge and capabilities in terms of technology, patents, or physical properties (Ranft and Lord 2002:430). Getting access to this knowledge and creating synergies is one of the main motivations for acquisitions in the high-tech industry.

Apart from that the above, Ramesh and Gelfand (2010:810) note that M&As do not only entail considerable monetary transactions and high pressure for financial payoffs, they also cause conflicts, layoffs, and dissatisfaction. Employees often experience M&As as emotional surprise resulting in high occupational and private stress, separation anxiety, uncertainty (Ranft and Lord 2002; Sarala and Vaara 2010), and fear about the future and

career.

There is evidence showing that organisational employee turnover is not only detrimental to the organisational performance, but it can be advantageous as well. For instance, Mello (2011:100) postulates that turnover provides an organisation with the opportunity to engage new employees with recent training and ensure that they are not locked into existing ways of doing things. Other positive results are higher quality, less expensive replacements, displacement of poor performer, innovation, flexibility, adaptability offer opportunities to encourage talented, high performers, and more (Mello 2011:101). There are a variety of challenges in preserving talent and knowledge in the aftermath of the merger, including misaligned structures, poor communication, loss of key employees, and knowledge and motivation issues.

In anyway, given the fact that M&As result in uncertainty as far as employees' careers are concerned, retaining knowledge of employees whose careers are at risk will always be a challenge to the organisation.

2.12.1 Misaligned structures

Singh and Chitranshi (2016:17148) define the misalignment of structures as how the restructuring process is accepted by both organisations after the mergers. They argue that more often, companies do not align themselves to the predetermined strategies that result in erosion of talent from their team as well as the organisation. Therefore, it becomes imperative for organisations to always be aligned to the pre-determined strategies.

2.12.2 Poor communication

Communication is considered as an important aspect in M&A performance, yet surprisingly little research has examined the link between different communication approaches and M&A outcomes (Duncan, Mellahi, Gomes and Peter (2016; Rodríguez-

Sánchez et al. 2019). Additionally, Sarala, Vaara and Junni (2019:7) opine that communication is not only important in the aftermath of M&As, but also in the premerger period. They further argue that in the premerger, communication that realistically conveys the key goals and integration plans can alleviate fears and concerns of staff members. From the practice point of view, communication links directly to other managerial practices and actions. In this regard, Bastien (1987) and Sarala and Vaara (2010) state that employees of the target firm should understand the acquirer's practices and actions as communication even when they are not specifically intending it as such. Proper communication ensures that staff members base their expectations on formal communication. With no communication, staff members base their expectations on any information they can find, and this includes rumours (Sarala et al. 2017:7).

Furthermore, Seo and Hill (2005), and Rodríguez-Sánchez et al. (2019) opine that for organisations to lessen the fretfulness of employees, communication from the top to the bottom should be implemented, and it is essential that updated information is communicated throughout all levels in order to know what will happen next.

Additionally, Singh and Chitranshi (2016:17145) remark that during the process of a merger, employees are ordinarily kept unaware of the buy or sale of the enterprise. They frequently obtain information about the merger and acquisition on a less than timely basis, through the corporate scuttlebutt or through media communication. This can lead to a misrepresented or distorted picture of the merger's ramifications and to counterproductive exercises by staff members who might be on edge about possible job losses. Therefore, wherever possible, companies should aim to notify all staff in time and talk about their concerns as well as positive emotions in order to minimise the anxiety (Singh and Chitranshi 2016:17145).

If employees are often informed of the latest information, it may boost their trust in the organisation and, therefore, may decide to stay longer even if opportunities to leave may be available. This information sharing may be in formal platforms such as general meetings where employees and management get to interact, and employees can ask

questions where they may need clarity.

2.12.3 Loss of key employees and knowledge

Jasimuddin, Connell and Klein (2012:196) argue that in the process of knowledge transfer in mergers, important knowledge could be lost. Mergers could also lead to a loss of tacit knowledge. The authors highlight the fact that managers struggle to manage and retain the organisational knowledge during times of radical changes like mergers. Additionally, McKinney et al. (2017:41) posit that there is loss of knowledge in every M&A, and that this knowledge loss is even more in the case of dramatically diverse knowledge. The principal issue is that it is hard for managers to define individual and organisational knowledge and who possess what knowledge.

Zander and Zander (2010:30) add that acquirers are not 100 per cent sentient of what they are acquiring in terms of knowledge. It is essential for the acquiring firm to identify who knows what and to retain key employees (McKinney et al. 2017:41). Nonetheless, if conflicts arise during mergers, it can lead to employees turnover, which can be a precondition for knowledge loss.

2.13 Similar studies

This section reviews studies related to this study with the aim of considering the research methodology employed by other researchers. In particular, the section looks at the approaches used, data collection tools employed, and the research results those studies yielded. This review of previous related studies has been done with the aim of justifying the adopted methodology of this study.

Lodden (2012) conducted a study on knowledge transfer in mergers and acquisition and Cisco company was used as a case study organisation. This was a qualitative study which employed a case study design with the interviews as data collection tools. Key to the findings in this study are the following: firstly, the finding pointed to the fact that the things that Cisco did in the early stages of the integration process could have an effect on the

post-integration process and knowledge transfer, which is vital for knowledge retention. Secondly, the results of this study demonstrated that the retention of key employees would not be possible if human resources and management were not involved in the process. Thirdly, the results point to the fact that the cultural barriers and challenges can be fixed in the process, but failure to retain key employees may hamper knowledge transfer. The study further stated that the acquisition process might fail because of this.

Holland (2015) investigated talent retention, which was a multiple case study of the talent's 'pull-to-stay' after acquisition. Holland (2015) employed a qualitative research approach which triangulated interviews and document analysis as techniques of data collection. The study findings revealed that the connections that the employees had across subsidiaries studied, mainly Dutch, MedPk, L10N international and BSW had an influence on their retention. The study findings further indicated that talent who had left and returned had felt the sense of loss and that feeling influenced their decision to come return. Moreover, the study found evidence of high retention L10N USA and very high voluntary turnover after the acquisition at L10N Ireland.

Von (2018) conducted a study on the Chinese cross-border mergers and acquisitions in developed economies. The study particularly looked at the organisation of knowledge transfer and the impact on business-to-business customer and supplier relationships of the acquired organisation. This was a qualitative approach study employing a multiple case study design. The population for this study was selected following a purposive sampling strategy with semi-structured interviews as methods of data collection. The main finding resulting from this study revealed that the management actions to achieve knowledge transfer in the milieu of cross-border acquisitions (CBAs) in developed economies (DEs) include the establishment of mutually operated research and development (RandD) centres and joint ventures, as well as the reaching of licence agreements between the Chinese parent company and the acquired target firm. Another major result of the study was that while the dominant knowledge transfer direction remains from the acquired enterprise to the Chinese parent company and knowledge transmission concerns the technological area, knowledge transfer meanwhile also occurs bi-

directionally.

Farsi (2017) investigated the impact of cultural differences on the performance of cross-border mergers and acquisitions. This is a qualitative methodology with a single case study design. The instruments used for collecting data by means of purposive sampling were semi-structured interviews. The main findings of this study showed that cultural variations have a multifaceted impact on the CBMandA processes, and particularly on the integration as well as on the long-term CBM&A outcome. To this effect, the study recommended that it can be managed by an early assessment of cultural fit and adequate analysis of cultural dynamics before the CBM&A. The findings also highlighted the importance of examining cultural differences from a broader perspective, “by considering industry-specific cultural characteristics or companies’ ownership structures during the target selection”.

Ai and Tan (2018) conducted a study on the intra-firm knowledge transfer in the outward MandA of multinational corporations from emerging economies (EMNCs). Intra-firm knowledge transfer in M&A has to do with the flow of knowledge from either direction, from the acquiring to the acquired firm and vice versa (Junni and Sarala 2013). This study adopted a qualitative approach that is based on the multiple case studies of three principal Chinese EMNCs. Data were collected through three rounds of semi-structured interviews. The main findings of this study revealed that there is a discrepancy between the transfer of explicit knowledge in the post-acquisition integration stage of Chinese organisation and outward M&A. Furthermore, the results show that Chinese MNCs chose to deal with cultural differences by “keeping their distance from their foreign acquired firms. This is because they were aware of the huge cultural differences at both the organisational and national levels when they undertook post-acquisition integration and of the lack of adequate capabilities to solve such a complex cultural problem”.

Yahiaoui, Chebbi and Weber (2016) investigated the role of HR practices in overcoming the differences and inconsistency between the source and recipient of knowledge during the exploitation of synergies in the post-merger integration (PMI) process. This study

followed a qualitative approach based on a case study using interviews as instrument of data collection. The study showed that conflict between employees of merging companies has been identified as a major factor in M&As failure. Furthermore, the results of the study confirmed and highlighted the important role of HR practices in the knowledge transfers process during the acquisition as evident.

Chigada (2014) conducted a study on how knowledge management may be used to improve performance of organisations in the selected banks of South Africa. The aim of this study was to identify means by which knowledge is identified, stored, organised and retained with the purpose of improving organisational performance. This embedded case study research triangulated quantitative and qualitative research methods culminating in multi-methods research. These triangulated research methods are questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. The study findings pointed to the uncertainty on whether knowledge management can be used to improve services in the selected banks.

2.14 Consolidation and assessment of related similar studies

The current section looked at the related studies with the aim of finding any similarity to the current study. Specifically, the related studies focused on and highlighted the importance of the following:

- The role played by the HR practices in the post-merger integration process
- Intra-organisational knowledge transfer in M&As
- Cultural variations on the performance of cross border M&As
- Talent retention after M&As
- Knowledge transfer in M&As

All these studies preferred using the qualitative approach with a case study design. Data collection instruments in most of studies were semi-structured interviews while others combined semi-structured interviews with document analysis.

2.15 Summary of Chapter Two

Chapter Two reviewed the literature related to different aspects of knowledge management and organisational mergers. Specifically, the following were discussed: knowledge retention, organisational mergers and cross-border mergers. The primary topics discussed included the conceptual and theoretical framework, with reference to the knowledge retention model guiding this study. Furthermore, the study reviewed the literature based on the proposed objectives and the following were discussed: knowledge management strategies, knowledge retention strategies, the role of organisational culture as a change factor in knowledge retention, key factors in transferring and retaining knowledge in mergers, challenges in retaining knowledge in the aftermath of a merger and the role of ICT in knowledge retention. The study also discussed the role of human resources management practices and the following HR practices were discussed: employee training and development, teamwork, performance appraisal, compensation and reward and recruitment and selection.

The next chapter discusses the methodology followed in undertaking this research.

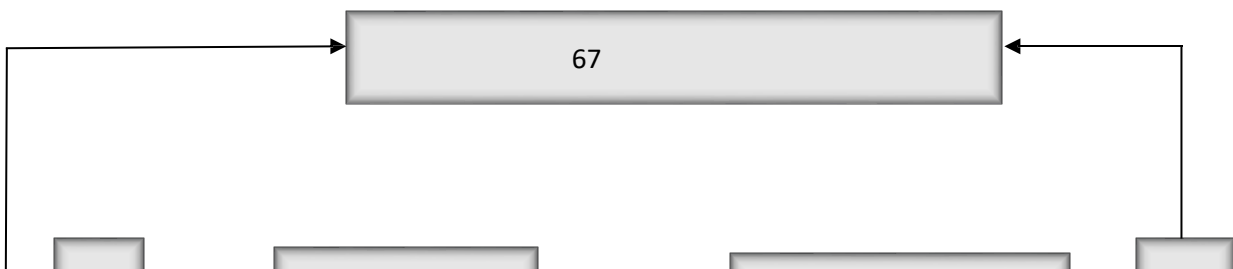
CHAPTER THREE

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter reviewed literature for the current study on knowledge retention in the context of organisational cross-border mergers. The literature review for the current study was consistent with the objectives extracted from the knowledge retention model. It was revealed in Chapter Two that the literature review assisted the current study in many ways and one of these was that it assisted in identifying the methodological characteristics that have been employed in previous similar studies.

The literature review established that the scientific investigation is anchored on certain philosophical underpinnings regarding what constitutes a reliable and a valid research. In particular, ontology, epistemology, research approach, design as well as the methods for this study are thoroughly discussed. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the population, sampling, data analysis and the ethical considerations for the current study. The road map for the current study's design is presented in figure 3.1.



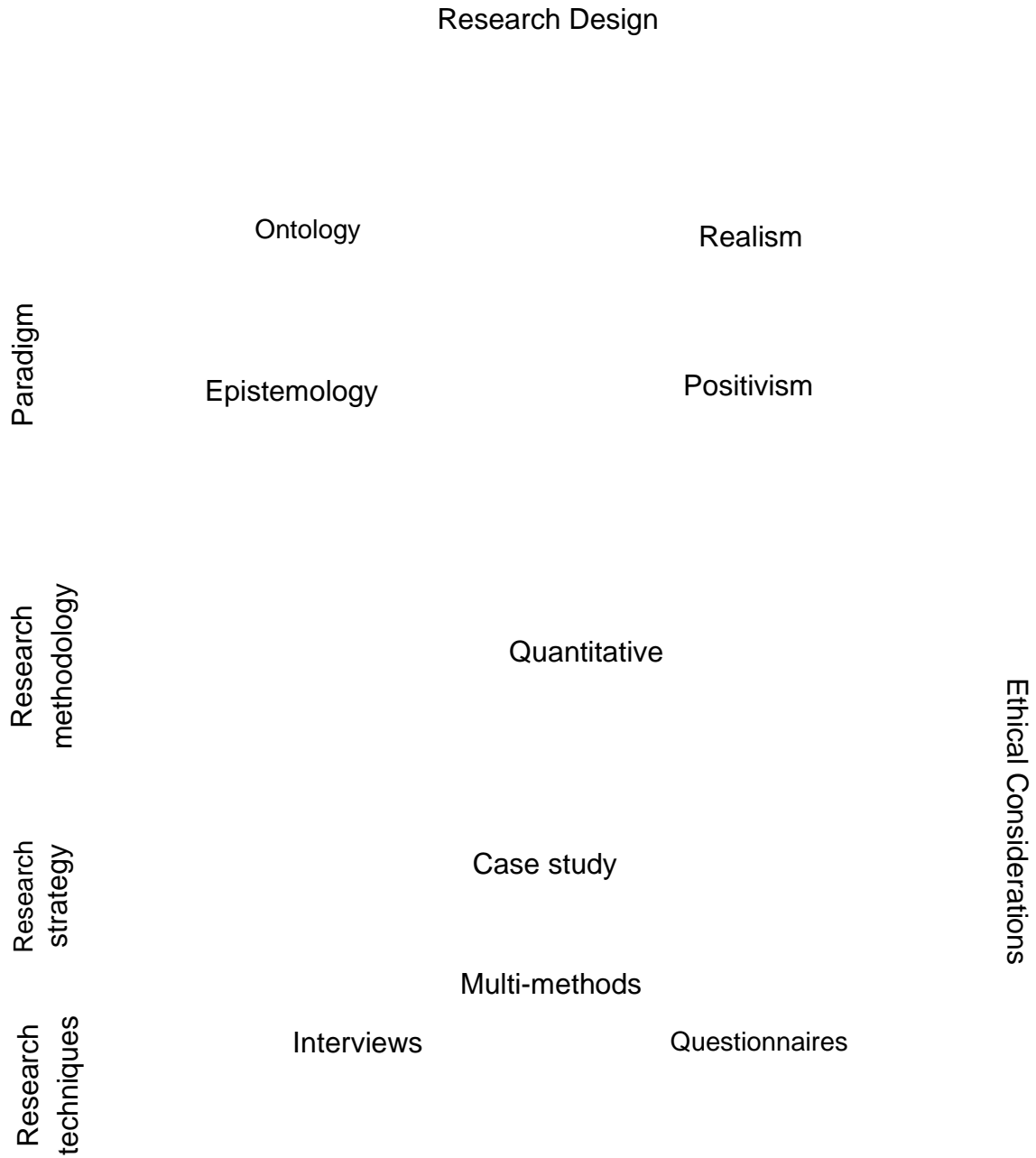


Figure 3.1: Design map of the study (adapted from Ngulube 2019).

3.2 Research paradigm

This section deals with the research paradigm guiding the current study. The word 'paradigm' dates as far back as Thomas Kuhn's book of 1962 called *The structure of scientific revolutions* in which he scrutinised the history of natural sciences with the aim of discovering patterns of activities that shape the progress of science (Bhattacharjee 2012; Kivunji and Kuyini 2017). Bhattacharjee (2012:17) further notes that the same ideas also apply in social sciences where a social reality can be viewed by different people in different ways, which may confine their thinking and reasoning about the observed phenomenon. Schwandt (2001:124) understood and defined a paradigm as a shared worldview that embodies the beliefs and values in a given discipline and that shows how problems are solved. Similarly, Sarantakos (2005), Kamal (2019), and Kaushik and Walsh (2019) explain paradigms as the philosophical assumptions or beliefs that guide the actions and explain the researcher's worldview. For Patton (2002:135), a paradigm explains a worldview that is guided by the philosophical assumptions relating to the nature of reality called ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Each of these paradigm components is explained in detail below.

3.2.1 Ontology

The term 'ontology' originates from Greek and is divided into two parts, with "onto" meaning "being", and "logos" generally construed as "science"; so that ontology, as usually understood, refers to the science or study of being (Antwi and Hamza 2015). Scotland (2012:9) defined ontology as a division of philosophy about the suppositions that people make in considering that something makes sense or is real, or the very nature or essence of the social phenomenon we are studying.

According to Bryman (2012:32), ontology reflects on the question of "whether social entity can and should be regarded as objective entities that have a reality outside the social actors or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors". As a result, these give birth to two distinct ontological philosophies; namely 'objectivism' and 'constructionism' and are discussed

below.

3.2.1.1 Objectivism

Objectivism can be considered as a foundation of naturalism or scientism which promotes the application of natural science to society (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe 2010:619). These authors suggested that objectivism can be explained as both ontology and epistemology. Ontologically, objectivism holds the view that there is a reality “in itself,” existing separately from the human mind (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2007; Mills et al. 2010; Bryman 2012).

3.2.1.2 Constructivism

Constructionism philosophy undertakes that the social phenomena and related meanings are repeatedly accomplished by social actors and are in an unvarying state of revision (Bryman 2012:33). Those who do not favour objectivism like Thomas Kuhn (1964) and Kenneth Gergen (1985) allege that “scientific beliefs” have a meaning only in the context of a specific theory and therefore are “flawed” in understanding reality. Thomas Kuhn and Kenneth Gergen further allege that “the understanding of science can never depend completely upon ‘objectivity’ alone because objective conclusions are eventually based on the subjective worldview of its researchers”. Constructivism, according to Chipangura, Van Niekerk and Van der Waldt (2016:264), is built upon this view to disparage the objectivist epistemology and ontology.

Social constructivism positions are based on the theoretical belief that reality is socially constructed and therefore changes. It renounces the possibility of a theory neutral observational language (Burr 1995) and there is nothing like “ultimate true knowledge”, but whatever is understood as “truth” is mainly a result of subjective socio-cultural consensus of views, which is perceived as “reality”. For Bryman (2012:32), constructionism is an ontological position (often-called constructivism) that emphasises that social phenomena and their meanings are persistently being accomplished by social actors. Bryman further states that “social phenomena and categories are not only

produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision”.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Irene (2014:5) traced the roots of epistemology to the ancient Greek verb ‘*epistame*’ which means to have a deep knowledge of something; to have internalised something by experiencing it, symbolising a close relationship of the knower and the known. Epistemology focuses on the very foundation of knowledge, its nature, and forms and how it can be gained as well as how it can be shared between individuals (Irene, 2014; Scotland 2012). Bryman (2012:27) posited that epistemology involves the issues around “what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a given discipline”. Bryman (2012) further states that a central issue of epistemology is whether the social world can and should be studied along similar principles, procedures, and ethos as the natural sciences. Chilisa and Kawulich (2012:1) argue that epistemology goes further to even ask what the sources of knowledge are and how reliable they are. There are two broad epistemological positions, namely positivism and interpretivism and they are discussed below.

3.2.2.1 Positivism

The word ‘positivism’ was first used by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) to mirror strict pragmatic approaches in which assertions about knowledge are based directly on experience; it accentuates facts and the causes of behaviour (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003:105). Comte differentiated between empirical knowledge and knowledge resulting from metaphysics or theology; he argued that scientific knowledge was more representative of truth than the knowledge derived from metaphysical speculation (Schwandt 2001:199). According to Bryman (2012:28), positivism “is an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond.” If, for instance, we consider an old African belief that witches or witchcraft exists, positivists would want to have a tangible evidence of their existence as well as the methods used to obtain that evidence. Again, if a person is found on a rooftop

naked mostly at night, Africans would believe he or she is a witch. Even though positivists can physically see that person, they would still need a scientific evidence. A basic assumption of positivism, according to Ntwi and Kasim (2015:219), “is that the ultimate goal of science is to develop the most objective methods possible to get the closest approximation of reality”. Researchers who subscribe to this perspective explain quantitatively how variables interact, shape events, and cause outcomes (Ntwi and Kasim 2015:219).

3.2.2.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism originally arose as a response to positivism (Sefotho 2018:25). According to Saunders et al. (2007), Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), and Gryan (2018), interpretivism “is an epistemology which argues that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans as social actors.” This emphasises the difference between conducting research among people rather than objects such as trucks and computers (Saunders et al. 2007:106). Similarly, Thanh and Thanh (2015), and Creswell and Creswell (2018) underscore that the interpretive paradigm permits researchers to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. Given the above example of witchcraft, the advocates of interpretivism would want a “supposed” witch to confess and they would believe them. Thanh and Thanh (2015) further suggest that in the quest to find the answers for research, the researcher who uses an interpretivism paradigm employs the participant’s experiences to develop and interpret his comprehension from the collected data.

3.3 Taking a position

Weber (2004:vi) opines that “research is a continuous journey to find ways to understand reality regardless of whether the researchers view of reality is an objective or socially constructed one”. Researchers, therefore, should clarify what they understand constitutes both the reality and knowledge (Scotland 2012:9).

3.3.1 Ontological position

By taking the ontological position of realism which falls within the positivist paradigm, the researcher holds the view that there is a real world existing autonomously from our insights, theories and constructions (Maxwell and Mittapali 2010; Williams 2020). To clarify the ontological position of realists, William (2020) likens realists' ontology to the snow and argues that snow is white only if the substance of snow has the property of whiteness. Neuman (2011) and Saunders et al. (2007) identify two forms of realism, namely direct realism and critical realism. Direct realism assumes that what you see is what you get. Critical realists on the hand highlight that what people experience are only ambiences, the images representing the actual world, not the things directly, and they further argue that our senses through which we experience the world sometimes deceive us. The example provided is that of a football match where an advertisement of the sponsor is displayed in a prominent location on a playing field. It may look as if it is standing upright, but that is an illusion, as it may as well be painted on the grass, thus representing the real world. The direct realist would then respond to the critical realist that what they call illusions result from inadequate information (Saunders et al. 2007:105).

The phenomenon studied relates to the facilitation of knowledge retention in cross-border mergers of the telecommunication industry of Lesotho. The researcher feels that the issue of retaining employees during the merging process is dependent on the individuals concerned at the time. In other words, management may not have an influence on the employees who have made up their minds that they are leaving the organisation because of uncertainty that is usually associated with mergers, thus, the reality is that M&As are synonymous with high staff turnover and when the time comes, employees will leave, regardless of the offers that management may put on the table for them. The actions of management to retain important knowledge of employees during M&As are therefore independent of the fact that employees may decide to leave anyway and that is why organisations need to establish an ongoing culture of knowledge sharing to avoid knowledge loss during the process.

3.3.2 Epistemological position

This study is premised on a positivism epistemology. According to Kuyini (2017) and Corry, Porter and Mckenna (2018), knowledge is best obtained from lived experiences, and obvious, unbiased facts. Positivism epistemology underscores that only facts obtained through scientific approaches can make genuine knowledge claims. In fact, Comte (1896:29), who coined the term positivism, feels that there can never be any real knowledge except that which is backed up by evidence or facts. This study is premised on a positivism epistemology which also falls within the positivist paradigm. Saunders et al. (2007:120) feel that employees are unpredictable, particularly during transformational periods such as M&As that come with uncertainties. Employees have the freedom to decide whether or not to remain with the new organisation after the merger or to leave during the merger process. M&As present a turbulent environment where decisions need to be made very fast. Therefore, meaning can be discovered objectively outside the MandA context, because there is no time to interact with other employees and decide whether or not to leave the organisation, particularly if there are already job offers outside.

3.4 Research methodology

It has been established that in an attempt to understand the world around them, that people use two forms of reasoning namely deductive and inductive reasoning (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Saunders et al. 2007; Bryman 2012; Bhattacharjee 2012; Creswell 2014). The aim of a deductive research according to Bhattacharjee (2012:3) is to test concepts and patterns from the theory using newly collected empirical data. For Locke (2007:868), deduction involves a shift from the general to the particular, such as starting from a theory, deriving hypotheses from it, testing those hypotheses, and revising the theory. Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, entails a “shift from the particular to the general, as when making empirical observations about some phenomenon of interest and forming concepts and theories based on them”. However, in the view of Bryman (2012:407), it is uncommon for qualitative or grounded theory practitioners to begin with a general focus and move to specific as in the deductive or quantitative research.

3.4.1 Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research

Informed by the paradigm, the worldview or philosophical assumption that the researcher brings to the study, the research approaches or strategies, and specific research methods or data collection techniques, analysis and interpretation, social research can make use of a qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research (MMR) methodologies. It is important to note that while this study refers to these concepts as methodologies, Gunned (2016) and Ngulube (2019), and other authors (Creswell 2009; Creswell 2014; Creswell and Creswell 2018) refer to them as approaches. On the other hand, Bryman (2012:35) refers to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods researches as research strategies. Although this study is mostly quantitative in nature, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to improve reliability and validity of the study.

Methodology is fundamental in research as it is the basis on which the researcher makes decisions related to the whole research process (Ngulube 2015:7). Therefore, it becomes imperative to explain these methodologies in order to make an informed decision for the current study. These methodologies are discussed below:

Qualitative research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour. Research in such a situation is a function of researcher's insights and impressions.

Punch (2005) and Mishra and Subudhi (2019) state that qualitative research is mostly concerned with cases. Punch (2005) further argues that qualitative research is "sensitive to context and process, to lived experience and to local grounded-ness, and the researcher tries to get closer to the phenomenon under study".

Alok (2017:3) defines quantitative and qualitative research methodologies as follows:

Quantitative research is based on the aspect of quantity or extent. It is related to object that can be expressed in terms of quantity or something that can be counted. It involves systematic experimental analysis of observable phenomenon via statistical, mathematical, or computational

techniques in numerical form such as statistics, percentages, etc.

Qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomenon such as the one involving quality or variety. This research type is normally expressive and harder to analyse than quantitative data. Qualitative research involves looking thoroughly at non-numerical data. It is more naturalistic or anthropological.

Mixed methods research is about the assimilation of qualitative and quantitative methodologies and data in one study (Creswell 2019; Ngulube 2020). The major reason often provided for using this approach is that the interface between quantitative and qualitative research provide more vigorous analysis possibilities (Dos Santos, Fabrizio, Peiter, De Mattia, Perin and Lorenzini 2020; Ngulube 2020).

According to John, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007:115), the following justification has been provided for using quantitative and qualitative methodologies in one study. One of the reasons often provided is the confirmation or validation of each other through triangulation (Ngulube 2009; Romm and Ngulube 2015; Fusch, Fusch and Ness 2018; Creamer 2018). Furthermore, researchers use mixed methods in order to instigate new ways of thinking by attending to inconsistencies that appear from the two data sources (John et al. 2007:115).

Notwithstanding the growing popularity of MMR, Ngulube and Ngulube (2015:3) note that different opinions still linger. One such contradictory view is that the prospective contribution of MMR is often 'oversold' (De Loo and Lowe 2011:24). Moreover, Denzin (2010:420) notes that one of the arguments and issues on MMR is that there are disagreements on its definitions. According to Ngulube (2013:10), scholars who argue against blending the two research approaches point to their incompatibility. The reasoning against amalgamation is that the two approaches have different research questions, different research methods and strategies of analysis and inferences (Ngulube 2013:10). Another criticism levelled against the use of MMR by Doyle, Brady and Byrne (2016:10) is that it is more time consuming than using a single approach, more specifically for time-bound projects such as master's or

doctoral studies. For that reason, triangulation of methods was preferred in this study in contrast to mixed methods research. The research question was answered by a quantitative methodology (the triangulated methods) in order to enhance the validity of the data through establishing consistencies and corroboration in the data.

3.5 Research approaches and design

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:3), research approaches are defined as the strategies and actions for research that follow on it's the collection and interpretation of data. However, as pointed out earlier, the approaches referred to here by Creswell and Creswell (2018) are quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research. This is in direct contradiction to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Ngulube (2019) who refer to approaches as case studies, surveys, grounded theory, action research ethnography, and more. However, other authors (Bryman 2012; Creswell 2013; Kumar 2010; Creswell and Creswell 2018) categorise these as research designs. This goes to show the inconsistencies surrounding the social research methodological procedures.

Based on the arguments above, Ngulube (2019:87) remarks that comparing a research approach with a research design is no longer tenable because research approaches are aspects of the study design. Study design is regarded as a foundation for any study. Creswell (2013), Van Wyk and Taole (2015) and Gorard (2010) regard research design as a plan for the entire research project and, therefore, in its absence or without using an appropriate design, research conclusions may be rendered insignificant.

Ngulube (2019:94) notes that, a “coherent research approach or strategy facilitates rigour in research”. The nature of this study, therefore, allows for the adoption of a case study research approach. This is in line with the submission of Goecke et al. (2018:170) who suggest the use of case studies in mergers and acquisitions. Baguma (2016) also adopted a case study approach in his study on retaining knowledge in national agricultural research organisations of Uganda. In the view of Rule and John (2011:3), a case means a particular instance. A case refers to the circumstances or a situation relating to a particular

individual, a thing or an action. A case study is an empirical study of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear, and in which different techniques of data collection are employed (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Ridder 2017; Yin 2018).

Furthermore, case studies provide real-life insights into particular phenomena by gathering deep wealth of data (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Bryman 2012). Bryman (2012:101) posits that the basis for using a case study is to “provide a holistic account of a case and in-depth knowledge of the specific through rich descriptions situated in a specific context”. Additionally, Tight (2008:330) says, “the main goal of a case study is to gain detailed information from a small sample size, where single-case study is the most intense form relating to a particular topic and perspective”.

There are three conditions that influence the type of design to be applied in a study, including the types of research questions asked, the degree to which the researcher has control over the real behavioural happenings and the attention was on present events as opposed to past events (Yin 2018:120). There are three types of case studies, namely intrinsic, instrumental, and multiple or collective case study (Punch 2009; Gruber 2014). Punch (2009:119) further elaborated on these case study types as follows:

- The intrinsic case study, where the study is undertaken because the researcher is interested in better understanding of this particular case
- The instrumental case study, where a specific case is scrutinised in order to provide insight into the issue, or to refine a theory
- The collective case study, where the instrumental case is extended to cover other multiple cases, to uncover more about the phenomenon under study, population or general condition.

This study employed the first option (the intrinsic case study) because the researcher felt it was vital in understanding the process of KR in the context of cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho and no generalisation or multiple cases were employed and as a result, the other two types were eliminated. Case studies provide an

analysis of a variety of viewpoints where the researcher deliberates not just the voice and standpoints of a single or several partakers in a status quo, but the opinions of other pertinent groups of players are taken into account as well as the interaction between them (Nieuwenhuis 2007:75).

The current case is a single case study investigating in detail the typical phenomena of knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers of the telecommunications industry of Lesotho. Heale and Twycross (2017), however, argues for the superiority of a multiple case study over a single case study. Their explanation is based on the fact that multiple case study approach permits an in-depth analysis and understanding of the cases in a unit. The purpose for this research allowed for the use of a single case study because only one incidence of cross-border merger in the telecommunications industry took place in Lesotho.

However, notwithstanding the fact that the sample is small within a single-case study, Siggelkow (2007:23) states that it can be very persuasive and powerful. Case studies are conducted using multiple data collection techniques such interviews, questionnaires, observations, content analysis, and others (Mohajan 2018:1).

The case organisation, ETL, was a “purposefully selected” site (Coyne 1997; Creswell 2009). A purposely selected research site is a site that is selected deliberately to assist the researcher to address the research problem and to attain the study aims. Firstly, the site was selected bearing in mind that the researcher also resides in the nearby town and, therefore, data collection would not be a problem. Secondly, the purpose of this study is to describe and explain the process of knowledge retention in the context of organisational cross-border mergers in Lesotho, particularly in the telecommunication industry. Therefore, the company came into being following the merger between Econet Ezi-Cel Lesotho, which had its origins from the Republic of Zimbabwe and Telecom Lesotho, which was a company that was wholly owned by the government of Lesotho. The researcher therefore believes this research site was in line with the study purpose.

3.6 Population and sampling

Population, according to Bryman (2012:187), refers to the universe of units from which a study sample is selected. The word “units” is used here to specify that it is not always necessarily people from which a sample may be drawn. Majid (2018:3) defines a study population as the targeted population in a study that it aims to study or treat. Rowley (2014:318) opines that in an ideal situation, the investigator has to select an adequately large sample from the population to ensure that the sample is illustrative of the population, making use of an appropriate sampling strategy. The study population is made up of 32 people. Out of the population of 32 people, 18 were those who are currently with the merged organisation and out of this 18, 14 responded to the questionnaire while four were interviewed. The other 14 consisted of the former employees who had left the individual organisations either before or during the merger process and ETL HR department provided the researcher with their contact details. Overall, questionnaires were administered to all the population of 28 people.

3.6.1 Sampling

Depending on the size of the population, it is unconvincing that the researcher can collect data from all the cases in responding to research questions. Therefore, there may be a need to select a sample in some cases. The main reason why researchers select a sample rather than studying the entire population is because they neither have the time nor the resources to analyse the entire study population. Moser and Korstjens (2018:10) explain sampling as the identification and selection of a study population that can provide relevant data about the topic being studied. Sampling in qualitative research is intentional and not random as it is in quantitative research. Sampling as applied to qualitative research means that only a portion of the population, known as a sample, is selected to answer the research problem. Oppong (2013:203) argues that the aims of a given study and the features of its population influence the decision on who to include in the sample as well as the number of those individuals to select for a given research study. Depending on the approach of the study, it can adopt either probability or non-probability sampling. Sarantakos (2013:181) argues that the advocates of qualitative research use sampling procedures that correlate

with this research type. Neuman (2011:123) further notes that non-probability sampling usually used by that qualitative researchers do not use the probability sampling rules and, therefore, representativeness is not required as is the case with quantitative researchers, but slightly about relevancy of the characteristics of a phenomena understudy.

3.6.2 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample of four participants from ETL management to be interviewed because the researcher believed they were people who had experienced the merger and, therefore, would have answers to research questions (Patton 2015:263). Taherdoost (2016:23) defines purposive or judgemental sampling as a sampling strategy in which certain settings, persons or events are selected intentionally in order to provide important information that is most relevant in answering research questions of a given study. For Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011:123), purposive sampling has to do with the identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals who appear knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest. In addition to knowledge and experience, Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood (2015:2) note the significance of participants' accessibility and their preparedness to participate as well as the capacity to express opinions and experiences in a clear manner. As mentioned in section 3.7 above, the rest of the population of the study consisted of 14 people who are currently with the new entity and the other 14 who have since left the organisation and questionnaires were administered to all of them, therefore no sampling was required in this case.

3.6.3 Justification for the selected sampling technique

As mentioned earlier, the purposive sampling technique was used to select the interview sample for the current study. The participants that were selected had a special relationship with the phenomenon under investigation. The study is about knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho. The sample members were selected on the basis that they have been with the merging organisations

for longer periods leading to the merger, during the merger process and have remained with the new entity after the merger. Purposive sampling was, therefore, appropriate for this study.

3.7 Data collection tools

Kumar (2010) and Douglas (2015) identify two approaches to collecting data about a situation, an individual, a problem or a phenomenon. Sometimes the data required need to be collected; however, sometimes the data required are already available and only need to be extracted. Based on the above broad approaches to data gathering, Kumar (2010:132) remarks that data can be classified as either primary or secondary. The primary data are data that are collected for the first time by the researcher using a questionnaire, interviews, experiments, and other methods while secondary data are data that have already been collected or produced by other researchers, such as census, government publications, service records, and more (Ajayi 2017:2). The research approach used in a study usually determines the selection of data collection tools because data collection tools may yield either qualitative or quantitative data. However, there are cases where different data collection tools may be used in one study, irrespective of whether a researcher has adopted a qualitative or a quantitative approach, a term usually referred to as triangulation (Jonsen and Jehn 2009; Ngulube et al. 2015; Fusch et al. 2018). Denzin (1978:294) defines triangulation as an amalgamation of methodologies in one study. As highlighted in the previous section, this is a quantitative case study questionnaires and interviews as data collection tools. Interviews were mainly used to corroborate data from the questionnaires.

3.7.1 Multi-methods

As specified in section 1.9, this study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods culminating in multi-methods research. Multi-methods research should not be confused with MMR, as stated by Romm and Ngulube (2015), Creswell (2016), and Creamer (2018). The former has to do with using multiple data sources and the latter with employing two methodologies and two paradigms (worldviews). Indeed, there is a difference between mixed methods research and multi-methods research (Ngulube

2019).

Multi-methods research is defined as a research involving more than one qualitative or more than one quantitative research methods (Romm and Ngulube 2015; Creamer 2018). Ngulube (2019:7) extends this definition to include a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study. Mixed methods research, on the other hand, is defined as involving more than simply collecting two types of data (Ngulube 2019:7).

Creswell (2016) and Creamer (2018) mention integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods throughout the study as a distinguishing factor that detaches mixed methods research from other methodologies. However, some authors still use the two interchangeably (Lakshmi 2019:282). According to Romm and Ngulube (2015) and Ngulube (2019), multi-method was conceived by Campbell and Fiske (1959) with the aim of ensuring reliability and validity of quantitative research and even though they do not agree, they can also be used in qualitative studies as well. The adoption of a multi-methods by the researcher ensured that the study is less prone to built-in errors and is thus superior to the study employing a single method (Room and Ngulube 2015:3). Furthermore, multi-methods were adopted in this study to enhance its validity and reliability. Romm and Ngulube (2015:3) are of the opinion that multi-methods are designed with the aim of ensuring validity and reliability of quantitative measures even though they could also be applied to qualitative traditions. This is the same as triangulation, which was conceived by Denzin (1970) as a form of qualitative methods that is used to ascertain consistency in data, but which is also applied in quantitative research.

In investigating the if knowledge management may be used to improve organisational performance, particularly of banks of South Africa, Chigada (2014) also used the multi-methods research. The choice of a multi-methods strategy was informed by the positivism epistemology that this study is anchored on (Creswell 2014:32).

3.7.1.1 Interviews

Punch (2014:144) argues that interviews are the most commonly used tools for collecting data in qualitative research as they assist researchers in obtaining people's perceptions and meanings and explain situations and assist in constructing reality. Furthermore, Nieuwenhuis and Smit (2012:133) opine that a large amount of data that are collected and used in qualitative studies are usually collected or generated through interviewing. Nieuwenhuis and Smit (2012) further suggest that a qualitative research interview ought to be malleable, collaborative and endless. Basically, interviews involve probing the respondent's questions while also recording their responses. Kumar (2010:137) identifies two types of interviews in qualitative research, including structure and unstructured interviews. The said qualitative interview types are further discussed below:

Structured interviews

Kumar (2010:138) opines that a structured interview follows a set of predetermined questions, using the same wording and order of questions as specified in the interview schedule. An interview schedule is a written list of questions, open ended or closed, prepared for use by an interviewer in a person-to-person interaction (this may be face to face, by telephone or by other electronic media) (Kumar 2010:138). Punch (2005:170) further states that in the structured interview, there is little room for variation in response even though open-ended questions may be used sometimes.

Unstructured interviews

According to Sarantakos (2005:268), unstructured interviews does not follow a set of predetermined questions. Kumar (2010:137) argues that the vigour of unstructured interviews is that they provide the researcher with complete freedom as far as content and structure are concerned. The researcher is free to order these in whatever sequence they may want. Furthermore, the researcher has the freedom in terms of the wording used and the way they elaborate on questions to respondents. There are two types of interviews in qualitative research namely semi-structured and the unstructured ones (Sarantakos 2005:270).

3.7.1.1.1 Strengths and limitations of interviews

The use of interviews in research has a number of advantages and disadvantages presented in table 3

Table 3: Strengths and limitations of interviews: Adapted from Queiros, Farai and Almeida (2017:378)

Type	Strengths	Limitations
Structured interviews	Well-structured and easy to compare respondent's answers	Very rigid
-	Can reach a large sample	Low flexibility in the response's choice
-	Easy to replicate	Difficult to obtain detailed data
-	Conducting an interview is fairly quick to conduct	Preparing an interview can become time consuming
Unstructured interviews	Adjusted to get detailed and insightful information on a given domain	Time consuming and relatively expensive
-	Need only fewer participants to provide useful and relevant insights	Longer verification process to extract compared information
-	Can be performed in informal environments	Participants should be carefully chosen to avoid bias
-	Easy to generalise	Not easy to generalize

3.7.1.2 Questionnaires

Bhattacharjee (2012:74) defines a questionnaire as a data-gathering instrument consisting

of a set of questions (items) with the aim of capturing answers from participants in a logical manner. Questionnaire questions may be either structured or unstructured. A structured questionnaire asks the participants to select answers from a provided list. On the other hand, an unstructured questionnaire affords respondents an opportunity to respond using their own words.

The content of the questionnaires comprised the research objectives in totality. Questionnaires consisted of Likert scale questions as well as multiple questions.

3.7.1.2.1 Advantages of a questionnaire

Kumar (2010) and Bryman (2012) identify and listed the following advantages of using a questionnaire in a study:

No interviewer invariability

Self-completion questionnaires do not suffer the problem of interviewers asking questions in a different way.

Convenience to respondents

Questionnaires are convenient to respondents because they afford them an opportunity to complete them at their own time and space.

Less expensive

Because there is no interview involved, it means time, human and financial resources are saved.

Greater anonymity

Because there is no face-to-face interaction with respondents, there is a greater possibility of obtaining accurate information resulting from greater anonymity.

3.7.1.2.2 Disadvantages of a questionnaire

Questionnaires also have disadvantages, such as the following:

Cannot prompt

There is no one readily available to assist respondents when they encounter difficulty in answering questions.

No probing

The questionnaire does not offer the opportunity to ask further questions in case where the respondent needs clarity.

Low response rate

Questionnaires are known to receive low response rate. If people fail to return them, nothing can be done.

External influence possible

Respondents may feel tempted to consult to find out how others have responded to similar questions.

3.7.1.2.3 Questionnaire structure

Sutton and Austin (2015:229) opine that when choosing and developing questionnaire questions, the investigator must bear in mind the format of questions that will produce the desired data. The same author argues that the way questions are formatted will also determine responses received. Similarly, Kumar (2010:138) cautions that because no one will clarify questions for respondents in a questionnaire, the researcher should ask concise and clear questions. Furthermore, the questionnaire layout should be made easy to read with the questions sequence easy to follow. The questioning in a questionnaire should follow an interactive style, where respondents feel like someone is directly talking to them (Kumar 2010:138).

For this study, the questionnaire design was guided by the study objectives. The questionnaire consisted of two sections (see appendix E). Section one comprised the researcher's introduction, study topic and the research objectives. Section two comprised

of the study questions which also had eight sections, including background information; knowledge management strategies; knowledge retention strategies; the role of ITCs in the knowledge retention process, the role of culture in cross-border mergers in relation to knowledge retention; the role of human resources management (HRM) practices in knowledge retention at ETL; the key factors in transferring and retaining knowledge in mergers and challenges of retaining knowledge in the post-merger process

3.8 Data analysis and presentation

Dhall (2019:109) argues that one of the main objectives of any study is to analyse data, thus providing meaningful data for successful decision-making. Dhall (2019) further remarked that unless data are appropriately analysed, no conclusions can be made and, therefore, the entire process of research design, data collection and data cleaning go to waste. Again, if data are not accurately analysed, they may provide the results which may be difficult to interpret or results which may be interpreted incorrectly. Creswell (2009:218), underscores that the analysis of data in the context of multi-methods study narrates to the research strategy type employed. For this study, data consisted of the interview scripts, the interview recordings from the interviews sessions and data collected through the questionnaire (Neuman 2013:477).

3.8.1 Quantitative data analysis

This study collected quantitative data through questionnaires that needed to be analysed. Ngulube (2009), Chireshe (2015) and Chireshe (2020) underscore that the ability to organise large amounts of data in pictorial form, thus adequately responding to research questions asked remains one of quantitative research advantages. Creswell (2009:218) notes that “data analysis in a multi-methods study relates to the research strategy type selected for the procedure”. Jena and Kar (2019:287) are of the view that data are collected on its original form may be prone to systematic and random errors. Such errors therefore need to be cleaned; the term known as ‘data cleaning’ (Jena and Kar 2019:287). Before data were analysed, it was cleaned to ensure data quality. According to Azeroua, Saake, Abuosba (2018), and Jena and Kar (2019), data cleaning is a process of detecting

and correcting errors in data sets. Examples of errors in data include incomplete, incorrect, inconsistent, redundant, and more.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:1560), when analysing quantitative data, the researcher should provide information regarding the computer programs used as well as the steps followed in the analysis. Firstly, quantitative responses for the current study were processed using Microsoft Access 2016 and, afterwards, the actual data analysis was performed using SPSS software (Version 17). The presentation of results was done with the assistance of Microsoft Excel through the design of charts and tables.

3.8.2 Qualitative data analysis

The current study also consisted of qualitative data collected through interviews that needed to be analysed. According to Neuman (2014) and Dhall (2019), data in qualitative research are gathered with the purpose of describing specific details about people, actions and events in social life. Data analysis is basically about what is being done about the collected data with the view to making sense or creating meaning. Ngulube (2015:3) states that “in qualitative data analysis, the focus is on the meaning of events and actions, rather than statistical significance and relationships between variables”.

Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012:4) identify several strategies of qualitative data analysis, including thematic analysis, content analysis, and constant comparison method of data analysis, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis and analysis of narratives. For the current study, thematic analysis was employed to analyse data which was collected by means of interviews. According to Braun and Clark (2006:2), this is a strategy used to detect themes and patterns of meaning in a data set as they relate to a researcher’s question asked. This is a technique used for extraction of meanings and concepts from qualitative data that have been collected through interviews, notes from the field, documents, pictures and videos, and includes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns or themes (Javadi and Zarea 2016:34). One of the advantages of thematic analysis is its flexibility which can be modified for several studies to provide a

rich and detailed, yet complex account of qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006; Javadi and Zarea 2016). Braun and Clarke (2019:3) identify six phases of thematic analysis including familiarization with data, coding, searching for themes, review of themes, defining and naming of themes and writing up. However, Braun and Clarke caution that these phases should not be viewed as a linear model where the researcher cannot move to the next phase without first completing the previous phase correctly, but instead analysis is a recursive process. The six phases of thematic analysis are further discussed below.

Familiarisation with the data

The main point made is that the researchers must immerse themselves in their data and be closely familiar with it; reading and re-reading the data (and listening to audio-recorded data at least once, if relevant) and noting any initial analytic observations.

Coding

Creswell (2015:156) defines coding as the “process of analysing qualitative text data by taking them apart to see what they yield before putting the data back together in a meaningful way”. Coding permits the researcher to abridge and focus on specific characteristics of the data (Nowell, Norris, White and Moules 2017:5).

Searching for themes

A theme is a logical and meaningful pattern in the data pertinent to the research question. If codes are the bricks and tiles in a brick-and-tile house, themes are the walls and roof panels. Searching for themes is a bit like making your codes to identify similarity in the data.

Reviewing themes

The fourth phase begins once a set of themes has been devised, and they now require

refinement. During this phase, researchers review the coded data extracts for each theme to reflect on whether they appear to form a logical pattern.

Defining and naming themes

During this phase, the researcher is required to conduct and write a detailed analysis of each theme (the researcher should ask ‘what story does this theme tell?’ and ‘how does this theme fit into the overall story about the data?’), identifying the ‘essence’ of each theme and constructing a concise, punchy and informative name for each theme.

Writing up

Writing is a *central* phase in the analytic process of thematic analysis mostly in qualitative research. Writing up involves merging the analytic account and (vivid) data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data, and contextualising it in relation to existing literature.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues have become a central element in social research and, therefore, no research can be conducted without due regard to ethics (Madushani, 2016; Ramrathan, Le Grange and Shawa 2017). The concept of ethics is closely related to moral and values, it equips society with knowledge on what is right and what is wrong. The definition often used by social scientists, according to Sen and Nagwanshee (2016:37), refers to ethics as “norms for conduct that differentiates between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in research”. Generally viewed, ethics are inherent in the research, from the conception of what to study and how the studying will go about, through to analysis and the presentation of results (Creswell 2007; Sobočan et al. 2018).

Slaigwana and Wassenaar (2019:110) discuss four major ethical issues that the researcher must pay attention to in conducting research: informed consent, beneficence, respect for anonymity and confidentiality, and respect for privacy. In order to obtain

informed consent for the current study, the researcher provided all information relating to the study, including where they could sign if they agreed to participate (appendix B). The UNISA research policy on ethics (2016:9) also provides steps on how students should conduct research ethically. The policy advances the four major ethical principles involving human beings including:

- *Autonomy*: the researcher should respect the independence of participants.
- *Beneficence*: the study undertaken should positively contribute the people's welfare.
- *Non-maleficence*: the study should cause no harm participants.
- *Justice*: the gains and threats of the study should be fairly distributed amongst people.

Ramrathan et al. (2017:432) argue that it is mandatory for a social researcher undertaking research that involves human beings to apply for and be granted an ethical clearance certificate. Therefore, for this current study, the ethical clearance was applied for and granted by ethics review committee of Information Science Department (attached as appendix A). All information regarding the study was provided to the participants. For instance, participants were informed of who the person conducting the study is, and why they were requested to take part in the current study. Furthermore, the participants were informed of their voluntary participation and that they were free to withdraw their participation at any time they wished to. Lastly, the participants were made aware that anonymity and confidentiality regarding their participation were guaranteed. The letter requesting approval to conduct this study at ETL, and the letter of approval is attached as appendices C and D.

3.10 Research methodology evaluation

This is a multi-methods study which triangulated both qualitative and quantitative data. The data collection tools used were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The use of multi-methods was intended to enhance validity and reliability of the study. Using multi-methods strategy allowed the researcher to address issues from the wider

perspectives than would have been possible with a single method. One advantage of a multi-methods study is that one method is able to offset the weaknesses of other and therefore brings some form of balance to a study. The limitations of a single method are usually the strengths of another method. Therefore, by adopting a multi-method research to this study, the researcher hoped to achieve the best of each method while also overcoming the weaknesses that accompany each method (Creamer 2018; Creswell 2016). This multi-methods research is different from mixed methods research and Creswell (2016), Creamer (2018) and Ngulube (2020) suggest that this difference should be preserved because they are indeed not the same. One major difference is that multi-methods involve the use of more than one method, therefore, involving several qualitative or several quantitative methods, or mixing both qualitative and quantitative methods (Ngulube 2020:431). However, mixed methods go beyond merely the mixing of methods. For a study to qualify as a mixed methods study, Ngulube (2020:432) suggests that it should include and integrate a deductive and an inductive element in many phases of the research process.

3.11 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter discussed the research methodology and design that the current study followed. In particular, the research paradigm, research approach and the justification of the selection of one approach over the other were explained. Furthermore, various data collection instruments were identified, discussed and a choice was made between those to use in the study. The population of the study and sampling strategies employed in the current study were discussed. Furthermore, data analysis procedure adopted in the current study and the ethical considerations as applicable to the current study were explained. The subsequent chapter provides the study results.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three discussed the study design and methodology adopted in conducting this study. The current chapter presents the findings of this study based on the objectives as well as the research questions. The findings are from the questionnaire and the interviews.

According to Reay, Monteiro and Glaser (2019:267), quantitative data are often gathered in its raw state and, therefore, the inherent information is tricky to comprehend. Consequently, raw data need to be summarised, processed, and analysed. Nevertheless, no matter how well manipulated, the information resulting from the raw data must be presented in an efficient format, or else, it would be a great loss for consumers (Reay et al. 2019:267). Presentation of results for this study is done in tables, text and graphs (Reay et al. 2019:270). In and Lee (2017:268) suggest that tables are suitable for presenting both quantitative and qualitative information. For this research, the quantitative results are presented first, followed by the qualitative results. The findings are then merged in the next chapter where interpretation takes place, consistent with the study design.

4.2 Quantitative data presentation

The following section presents the quantitative data for this study.

4.2.1 Participant questionnaire

Quantitative data are gathered by means of a questionnaire (appendix E). The questionnaires were intended for all staff members who were available during the merger process. It was also targeted to those who left the organisations just before the commencement of the process and those who left the organisation because of the process itself for whichever reason. The questionnaire for staff members who were still with the merged entity (Econet Telecom Lesotho) was accompanied by the approval letter from the organisation. However, regarding those who were no longer with the organisation, the researcher had to assure them that the study is only for academic purposes and nothing else.

4.2.2 Questionnaire response rate

The response rate in research is primarily defined as the total number of responses received from participants divided by the number of eligible participants in a sample (Fan and Yan 2009; Brtnikova, Crane, Allison, Hurley, Beaty and Kempe; 2018; Saldivar 2012). The response rate in research is normally used as an indicator of representativeness, and it is argued that the higher the response rate, the better and the higher the likelihood of data validity (Brtnikova et al. 2018:3). In this way, Ngulube (2005:136) argues, reporting response rates and no-response has become an acknowledge obligation for better overviews. However, Weaver, Beebe and Rockwood (2019:7) caution that it is important to note that the response rate is normally determined by the method used.

It was stated in section 3.7 above, that the total number of questionnaires administered to study participants was 28, both to current ETL employees as well as the former employees. Out of the 28 questionnaires delivered, 21 were responded to and returned, thus achieving a response rate of 75%. This turned out to be a great response rate that is consistent with Raubenheimer's view (2016:154) that a response rate of 70% or higher is suitable. Furthermore, the response rate that is under 50% is regarded as poor, while one which is over 90% is considered to be very good (Neuman 2000:267). However, the researcher had anticipated a much better response rate from the former staff members because a number of factors came into play, mainly the difficulty to find qualified participants and the probability that in the event that potential participants are found, they were not willing to participate (Morton, Bandara, Robinson and Atatoa Carr 2012:107).

4.2.3 Characteristics of respondents

In this section, the researcher wanted to establish the demographic details of participants as they pertain to this study, including gender and experience in terms of the number of years they have been with ETL. The researcher also wanted to know the status of employment with ETL, whether they are currently still employed or if they left the organisation as a result of the merger.

Table 4.1: Gender of respondent

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage
Female	9	42.9
Male	11	52.4
Not answered	1	4.8
Total	21	100

Looking at gender, most of the respondents were males, constituting 11 (52%), while females made up a total of 9 (42%). However, 1 (4.8%) respondent did not answer the question on their gender status. The profiles of respondent are presented in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Experience of respondents

Years of experience	Number of respondents	Percentage
11-20	7	33.3
21-30	8	38.1
31-40	2	9.5
6-10	3	14.3
More than 41	1	4.8
Total	21	100

As for the number of years that the respondents have worked for either of the two merged companies, most respondents 8 (38%) indicated the range of between 21-30 years. This was followed by 7 (33.3%) whose years ranged between 11-20. Others fell within the ranges of 6-10 years with 14.3%, 31-40 with 2 (9.5%) and those with more than 41 years totalling 1 (4.8%). The current employment status of respondents is presented in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: employment status of respondents

Employment status	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	11	52.4
No	10	47.6
Total	21	100

The researcher also sought to find out what the employment status of participants was after the merger and the results indicated that most respondents 11 (52%) reached were those who are still in the employ of the new entity. However, 10 (47%) respondents were those who are no longer with the company and they left for a variety of reasons. Moreover, those who are no longer with the new entity were requested to indicate how they left the organisation, and 9 (42.9%) are those who were forced to resign while 2 (9.5%) indicated that they left the organisation through voluntary resignation.

4.2.4 Purpose of Econet telecom Lesotho merger

The aim of this section was to establish the purpose of the ETL merger, and particularly, respondents were requested to state the extend to which they agree to the statement that the purpose of ETL merger was to gain valuable resources, including employees' knowledge and culture. According to the results, the majority of respondents 9 (42.9%) agreed to the statement. However, 5 (23.8%) of respondents disagreed to the assertion. On the other hand, 4 (19%) of respondents showed that they strongly disagree while 1 (4.8%) showed they are not sure.

Moreover, the respondents were requested to state how much they agree to the statement that the purpose of the merger was the need to comply with government directives and regulatory reforms. The statistics show that 6 (28.6%) of respondents agreed to the statement. On the other hand, 3 (14.3%) of respondents disagreed to the statement while 5 (23.8%) of respondents strongly agreed. Surprisingly, a substantial number of respondents 6 (28.6%) seemed unsure.

4.2.5 Ways the employee left Econet telecom Lesotho

Regarding the ways that the employees left the organisation, the researcher found that the majority of them 9 (42.9%) left through forced resignation while 2 (9.5%) voluntarily resigned. However, 10 (47.6), which happens to be the majority of the total respondents, did not indicate how they left the organisation, as seen on table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Ways the employee left ETL

Ways employees left the organisation	Frequency	Percent
Forced resignation	9	42.9
Voluntary resignation	2	9.5
Not answered	10	47.6
Total	21	100

4.2.6 Purpose of Econet telecom Lesotho merger – to gain valuable resources

It has been established from the literature that mergers and acquisitions occur because of different reasons. This section sought to find out if one such reason was to gain valuable resources with the ETL merger. As can be seen from figure 4.1, the majority of respondents (9 (42.9%) consists of those who agree to the statement. This was followed by 5 (23.8) who disagreed. Moreover, 4 (19.0%) of respondents were those who strongly disagreed. However, 2 (9.5%) of participants decided to be mute while 1 (4.8%) indicated that they were not sure (see figure 4.1).

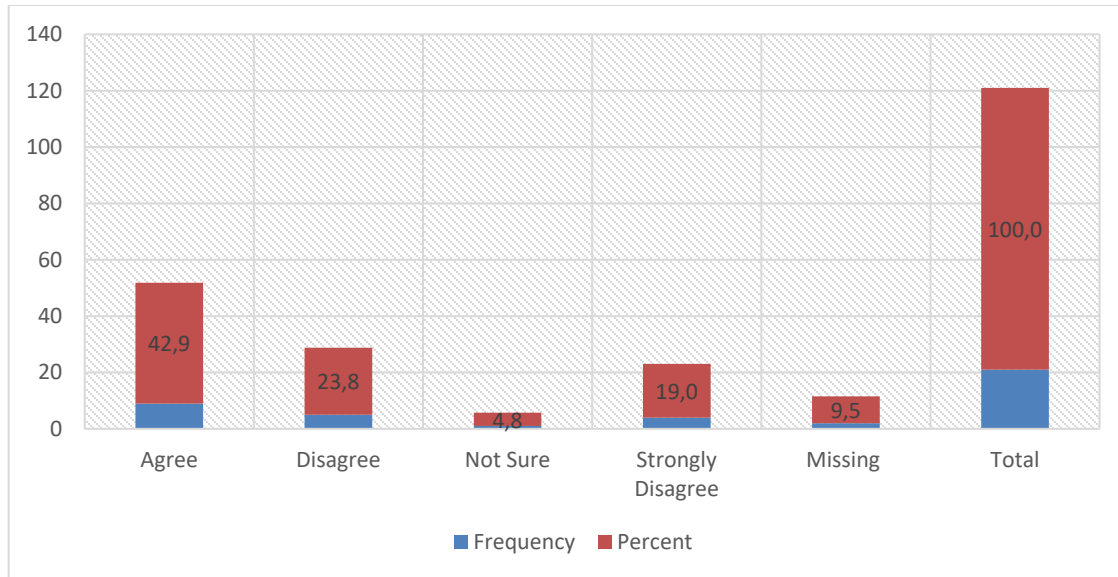


Figure 4.1 Purpose of ETL merger- to gain valuable resources

4.2.7 Purpose of Econet telecom Lesotho merger

Another reason provided from the literature review why organisations merge was the need to comply with government directives. Here, the study sought to determine the extent to which the participants either agreed or disagreed. According to figure 4.2, 6 (28.6%) respondents agreed to the statement. Interestingly, the same number 6 (28.6%) consisted of those who indicated they were not sure. This was followed by 5 (23.8%) who strongly disagreed and 3 (14.3%) who disagreed to the statement. However, 1 (4.8%) showed that they strongly agreed.

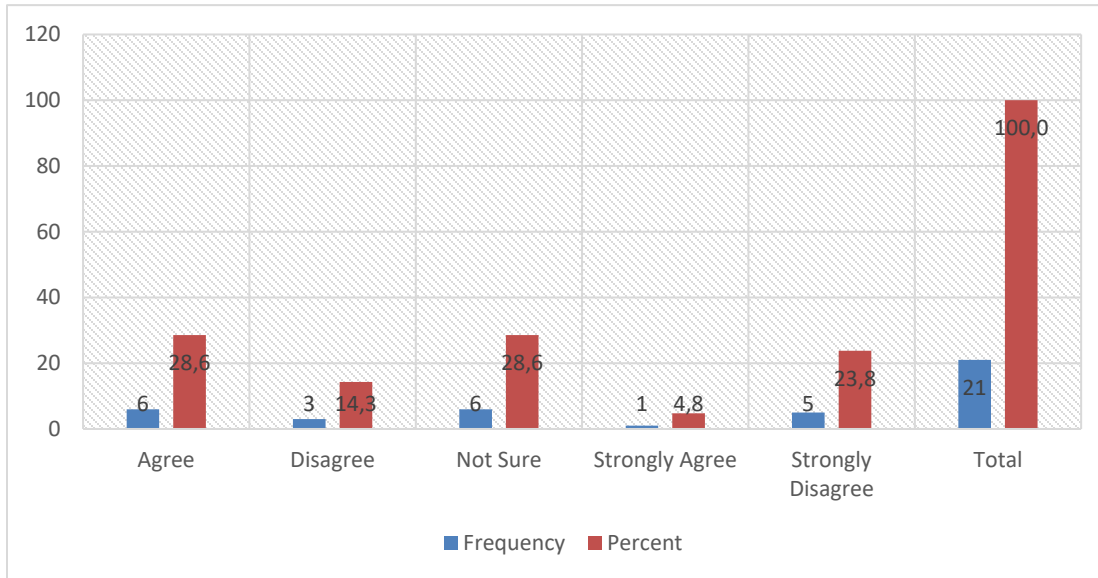


Figure 4.2 Purpose of ETL merger

4.2.8 Existence of a knowledge management policy at Econet telecom Lesotho

In this section, the researcher wanted to find out if ETL has a knowledge management policy. As can be noted from table 4.5, the majority (11 (52.4%)) said yes, while 10 (47.6%) said no.

Table 4.5 Existence of knowledge management policy at Econet telecom Lesotho

Existence of KM Policy at ETL	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	52.4
No	10	47.6
Total	21	100

4.2.9 Mergers and acquisitions are popular with high staff turnover

The literature review established that mergers and acquisitions are popular with high staff turnover. This section wanted to find out from the respondents if they agreed with this statement based on their experience. Figure 4.3 shows that most of the respondents (20 (95.2%)) agreed to the statement while only 1 (4.8%) said no.

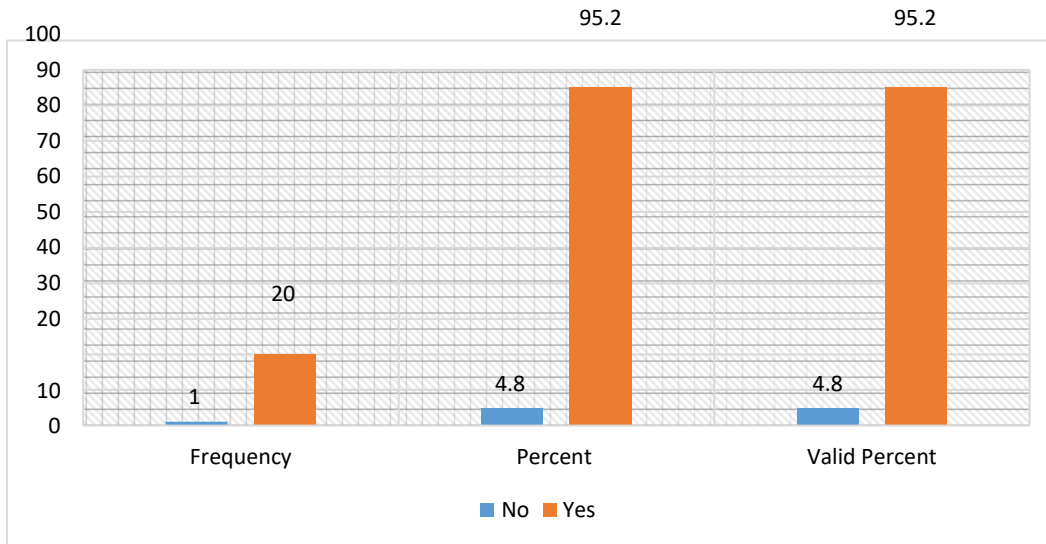


Figure 4.3: Mergers and acquisitions are popular with high staff turnover

A follow-up question was asked to those who indicated that mergers and acquisitions are synonymous with high staff turnover to indicate if those who left the organisation as a result of the merger were interviewed before leaving and the majority of the respondents 14 (66.7%) said no, while 6 (28.6%) said yes. However, 1 (4.8%) of respondent decided not to provide the answer (see figure 4.4).

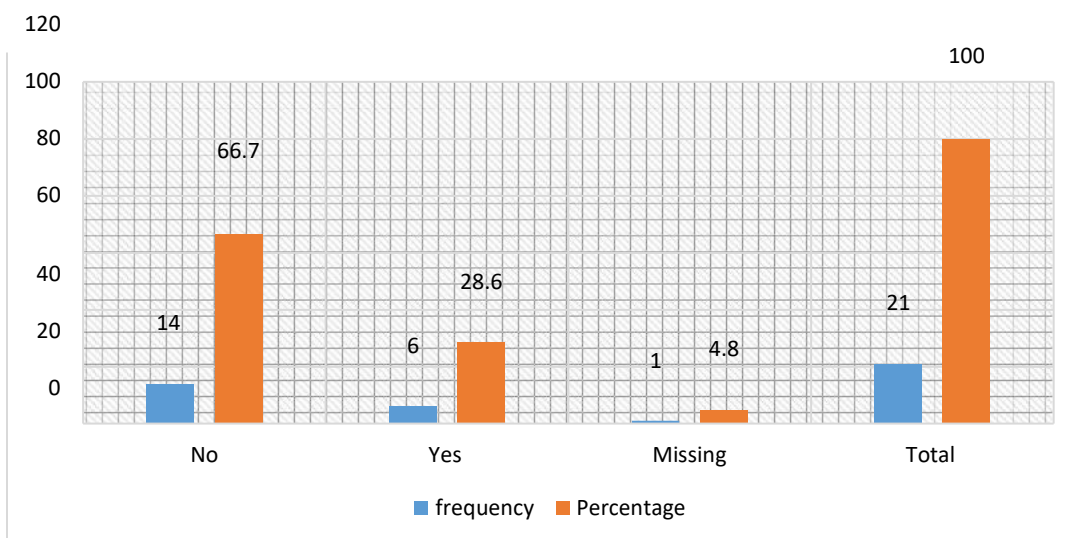


Figure 4.4: Exit interviews

4.2.10 Knowledge retention strategies during the merger process

The researcher on this objective sought to establish which knowledge retention strategies were used for retaining knowledge at ETL specifically during the merger, and multiple responses were expected. As can be noted from table 4.6, the majority of respondents (10 (41.7%)) identified job rotation. This was followed by those who identified mentorship (7 (29.2%)). Moreover, 3 (12.5%) indicated communities of practice and job shadowing, respectively (3 (12.5%)). The least number (1 (4.2%)) is for those who identified storytelling.

Table 4.6 Knowledge retention strategies used

Knowledge retention strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Communities of Practice (CoPs)	3	12.50
Mentorship	7	29.20
Job Rotation	10	41.70
Storytelling	1	4.20
Job Shadowing	3	12.50
Total	24	100

4.2.11 Computer literacy

This section sought to find out if ETL staff is computer literate and table 4.7 shows that all 21 (100%) respondents agreed.

Table 4.7 Computer literacy

Computer literacy	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	100
Total	21	100

4.2.12 Availability of internet at Econet telecom Lesotho

In this section, the researcher wanted to find out if there is internet at ETL, and all 21 (100%) respondents agreed. as seen in table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Internet availability at Econet telecom Lesotho

Availability of Internet	Frequency	Percent	
Yes	21	100	
Total	21	100	

4.2.13 Internet accessibility

As a follow-up to the question above, all respondents were requested to indicate if internet is accessible to everyone at ETL and 20 (95.2%) agreed, while 1 (4.8%) did not answer the question as indicated in table 4.9.

Table 4.9. Internet accessibility

Internet accessibility	Frequency	Percent
Yes	20	95.2
Not answered	1	4.8
Total	21	100

4.2.14 Technologies used for knowledge retention at ETL

The literature review established that one of the success factors of knowledge retention is the use of ICTs. This section sought to find out what technologies were used for knowledge retention at ETL and multiple answers were expected from the provided list (see table 4.10). According to the statistics provided, the majority 21(100%) identified the internet, 20 (95.2) said email, 15 (71.4) said intranet, 8 (38.1) said video-conferencing, 6 (28.6%) said LinkedIn and 1 (4.8%) said wikis.

Table 4.10 Technologies used for knowledge retention at ETL

Technologies used at ETL	Frequency	Percentage
Internet	21	25.60
Intranet	15	18.30
E-mail	20	24.40
Video-conferencing	8	9.80
Wikis	1	1.20
LinkedIn	6	7.30
Facebook	6	7.30
Document and Records Management System (DRMS)	5	6.10
Total	82	100

4.2.15 Noticeable cultural differences between merging organisations

It was found from the reviewed literature that mergers and acquisitions mostly fail because of variations in culture. This section therefore aimed to discover if there were any noticeable cultural differences between the two organisation prior to the merger, and respondents were required to mention how far they either agree or disagree with the statement. Figure 4.5 presents the respondents’ answers where the majority 9(42.9%)) agreed to the statement. On the one hand, 6 (28.6%) showed that they strongly agreed to the statement, 4 (19.0%) respondents disagreed while 1 (4.8%) strongly disagreed. However, 1 (4.8%) respondent said they were not sure.

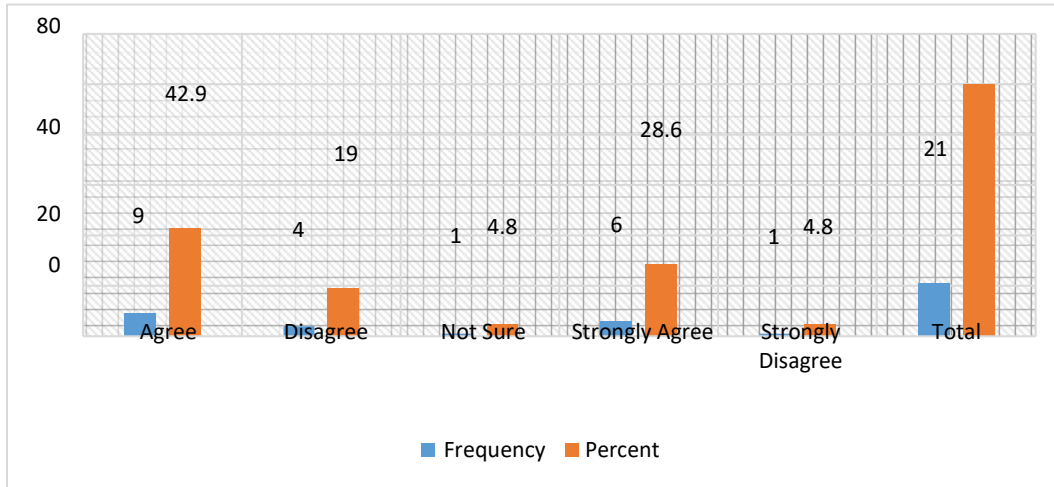


Figure 4.5: Cultural differences between merging organisations

4.2.16 Organisational cultural variations impede knowledge retention

Another question regarding organisational culture was a statement requesting respondents to state the extent to which they either agree or disagree to the statement that differences in organisational culture encumber knowledge retention. According to the statistics presented in figure 4.6, the majority (9 (42.9%) agreed, while 3 (14.3%) disagreed. Four (19.0%) disagreed while 1(4.8%) strongly agreed. Four (19.0%) respondents indicated they were not sure.

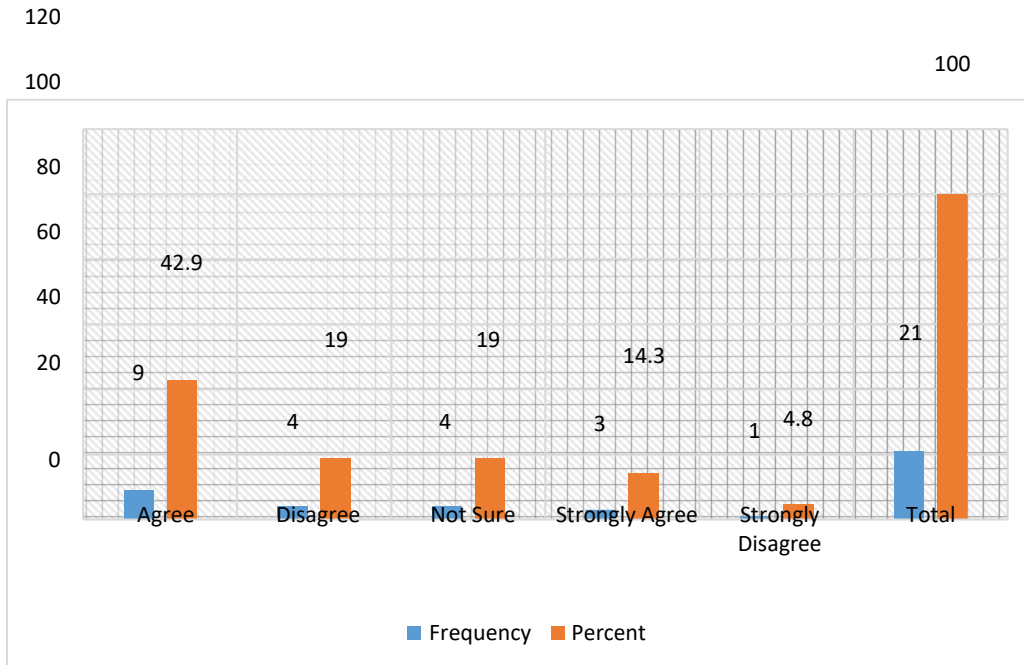
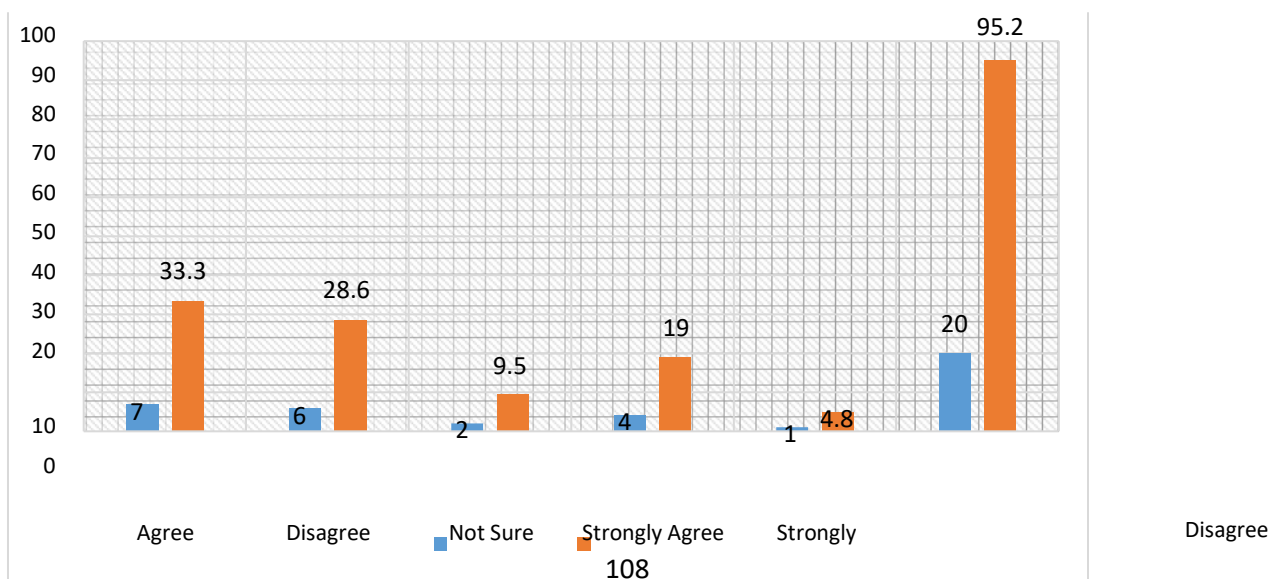


Figure 4.6: Organisational cultural variations impede knowledge retention

4.2.17 Promotion of knowledge retention culture at ETL

This section of the study sought to find out if ETL promotes the culture of knowledge retention, and multiple responses were expected. Most respondents (7 (35.0%)) agreed and 4 (19.0%) strongly agreed. However, 6 (28.6%) respondents disagreed while 1 (4.8%) strongly disagreed. Four (19.0%) showed that they were not sure as (see figure 4.7).



Total

Frequency Percent

Figure 4.7: Promotion of knowledge retention culture at ETL

4.2. 18 Provision of training and development at Econet telecom Lesotho

This section sought to find out if ETL provides training and development to its staff members. As displayed on table 4.11, most of the respondents (10 (47.6%)) agreed and 4 (19.0%) disagreed and strongly agreed respectively. However, 4 (19.0%) disagreed, while 2 (9.5% strongly disagreed. One respondent (4.8%) indicated that they were not sure.

Table 4.11 Provision of training and development at Econet telecom Lesotho

Provision of training and development	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	10	47.6
Disagree	4	19
Not Sure	1	4.8
Strongly Agree	4	19
Strongly Disagree	2	9.5
Total	21	100

As a continuation to the preceding question, participants who agreed that ETL does provide training and development to its staff members were asked to also state whether the training is paid for by ETL or not, and as presented in table 4.12, the majority of the respondents (11 (55.0%) and 4 (20%)) agreed and strongly agreed, respectively. On the other contrary, 3 (15.0%) disagreed while 2 (10.0%) said they were not sure.

Table 4.12 ETL pays for the training and development of staff member

Payment of training and development	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	11	55
Disagree	3	15
Not Sure	2	10
Strongly Agree	4	20
Total	20	100

4.2.19 Compensation and rewarding employees for sharing knowledge

In this section, the researcher wanted to know if ETL compensates employees for sharing their knowledge with each other. As can be noted from table 13, the majority of respondents (15 (71.4%) and 3 (14.3%) agreed and strongly disagreed respectively. On the other hand, 1 (4.8%) agreed, while 2 (9.5%) stated that they were not sure.

Table 4.13 Staff compensation for knowledge sharing

Staff compensation for knowledge sharing	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	3	14.3
Disagree	15	71.4
Not Sure	2	9.5
Strongly Disagree	3	14.3
Total	21	100

4.2.20 Staff meetings during integration phase

The literature review has established that it is important for merging organisations to hold regular meetings during the integration phase of the merger with the aim of sharing knowledge. This researcher on this section sought to determine the extent to which

respondents either agreed or disagreed to the statement. As depicted from figure 4.8, the majority of respondents (11 (52.4%) disagreed. On the contrary, 7 (33.3%) and 1 (4.8%) agreed and strongly agreed, respectively. However, 1 (4.8%) disagreed, while 1 (4.8%) said they were not sure.

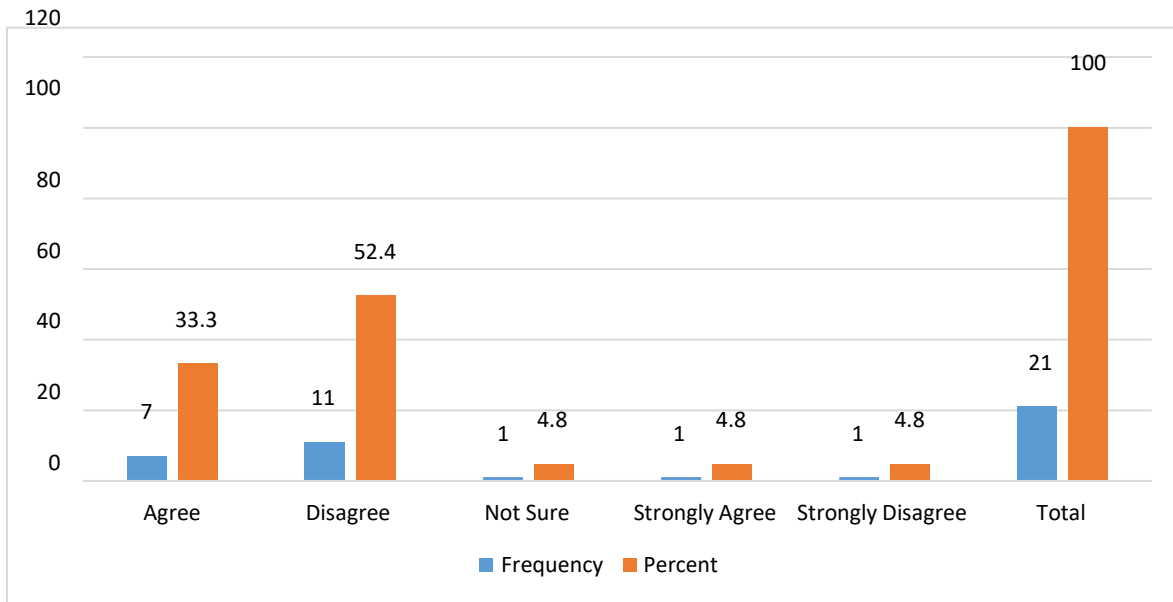


Figure 4.8 staff meetings during integration phase

4.2.21 Trust between staff members facilitates knowledge retention

Trust between staff members is said to be important to facilitating knowledge retention during mergers. The researcher here sought to establish how far the respondents either agreed or disagreed with this statement and, as illustrated in figure 4.9, the majority (11 (52.4%) and 3 (14.3%)) agreed and strongly agreed, respectively. On the contrary, 5 (23.8%) disagreed while 2 (9.5%) said they were not sure.

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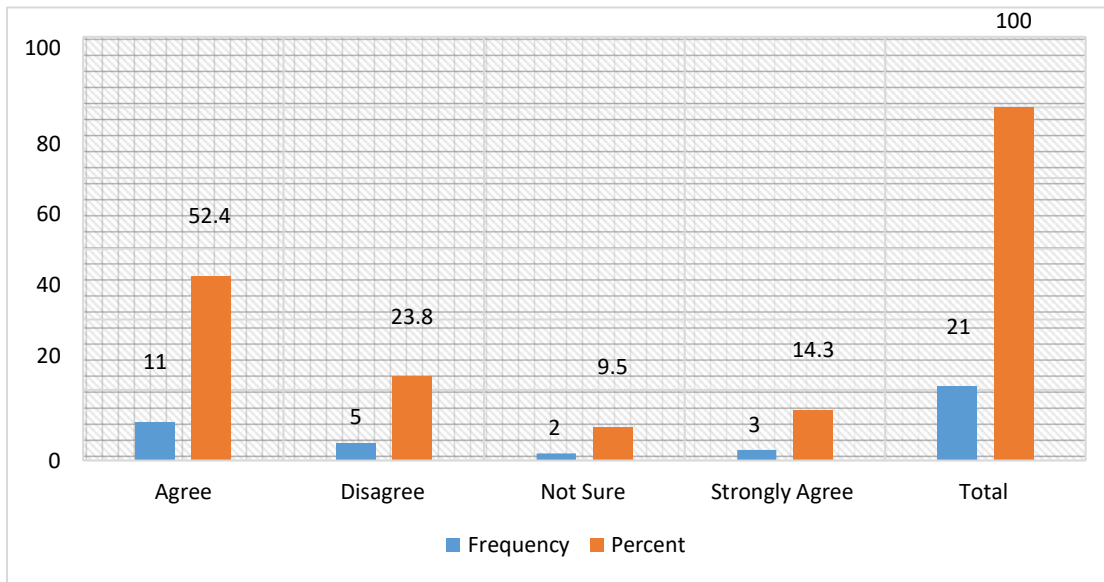


Figure 4.9 Trust between staff members facilitates knowledge retention

4.2.22 With stronger trust, the integration process becomes smooth

It has been argued that the presence of trust between partners makes the integration process smoother. The researcher in this section wanted to establish how far the respondents either agreed or disagreed with the statement. According to the illustration in figure 4.10, most of the respondents (10 (47.6%) and 4 (19.0%)) agreed and strongly agreed, respectively. However, 2 (9.5%) disagreed, while 1 (4.8%) strongly disagreed. One (4.8%) respondents strongly disagreed while 3(14.3%) indicated that they were not sure.

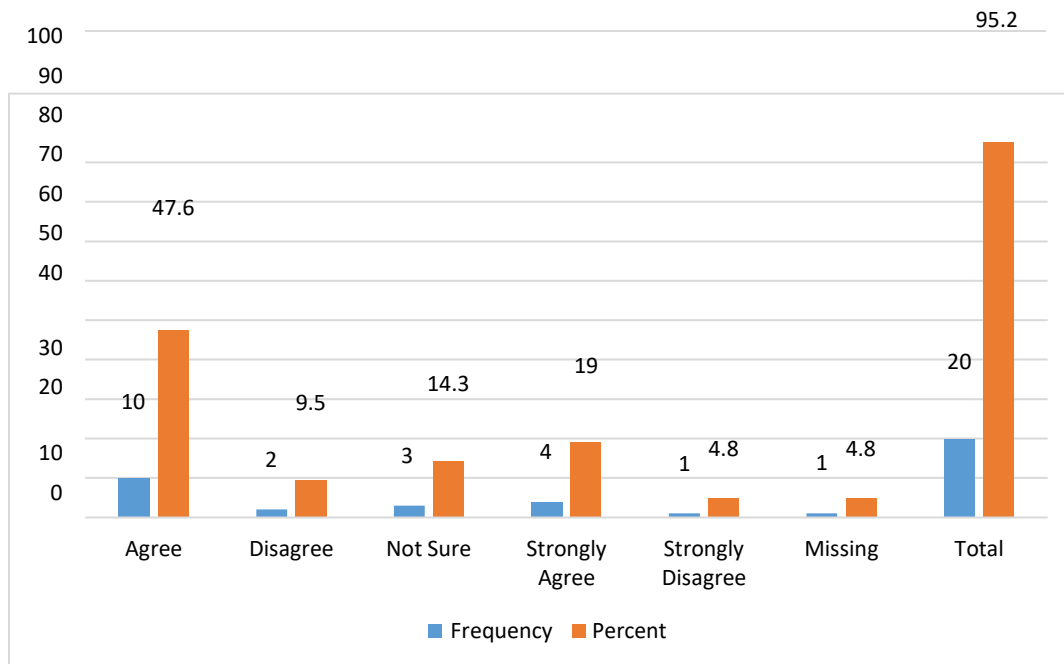


Figure 4.10 with stronger trust, the integration process becomes smooth

4.2.23 Shared vision positively affects knowledge retention

It has been established in the literature review that shared vision positively affect knowledge retention (Zulkifly, Ismail and Hamzah 2019:16). All respondents (21 (100%)) were in agreement with 15 (71.4%) noting that they agreed and 6 (28.6%) stating that they strongly agree (see table 4.14).

Table 4.14 Shared vision positively affect knowledge retention

Positive impact of shared vision on knowledge retention	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	15	71.4
Strongly Agree	6	28.6
Total	21	100

4.2.24 Importance of communication in M&As

Communication is also said to be important in M&As. Table 4.15 depicts the study results

where 12 (57.1%) agreed and 9 (42.9%) stated that they strongly agree.

Table 4.15 Importance of communication in M&As

Importance of communication in M&As	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	12	57.1
Strongly Agree	9	42.9
Total	21	100

4.2.25 Retention of senior staff members in M&As

The literature review established that the retention of senior staff members is important for knowledge retention (Goecke et al. 2018; Bilgili, Calderon, Allen and Kedia 2017). On the extent to which they either agreed or disagreed, the majority of respondents (11 (52.4%) and 5 (23.8%)) agreed and strongly agreed, respectively. However, 1 (4.8%) indicated that they disagreed, while 4 (19.0%) seemed unsure, as illustrated on figure 4.11.

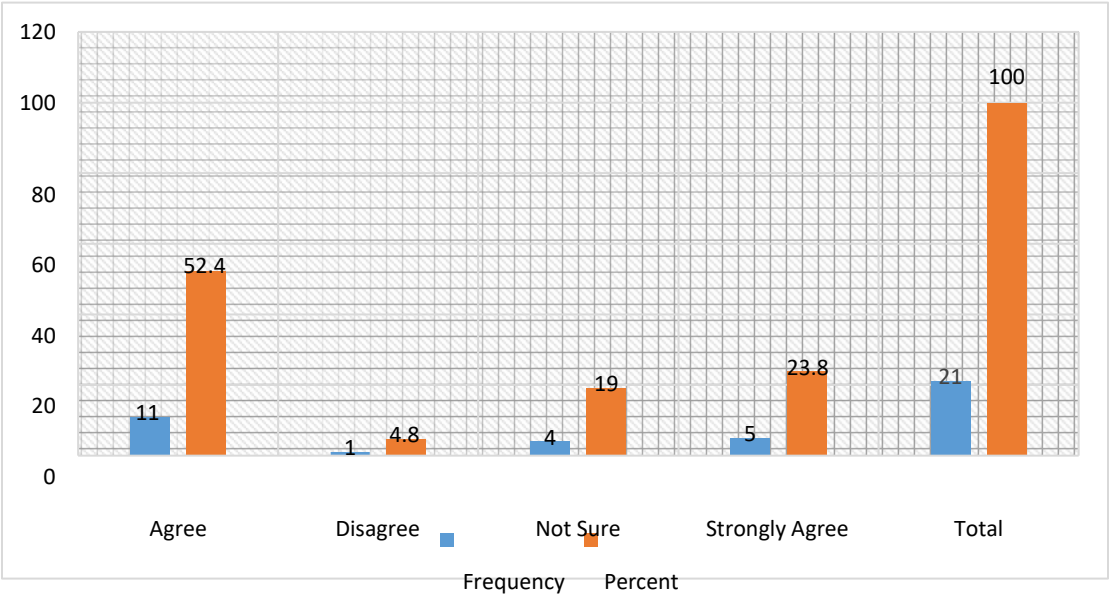


Figure 4.11 Retention of senior staff members in M&As

4.2.26 Staff turnover impedes knowledge retention

Staff turnover as a result of M&As is assumed to be a challenge, impeding knowledge retention. Figure 4.12 shows that the majority of respondents (15 (71.4%) and 4 (19.0%)) agreed and strongly agreed, respectively. However, 2 (9.5%) disagreed.

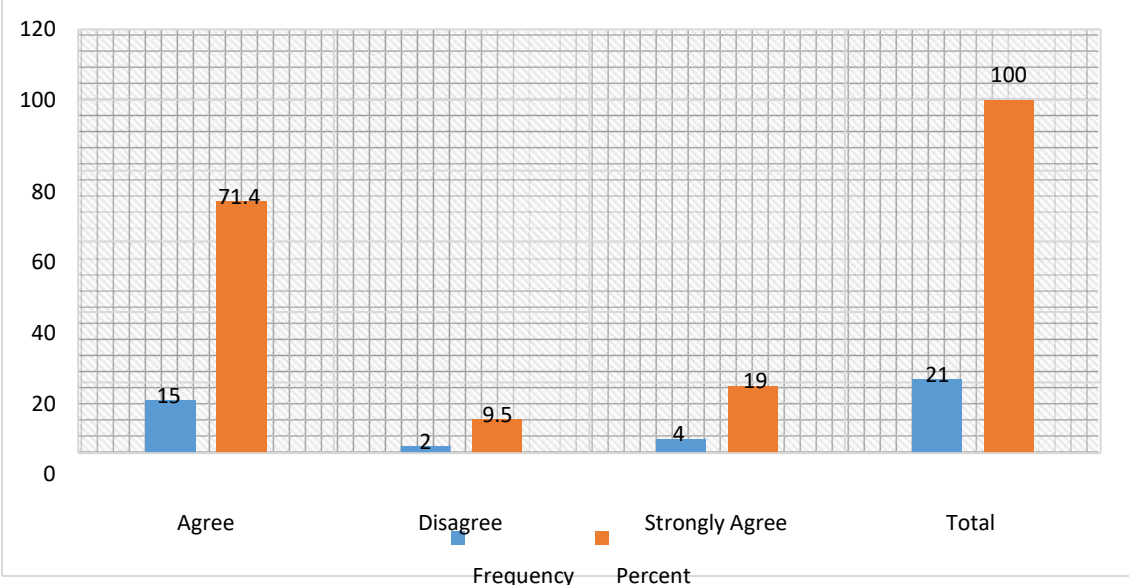


Figure 4.12 Staff turnover impedes knowledge retention

4.2.27 Poor communication is an obstacle of knowledge retention

One of the obstacles to knowledge retention is assumed to be poor communication. Based on the statistics in figure 4.13, 14 (66.7%) agreed and 5 (23.8%) strongly agreed. However, 1 (4.8%) stated that they were not sure, while 1 (4.8%) decided to be silent on the question.

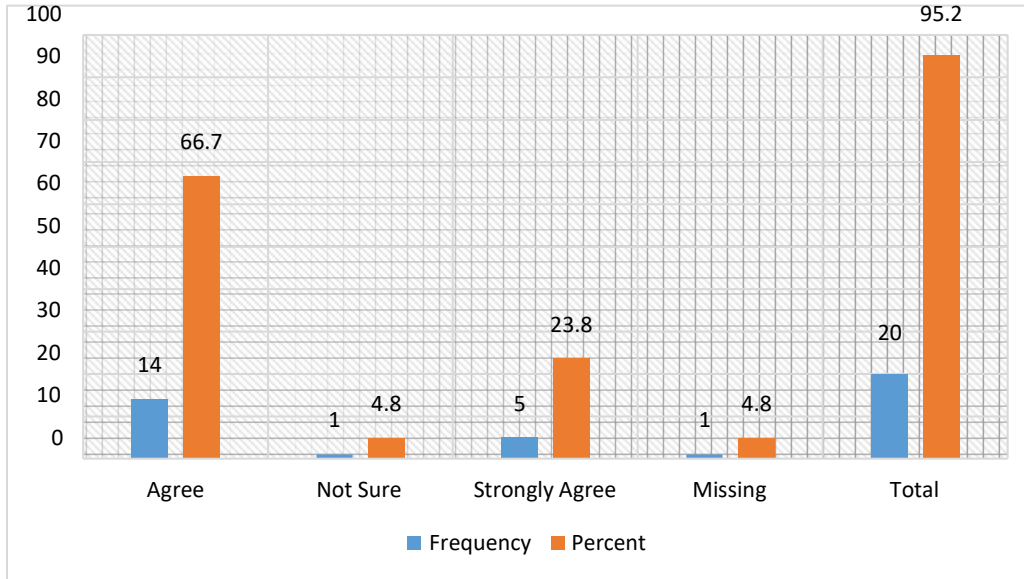


Figure 4.13 Poor communication is an obstacle of knowledge retention

4.2.28 Uncertainty in M&As is a challenge to knowledge retention

Mergers and acquisitions are synonymous with uncertainty, which is a challenge to knowledge retention. Table 4.16 shows that 13 (61.9%) respondents agreed and 6 (28.6%) strongly agreed. However, 1 (4.8%) disagreed while 1 (4.8%) was not sure.

Table 4.16 Uncertainty in M&As is a challenge to knowledge retention

Challenge of M&As uncertainty	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	13	61.9
Disagree	1	4.8
Not Sure	1	4.8
Strongly Agree	6	28.6
Total	21	100

4.3 Qualitative data analysis and presentation

The following section presents the qualitative data for the current study that were collected by means of interviews (appendix G)

Kabir (2016:204) notes that one way of collecting primary data is through interviews. One-on-one interviews were conducted with nominated key staff members who form part of the executive management who were available during the merger process. Before conducting interviews, the participants were informed of the study purpose and that they were not compelled to participate. They were also made aware that they were free to withdraw their participation at any time they felt they were no longer comfortable, and this was done to ensure adherence to ethical considerations (UNISA ethics policy 2016:14). Participants were also showed the approval letter from the director of human resources of the organisation (appendix D). This was made to allay their fear of talking to strangers about the important organisational information. The summary of the interviewees' characteristics is presented in table 4.3.1.

Table 4.3.1: Characteristics of participants

Experience	Gender	Managerial role	Respondents Classification
18years	Male	General manager HR	A
12years	Male	Head reacquisition	B
12years	Male	Core networks manager	C
12	Male	Manager environment, health, safety, and security	D

All participants suggested the interview site and all interviews were conducted in the office of the respective interviewees. Each interview session lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. The researcher requested to record all interviews and permission was granted by all participants. The researcher also ensured all participants that the purpose of recording the interviews was to make sure no time was wasted on the part of the interviews that is synonymous with “asking questions and writing down the (responses)” (Markham and Couldry 2007:678). One of the advantages of recording interviews in research is that

recording allows the researcher to capture the interview as it happens and thus increasing the immediacy of data capture (Crozier and Cassell 2016; Burton and Nesbit 2015).

4.3.1 Qualitative analysis procedure followed

In terms of the actual qualitative data analysis, the researcher initially thoroughly and critically listened through the notes taken from the field to increase the understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher further read the transcripts of the participants' responses numerous times and then colour coded (see appendix F) comparable responses to see what themes emerged from the data (Linneberg and Korsgaard 2020:6).

Chaterera-Zambuko (2020:151) underscored that identifying codes is helpful because codes permit a researcher to identify the variety of issues in the large volumes of data. Linneberg and Korsgaard (2020:6) define coding as a process of detecting pieces of meaning in your data and assigning labels to them with a code, which can be defined as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Wicks 2017:169). On the other hand, Ngulube (2015:12) describes coding as a technique that aids scholars to move data to a high level of abstraction as it plays a significant role in identifying categories.

All codes were then grouped together, resulting in a total of 11 themes. However, after reviewing the themes (Ngulube 2015; Nowell et al. 2017; Scharp and Sanders 2019; Thomas 2020) to determine whether they do reflect meaning emanating from the data set, three themes were merged into one, resulting in the total of eight themes as presented on figure 4.3.1. A theme is described as a specific pattern found that captures some vital information concerning data that are related to the research questions and features patterned meanings across the data set (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas 2013; Braun and Clarke 2019; Kiger and Varpio 2020; Xu and Zammit 2020). This organisation of the coded data into themes simplified the analysis and assisted the researcher to organise my

research findings (Creswell 2012; Nowell et al. 2017; Kiger and Varpio 2020; Creswell 2012).

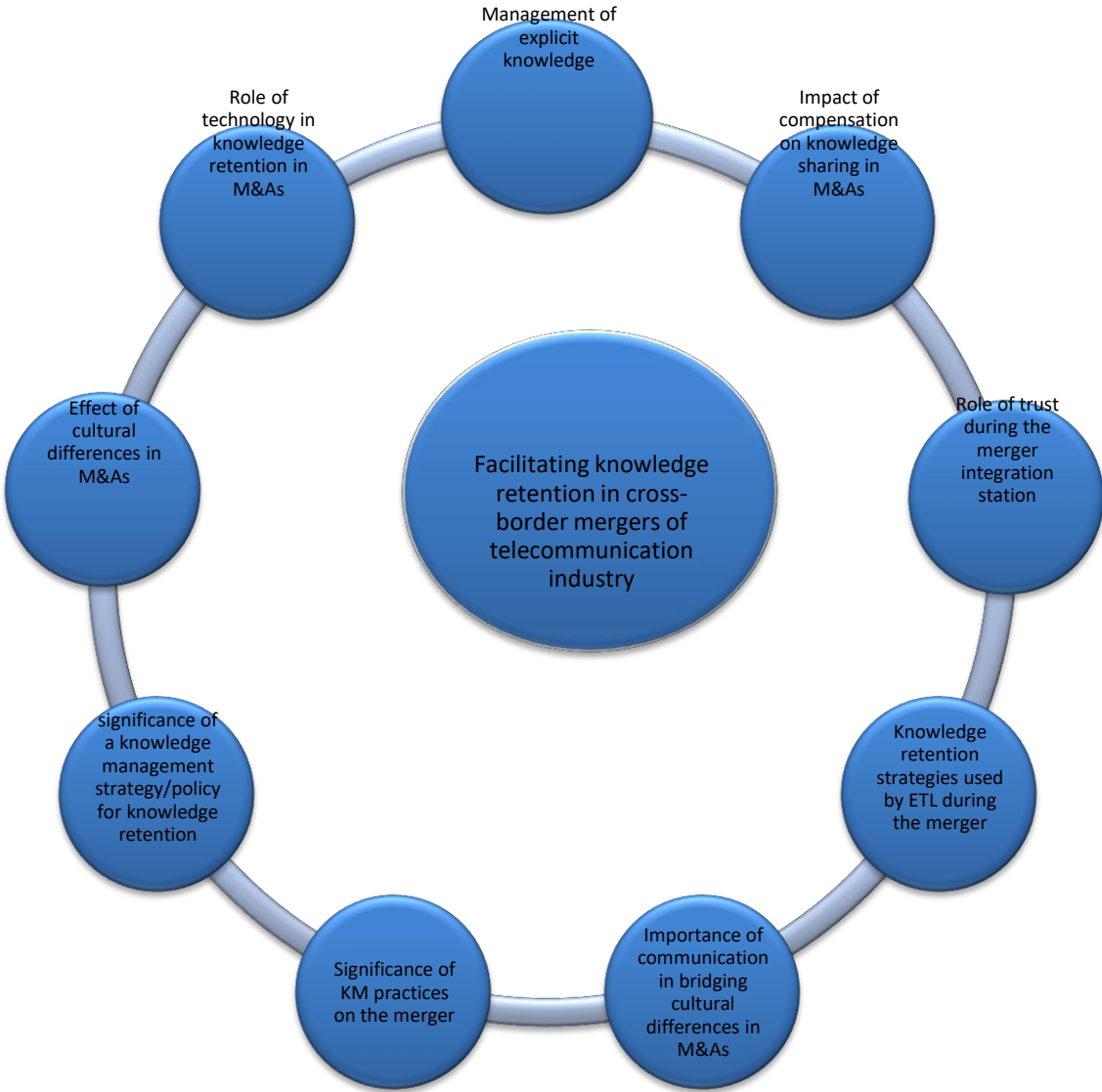


Figure 4.3.1: Thematic map of this study

4.3.2 Study findings

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the process of knowledge retention in the context of organisational cross-border mergers in Lesotho, particularly in the telecommunication industry. The current section presents the findings as informed by data collected using interviews. The themes that emerged from data analysis have been used as the subtopics under which the findings are presented. In line with the ethical clearance that the researcher subscribes to, the names of participants were not disclosed and they were therefore referred to as A, B, C and D.

4.3.2.1 Significance of knowledge management policy for KR

The existence of a knowledge management policy is often thought of as the first and most important step in the institutionalisation of knowledge management in an organisation. Therefore, this question was aimed at determining the seriousness that knowledge management is afforded at ETL and responses to the question are presented in table 4.3.2.

Table 4.3.2 Existence of KM policy at ETL

Participant	Response
A	No, we do not have a KM policy
B	As for the policy, I don't think we have
C	No, I would not say we have that, not to my knowledge
D	For now, I don't remember seeing such a document

As can be seen in table 4.3.2 above, responses differ, with participants A and C clearly stating the absence of the policy, and participants B and D not being sure of the KM policy's existence. However, it may be vital to note that the existence of any organisational policy is normally made known to all employees in order to enforce it.

4.3.2.2 Management of explicit knowledge at ETL

The management of organisational knowledge is imperative, regardless of the type of knowledge involved, whether explicit or tacit. Therefore, the aim of this question was to discover if there is any system in place for managing explicit knowledge such as reports, policies/strategies, different types of contracts with clients and other very important explicit knowledge. As presented in table 4.3.3, responses do vary as to how explicit knowledge is managed.

Table 4.3.3 Management of explicit knowledge at ETL

Participant	Response
A	We do have archives where all our documents are kept for purposes of knowledge sharing
B	We used to have a records office where several files were kept, but it has since been dismantled. I don't even know where those files are now but wherever they are, I don't think they are being taken care of
C	We used to have libraries, but everything is now electronic. However, I don't even know where those documents are now, but I keep mine in my office as an individual
D	We used to have a library, but it is no longer there, but soon it is going to be resurfaced

As can be noted, the above responses they seem to be inconsistent and contradictory. For instance, participant A noted that the organisation currently has an archival place where important organisational documents are kept, and reference made to them whenever necessary. This is inconsistent with the responses provided by participants B and C who alluded to the fact that although they used to have records before office the merger, that office has been dismantled. What is even more interesting about this inconsistency is when participants B and C said they are not even aware as to where those documents that used to be housed in the records office are currently, participant C noted that:

However, I don't even know where those documents are now, but I keep mine in my office as an individual.

Although participant D was in agreement with participants B and C, s/he further noted that the library they used to have will soon be reinstated.

4.3.2.3 Significance of KM practices during the merger process

Knowledge management practices are normally referred to as those actions performed that are meant to enhance the internal flow of knowledge within the organisation. This question was particularly aimed at determining if any of these practices existed because the researcher's contention was that their presence would mean knowledge is retained during the merger and the responses to this question are contradictory. All participants held the view that nothing was done to guard against knowledge loss during the merger process and this therefore means that important tacit knowledge might have been lost during this time. However, according to participant A, important organisational knowledge may not have need lost because:

"The organisation made sure that the 'star performers' were retained, and the rest of the staff members were interviewed before leaving the organisation".

However, it is important to note that any employee who has been with an organisation for a long period of time has accumulated a wealth of organisational tacit knowledge that needs to be retained and made available in the future.

To show that knowledge might have been lost during the ETL merger, participant B became detailed in the response and suggested that:

Things were never handled properly, particularly for people who left as a result of the merger, and am saying this because not even exit interviews were held with them. I even talked to the executive management then, making them aware that whenever people are released from work for a variety of reasons, they are first taken through a process to heal them. So, briefly, nothing was done to retain the knowledge of staff members who left during the merger.

Participant C also echoed the sentiments of participant B and remarked that:

Organisations should always ensure that the process of knowledge retention is always ongoing such that there is no problem when people leave organisations. However, I don't recall anything been done to retain knowledge of staff members who left the organisation during the merger.

4.3.2.4 Knowledge retention strategies used by ETL during the merger

Knowledge retention strategies are the different means by which knowledge is transferred from the knower to the organisation so that it can later be retrieved for usage by the knowledge seeker (Levallet and Chan (2019:178). The aim of this question was to probe and further find out if knowledge was indeed retained either before or during the merger and the researcher specifically wanted to determine the strategies that were used for retaining knowledge.

According to the responses provided, participants A and D identified job rotation as the knowledge retention strategy that was mostly used during the merger. For instance, participant A remarked that:

Our technicians used to be specialists in power, switches and transmission. The rotation of these technicians in these special areas enabled knowledge acquisition and therefore I can say there was job rotation.

However, participant C seemed uncertain if coaching as a knowledge retention strategy was implemented or if it only existed on paper. Participant C noted that:

I am not sure if it was successful or if it took off in the first place, but I think coaching as knowledge retention strategy did exist.

On the other hand, participant D made no mention of any knowledge retention strategy used during the merger. In fact, s/he noted that: *There was nothing in as far as knowledge retention strategies are concerned.*

4.3.2.5 Application of ICT in knowledge retention during the merger

It has been revealed in the literature review that ICTs play an important role in the knowledge retention process (Harandi, Nia and Valmohammadi 2019:1732). The aim of

this section, therefore, was to find out if ETL had the required ICT infrastructure for knowledge retention which they used for retaining knowledge and responses are presented in table 4.3.4.

Table 4.3.4 Technologies used by ETL for knowledge retention

Participant	Response
A	We do have a knowledge repository and it once crashed, but we had to retrace our steps to look for the source and it's now up and running
B	We do have an intranet although mostly it consists of human resources related issues. I have not seen anything related to our daily operational issues
C	We do have system called terror station when we keep our soft copies of documents.
D	We do not have any repository and my understanding is that our management think knowledge is in abundance in the street where new graduates can just be picked and be mentored to fit in well in the company in case of any resignation

The table of responses above provides a contradicting and confusing picture of the state of whether ETL indeed had technologies intended to support the retention of knowledge during the merger. According to participant A, the organisation had and still has a knowledge repository, which he mentioned had crashed once, although it was repaired and is currently functioning. This in agreement with the views of participant B who opined that the organisation has an intranet. Participant B further explained that:

We do have an intranet although mostly it consists of human resources related issues. I have not seen anything related to our daily operational issues.

Participant C also shared the sentiments of participants A and B although it appears to the researcher that there is no common name for the system in place. For instance, participant A referred to the system as just a knowledge repository while participant B called it an

intranet and participant C referred to it as a terror station. On the other hand, participant D alluded to the fact that, to his knowledge, ETL does not have a knowledge repository. This participant further noted that he does think management takes the issue of knowledge retention serious as they think knowledge is in abundance especially from the new graduates. He continued to say:

We do not have any repository and my understanding is that our management think knowledge is in abundance in the street where new graduates can just be picked and be mentored to fit in well in the company in case of any resignation.

4.3.2.6 The role of culture in M&As

The results of the impact of culture in mergers in the literature are both confusing and contradicting as evidenced in the literature review section (Froese, Pak and Chong, 2008; Stojanović-Aleksić, Erić Nielsen and Boskovic 2019). The aim of this section was to discover whether the participants viewed the merger as having been positive or negative.

Table 4.3.5: The role culture in M&As

Participant	Response
A	I would say culture plays an important role in cross-border mergers. What is equally important is when people are always enlightened about all the happening in the merger process. In other words, if there is a constant communication between management and staff members, then all cultural variations would not have any negative impact. Now all cultures have been aligned and its now one culture of self-driven team.
B	I would say organisational culture is positive because it normally brings different capabilities together.
C	It is in very rare cases where cultural variations are positive.
D	The majority of people on the ground perceived the exercise to be very bad to have happened, so I would say it was negative.

As evident from the responses provided on table 4.3.5., the results vary, with participants A and B arguing that culture plays a positive role in M&As and participants C and D arguing against culture in M&As.

In arguing for culture in M&As, participant A noted that:

I would say culture plays an important role in cross-border mergers. What is equally important is when people are always enlightened about all the happenings in the merger process. In other words, if there is a constant communication between management and staff members, then all cultural variations would not have any negative impact. Now all cultures have been aligned and its now one culture of self-driven team.

Participant B echoed the sentiments of participant A and opined that:

I would say organisational culture is positive because it normally brings different capabilities together.

Participant C also noted that culture plays a positive role in M&As in very rare cases.

Participant D also argued that:

The majority of people on the ground perceived the exercise to be very bad to have happened so I would say it was negative.

4.3.2.7 Effects of cultural differences during the M&As

Organisational culture is often thought to be one of the challenges facing cross-border mergers. The aim of the question, therefore, was to discover if there were any noticeable cultural differences between the two previously independent organisations, particularly considering the fact that the other company was previously from another country. The responses are illustrated in table 4.3.6.

Table 4.3.6: Effects of culture on M&As

Participant	Response
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A	Yes, there was a difference in that the home-based company (Telecom Lesotho) had the culture of lazy people, particularly because it was previously a government owned entity while the other organisation (Econet Ezi-cel) was a private and therefore consisted of people who were willing and doing their job.
B	I have heard that there was a perception from employees who came from Ezi-cel that they thought they were somehow better than those that were from Telecom Lesotho. But personally, I did not experience or notice any cultural difference and maybe it is because of the level of work I was doing at that time.
C	There will always be those noticeable cultural differences because they used to call us fixed because previously, we were in fixed communications sector while we called them mobile because they were in the mobile telecommunications industry. Particularly Ezi-cel, because they were from Zimbabwe and therefore, they had a different culture to that of Telecom Lesotho.
D	Yes, there was a difference because management of Ezi-cel consisted of people from Zimbabwe and they always wanted to pray before we begin daily work.

Based on the responses provided in table 4.3.5, except for participant B, all other participants held the view that there were noticeable cultural differences between the merged organisations although their perspectives regarding those cultural variations also differ.

However, participant B argued he did not notice any cultural difference between the employees, and he believes it might have been because of the kind of a job he was doing at that time. The participant added that:

Participant C also held the view that there were indeed cultural differences that were noticeable specifically during the integration stage of the merger.

Participant D, on the other hand, also agreed that there were noticeable cultural differences.

4.3.2.8. Cultural alignment post-merger at ETL

Organisational cultural alignment is defined as the extent to which the strategy, structure, and culture of the organisation combine to produce a synergy required for achieving the goals laid out in the organisation’s strategy. The aim of this question was therefore to find out to what extent the different cultures are now aligned to create a whole unified culture across the organisation. Responses provided are presented in table 4.3.6.

Table 4.3.7 Cultural alignment post-merger

Participant	Response
A	There are no longer any cultural differences now. All cultures have been aligned
B	For me, I did not notice any difference so even now I see only one culture
C	Since its now new people, they are still here and there but not to the point we can say they are noticeable
D	Not much really

According to the responses on table 4.3.7 above, participant A was of the view that cultures have now been aligned and, therefore, are one corporate culture. Participant B noted that he has always been of the view that there is one unified culture; therefore, there is still no difference as far as he is concerned. However, participants C and D indicated that cultural differences are still noticeable albeit not much. In fact, participant C remarked that:

Since its now new people, they are still here and there but not to the point we can say they are noticeable.

4.3.2.9 Importance of communication in bridging cultural differences in M&As

The objective of the question on bridging cultural differences in M&As was to find means through which cultural differences in M&As may be bridged and responses point to the importance of communication. When indicating the importance of communication in M&As, participant A remarked that:

First, it is important to have clear strategy and map individual employees' profiles to that strategy. The second step is to discuss that with relevant individuals. The other important aspect is to monitor progress and provide support. In that way I believe cultural variations may be bridged

Similarly, participant B was in agreement with the importance of communication in M&As and said:

If there is going to be a merger of companies, there should be an informal meeting where employees talk to each other about issues related to their work. Management should also be available. In that way management may notice very important issues and take positives and to work on the negative.

However, participant did not have an idea of the recommendation he could provide because, according to him, the cultural differences were not prolonged. Participant D also talked about the importance of communicating. He said:

We were constantly reminded that the business is a multinational and therefore, we should avoid unnecessary clashes.

4.3.2.10 Role of trust during the merger integration station in relation to KR

Trust, like communication, is regarded as important during the integration stage of the merger, particularly in relation knowledge sharing, which ultimately leads to knowledge retention. All participants alluded to the fact that trust is important and without it, it may be difficult for colleagues not only to share knowledge, but also to work together. In emphasising the importance of trust during the integration of M&As, participant A argued that:

Trust is important and without it, people may not be able to share their knowledge.

In the same vein, participant B was of the view that:

First of all, you can't work with someone you don't trust, so it is important for employees to trust each other.

Participant C was more detailed in his response and said:

If employees don't trust each other, they will never share their knowledge. For instance, if one employee is knowledgeable in procurement procedures, the absence of trust means he is only going to be the only person with that knowledge.

Participant D also shared similar sentiments to other participants on the importance of trust during the integration phase of M&As. This participant was of the view that:

Trust is very important that people trust each other because in the absence of trust there is not going to be any coordination between staff members.

4.3.2.11 Impact of compensation on knowledge retention in M&As

The aim of the last question of this section of the study was to establish if ETL has any reward system in place that is solely aimed encouraging employees to share knowledge before, during or after the merger. Responses to this question were inconsistent, with one participant arguing that there was indeed a reward system in place and the other three participants having a different opinion. In response to the question, participant A noted:

We had before the merger and we also have a reward system in place aimed at encouraging knowledge retention among employees.

On the other hand, participant B remarked that:

Not reward itself but knowledge retention is always encouraged at all levels.

Similarly, participant C and D believed ETL does not have any rewards associated with knowledge sharing.

4.4 Summary of Chapter Four

This is a multi-method study that presented data collected by means of questionnaires and interviews. The study's results were obtained from the former employees of Econet Ezi-cel and Telecom Lesotho, as well as the current employees who went through the merger process. Data were also collected from the management of Telecom Lesotho through the interviews. After cleaning data for accuracy, quantitative data were processed through Microsoft Access, analysed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented in tables and charts (Reay et al. 2019; In and Lee 2017). Qualitative data, on the other hand, were analysed by thematic analysis and presented in tables and in text using verbatim expressions of participants. The next chapter interprets and discusses the study findings by constantly comparing them to the literature in line with current understanding about the problem understudy.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter analysed and presented the data gathered through interviews and a questionnaire. The current chapter interprets and discusses the study findings. Saunders et al. (2007:5) argue that while the data obtained from a variety of sources may be part of the whole research process, without interpretation it is not research. Neuman (2011:177) views interpreting data as assigning significant or coherent meaning.

The interpretation and discussion of findings for the current study are based on both quantitative and qualitative findings in the order of data presentation that is done in the previous chapter which is on the research objectives as follows:

- To identify knowledge management strategies in place at ETL
- To find out which knowledge retention strategies were adopted to capture and protect knowledge during the merger process at ETL
- To establish the role of ICTs in the knowledge retention process
- To identify the role of organisational culture as an organisational change factor in the successful cross-border merger in relation to knowledge retention
- To identify the role of human resources management (HRM) practices in knowledge retention and retention at ETL
- To identify key factors in transferring and retaining knowledge in organisational mergers
- To identify challenges in retaining knowledge in the aftermath of organisational mergers

5.2 Purpose of Econet telecom Lesotho merger

Globally, M&As have been used as an important strategic corporate restructuring means in the business setting for as far back as 1897 (Ghosh and Dutta 2014:396). In the telecommunications industry, Koi-Akrofit (2014:1809) listed the following as the

reasons behind M&As:

- Deregulation
- Introduction of sophisticated technologies (wireless landline phone services)
- Innovative products and services (internet, broadband and cable services)

On the other hand, Lundqvist, Liljebloom, Loflund and Maury (2019:873) argue that one restructuring dimension resulting from M&As is ameliorating the quality of the target firm's governance by providing operational effectiveness gains, lower agency costs and funding at a lower cost.

What is interesting is that the motives for M&As in Africa are different from the rest of the world. To this end, Adegoye and Oladejo (2012:170) explain that the motive for M&As was need for organisations to comply with government directives and regulatory reforms. For instance, almost all the bank M&As in Africa were necessitated by increased minimum capitalisation levels set by the respective central banks. It is argued that such transformations were planned to save the country's banking systems from collapse and to reposition the existing organisations to become more competitive, efficient, and profitable. Similarly, mergers of colleges and universities in South Africa in the early 2000 were a result of the government's mandate following the end of its apartheid policy (Sehoole (2005; Van Vuuren et al. 2020)). Furthermore, mergers were motivated and completed in African markets mainly to create a conducive environment to national economic development (Maude and Okpanachi 2012:10). The results of this study are consistent with the idea that M&As in Africa need to comply with government directives and regulatory reforms and must gain valuable resources, including skills and competencies.

5.3 Existence of a knowledge management policy at Econet telecom Lesotho

Nair and Munusami (2019:7) argue that the availability of a knowledge management policy is often thought of as a first and the most important step in the institutionalisation of knowledge management practices in an organisation. Furthermore, Detlor, Ruhi, Turel, Bergeron, Choo, Heaton and Paquette (2006:125) remark that both organisational

and personal information behaviours are influenced by the corporate-wide knowledge management environment, including the practices, policies and processes institutionalised, and the technologies implemented for KM initiatives. Similarly, Mavodza and Ngulube (2011:19) suggest that for organisational knowledge to be managed, it is essential to have a knowledge management policy that will be well understood by all staff. This is inconsistent with the results of this study that found that the majority of participants were of the opinion that the organisation does not have a knowledge management policy in the post-merger company as well as before the merger.

5.4 Mergers and acquisitions staff turnover at ETL

Mergers and acquisitions are associated with high staff turnover. In this section of the study, participants were requested to state if there was any staff turnover during the merger. In particular, they were asked to indicate if there were any resignations, either voluntarily or forced, and the results indicated that there were indeed many resignations. These results seem to be in agreement with the literature review. For instance, Rodríguez-Sánchez et al. (2018:14) opine that the implementation stage of M&As “is normally characterised by redundancies, power struggles, voluntary resignations and absenteeism”. Similarly, lack of leadership in M&As is likely to result in poor morale, employee stress, increased sickness absences, high labour turnover and lower productivity (McKinney et al. 2017; Holland and Scullion 2019).

As a follow-up to the question on whether the merger resulted in resignations, respondents were requested to mention if any interviews were held with the departing employees with the intention of retaining their knowledge. The results showed that interviews were not held. These results are also consistent with the literature where, for example, Martins and Martins (2011:49) highlight that organisations are confronted with the challenge of knowledge loss and attrition as a result of layoffs, retirements, staff turnover, mergers and acquisitions. Martins and Martins (2011:55), therefore, argue that in order to retain organisational knowledge, organisations should ensure that there is a constant knowledge circulation across all organisational departments in order to maintain

competitive edge. In that regard, knowledge retention appears to be ideal for transforming individual knowledge into organisational knowledge (Foss, Husted and Michailova 2010:460).

5.5 Knowledge retention strategies during the merger process

It has been established that the employees depart from employment because of several reasons, including desire to improve their careers, retrenchments and retirements, M&As, layoffs, downsizing, and others (Dube and Ngulube 2013:2). Therefore, Liebowitz (2009) and Levy (2011) suggest that knowledge retention programmes should be employed or incorporated into the organisation when the employees first joins the organisation because they may leave the organisation with immediate effect (Levy (2011)). Several strategies that are aimed at retaining knowledge take on different forms, including CoPs, storytelling, job rotation, job shadowing and exit interviews (Malinski (2002), and Levallet and Chan (2019)). The question regarding the knowledge retention strategies sought to find out which knowledge retention strategies were employed at ETL, and the results showed that job rotation and mentorship were used. It would appear from the findings that even though these strategies were used, it may not have been made clear to the employees why they were implemented in the first place.

5.6 Technologies used for knowledge retention at ETL

Determining the role that is played by ICTs in the knowledge retention process was one of this study's objectives. Harandi, Nia and Valmohammadi (2019:1732) opine that ICTs permit the organisation to connect with their customers, suppliers and vendors in a novel and timely manner not experienced before. For competitive industry positioning, Mandal and Bagchi (2016:1259) suggest that managers should build IT infrastructure, develop IT-related competences to capture and manage organisational knowledge. In fact, Rathi and Given (2017:720) consider information technology as an enabler of knowledge management by contending that the implementation of technology leads to better knowledge retention practices. Rathi and Given (2017:720) further argue that there is no

one better technology or tool for managing knowledge, but the choice of which specific tool to use is determined by factors such as the already existing IT infrastructure or the organisational size. This study identified the following technologies as relevant to knowledge retention including, internet, intranet, email and wikis. The use of computers has been part of the society for decades to the extent that they have now become indispensable. Kumar and Mahajan (2013:21) argue that the development of ICT has created many challenges for society, thus compelling them to acquire the much-needed computer literacy in order to take advantage of this development. Similarly, Azam (2015:9) argues that organisations, including those in the telecommunications industry are integrating ICTs in their daily operations in order to ameliorate their performance. Computer literacy is defined as the ability to achieve any desired outcome through the usage of computers (Hatlevika, Thronsenb, Loic and Gudmundsdottir 2018). Similarly, Scherera and Siddid (2019:14) define computer literacy as “the interest, attitude, and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital technology and communication tools to access, manage, integrate, and evaluate information; construct new knowledge; and communicate with others in order to participate effectively in society”.

The aim of this objective was to find out what role ICT plays in knowledge retention and it was also important to find out if respondents were computer literate, the results showed consistency with the literature. The results showed that employees are computer literate and, therefore, in a good space to make use of the existing ICT infrastructure for the purpose of knowledge retention.

Furthermore, respondents were required to indicate if their organisation had internet connectivity and whether the internet as an enabler of knowledge retention is accessible to everyone in the organisation, and the finding revealed that the organisation does have internet connectivity which is accessible to all employees. The importance of internet in knowledge management is highlighted by Glavas, Mathews and Russell-Bennett (2019) and Gupta and Jain (2017) who note that the availability of ICTs such as the internet has greatly changed the transnational business milieu, particularly the flow of information and

the way knowledge is processed.

In order to determine which one of the identified knowledge retention technologies are used at ETL, respondents were requested to indicate those that are in use and the findings identified internet, email, intranet, video-conferencing, LinkedIn, Facebook, electronic documents management system and the wikis.

5.7 Role of culture in cross-border mergers in relation to knowledge retention

This objective deals with the role of culture as an organisational change factor in the context of cross border mergers.

5.7.1 Cultural differences in M&As

Identifying the role of organisational culture as an organisational change factor in the successful cross-border mergers in relation to knowledge retention was one of this study's objectives. In this section, the respondents were particularly requested to state if there were any noticeable cultural differences between the merging organisations. The findings on this are mixed, although the majority of respondents agreed that there were indeed noticeable cultural differences. These findings are in line with the views of Mignerat and Marmenout (2017:167) who remark that when two distinct organisations with different cultures are combined, a clash or collision will occur, which may lead to unintended consequences. Similarly, Marks (2019:8) notes that just as organisations with different, incompatible information systems cannot perform better, so are the organisations with different incompatible cultures.

Furthermore, the respondents were requested to state if there had been any differences in terms of managerial approaches when the two companies first merged. The results indicated that there were indeed differences managerial approaches. This is consistent with what Felix and Bento (2018:1) believe that most of the time, mergers and acquisitions do not achieve the expected mainly because of different responses the individual and organisation

following the implementation stage of M&As. Therefore, “the interface between individual and collective identities has emerged as one of the critical factors for successful mergers” (Vieru and Rivard, 2014:383).

5.7.2 Cultural variations and knowledge retention in cross border mergers

This section sought to find out what the role cultural differences play in knowledge retention in the context of cross-border mergers. Specifically, respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they either agree or disagree to the statement that organisational cultural variations impede knowledge retention and retention in cross- border mergers, and the findings were mixed with almost half of the respondents agreeing and the other half in disagreeing.

The inconsistencies can also be seen in the reviewed literature where the results of the previous studies appear to be both inconclusive and mixed (Stahl and Voigt 2008; Farsi 2017). For example, Yen, Ling and Ting (2017:3) note that organisational cultural variations may replicate differences in the ability to identify, transfer and implement potentially useful knowledge among employees in both the acquiring and the acquired organisations. Similarly, Chang- Howe (2019:27) argue that if there are too many difference in terms of culture, institutional constraints or absorptive capacity in the organisational fit, the consequence of the changes is likely to be influenced by emotional resistance, language barriers, unpredicted legal restrictions and cultural clashes. Van den Brink (2020:385) also remark that strong cultural differences of the organisation may lead to “others” leaving an organisation after a while because they do not feel comfortable, or they do not become integrated in the dominant culture.

The contrasting view to this one is that cultural variations may be a source of value creation and learning. In fact, Marks (2019:8) opines that cultural differences can break the stringencies in acquiring organisations and help them to develop richer knowledge, and foster innovation and learning. Similarly, Ahammad et al. (2016:3) opine that

organisational cultural differences may create capabilities that may lead to performance improvement in mergers and acquisitions.

5.7.3 Promotion of knowledge retention culture at ETL

The results of this study are inconsistent, with the larger part of respondents alluding to the fact that a knowledge retention culture does exist, while the other part disagreed. These findings validate literature review as far as culture and knowledge retention are concerned. Consistent with the opinions of the majority of respondents, Nold (2011:85) suggests that, without the culture that supports knowledge retention in organisations, most knowledge management systems will generate unintended results. In the same way, Ajmal and Koskinen (2008), Pirkkalainen and Pawlowski (2013) remark that several KM systems fail because of cultural factors instead of technological lapses and, therefore, it is important to note that organisational culture is a major impediment in the knowledge management process. Furthermore, Jamshed and Majeed (2018:90) opine that attaining a competitive advantage through teamwork in M&As is contingent upon factors of culture, emotional intelligence, leadership skills and knowledge retention behaviours which may eventually act as a stimulus for improved organisational performance. Therefore, it would appear from the findings that even if the culture of knowledge retention do exist, the whole process of knowledge retention may be performed informally because it has also been established that the organisation does not even have a policy guiding KM.

5.8 Role of HRM practices in knowledge retention at Econet telecom Lesotho

HRM practices refer to the practices, systems, and policies that organisations use to influence the behaviour, performance, and attitudes of employees. According to Theriou and Chatzoglou (2014:652), HRM practices are essential in managing knowledge in organisations and can also increase the ability of staff members and skills, thus influencing the behaviour and attitudes towards learning. Similarly, Kim and Ko (2014:588) posit that HRM practices initiate positive exchange relationships among teams and organisations by satisfying employees' needs. For example, Edgar and Geare (2005) point out that equal employment opportunities, training and development, and recruitment and selection fulfil

employee needs and therefore generate favourable attitudes. In the same vein, HR practices foster the perception among employees that they are receiving a high level of organisational support (Vanhala 2019:350). Trust is also perceived as a significant aspect behind social exchanges because of its ability to initiate social exchange relationships is based on reciprocal trust (Gould-Williams and Davies 2005; Vanhala 2019; Kacperska and Lukasiewicz 2020).

In fact, Noopur and Dhar (2019:1) opine that HRM practices and knowledge management are antecedents. In this section, the respondents were requested to mention how far they either agree or disagree with the assertion that ETL provides training and development to its employees and the findings indicated that the organisation provides training and development.

In line with the study findings, Theriou and Chatzoglou (2014) and Papa, Dezi, Gregori, Mueller and Miglietta (2018) suggest that HRM practices such as training and development have been found to be closely related to knowledge creation and innovation in an organisation. Organisations therefore need to train employees to acquire and retain knowledge. As a follow-up, respondents were asked to state if ETL pays for training and development and the findings revealed that the organisation funds the trainings provided.

In addition, respondents were requested to state if ETL employees are compensated for sharing knowledge and the results indicated no compensation is provided for sharing knowledge. However, one participant agreed that employees are given incentives for sharing knowledge. However, this leaves many questions when only one respondent says something that is different to the majority of participants. The fact that employees are not compensated for sharing knowledge is worrying because compensation and reward are associated with influencing knowledge retention behaviour of employees. This is in line with the views of Pillai (2016), Papa et al. (2018), Noopur and Dhar (2019) who argued that HRM practices like compensation and reward are positively related to knowledge

retention behaviour of employees.

For example, Edgar and Geare (2005) point out that equal employment opportunities, training and development, and recruitment and selection fulfil employee needs and therefore generate favourable attitudes. In the same vein, HR practices foster the perception among employees that they are receiving a high level of organisational support (Vanhala 2019:350). Trust is also perceived as a significant aspect behind social exchanges because its ability to initiate social exchange relationships is based on reciprocal trust (Gould-Williams and Davies 2005; Vanhala 2019; Kacperska and Lukasiewicz 2020).

5.9 Key factors in transferring and retaining knowledge in mergers

The aim of this objective was to identify the factors that are essential in the transfer of knowledge in the context of cross border mergers.

5.9.1 Meetings and visits in M&As

The literature review revealed several modes of interactions that may be used to improve the quality of relationships in M&As, which includes regular meetings and visits. This section sought to find out if there were any of such meetings and visits during the integration stage of the merger and the results indicated that no meetings and visits were held that were intended specifically for knowledge sharing between employees of merging organisations. Contrary to the findings of this study, it is argued that regular meetings and visits are regarded as one of the key factors in the transfer of knowledge in the cross-border mergers. For instance, Bresman et al. (2010), Oberg and Tarba (2013), Calipha, Brock, Rosenfeld, and Dvir (2018) state how the acquiring organisation may be in possession of valuable knowledge it wishes to share with the target firm. They argue that visits and meetings may be vital for transferring that type of knowledge and in the absence of such, they concluded important knowledge could be lost.

Calipha et al. (2018:18) specifically underscore that both the merging organisations and high-tech firms are characterised by casual processes, comparable components of organisational culture, and they normally arrange brain-storming meetings and visits. These kind of meetings and visits facilitate implicit knowledge transfer. This mechanism is also discussed in the literature as a facilitator factor (Calipha et al. 2018:18).

5.9.2 Trust in mergers and acquisitions

With more trust, staff members from one organisation are able to share their knowledge with staff from another organisation during integration. Respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the above statement and the findings indicated that they believe trust is important and that without trust, it may be difficult for people to work together at all. These results are also corroborated by several scholars. For example, Frantz (2015) and Bansal (2016) remark that “trust dynamics become front-and-center of post-merger integration relationship development”. In order build trust during cross-border mergers, it is imperative for organisations to consistently communicate well and, as a result, avoid unnecessary conflicts between partners (Senior, Fearon, Mclaughlin and Manalsuren 2017:369).

Similarly, Trapczynski, Zaks and Polowczyk (2018:2) argue that trust plays a significant part in ensuring knowledge transfer and a continuous alignment of objectives, as well as connection to each other’s networks. The importance of trust in this context is highlighted by the fact that the merging organisations exhibit conflicting characteristics, predominantly in terms of the level of formalisation and the intricacies of organisational structures (Trapczynski et al. 2018:2). In the context of M&As specifically, Frantz (2015:112) suggests that the knowledge-exchange process requires trust, because organisational employees filter the knowledge they share with others based on the amount of trust they have and formality of the relationship with them. However, Hofstede (2010:40) cautions that the very presence of trust may be hindered by the presence of cultural variations that are synonymous with CBM&As.

5.9.3 Shared vision and knowledge retention in M&As

The importance of shared vision according to and Bratianu and Anagnoste (2011:320) can never be underestimated in mergers and acquisitions. The quicker employees of both organisations deal with the sense of a combined organisation, the more likelihood that they will be able to transfer their knowledge and show commitment to it (Venus 2013:130). Furthermore, Bratianu and Anagnoste (2011:320) argue that if employees of the two organisations have a shared vision, that could likely improve employees' motivation to be actively engaged in the knowledge retention process. On this objective, the respondents were required to mention the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement that if employees have the same vision, they have a deeper understanding of the benefits they could receive from sharing their knowledge and the findings of the study are also validated by the literature review, where respondents showed that successful M&As are dependent on shared vision between merging organisations.

In order to create the meaning and shared vision of the merger, Angwin et al. (2016:2390) note that communication must be abundant, but everything must be communicated constantly during the course of the merger process. Mahadewi (2018:55) remark that the shared vision also gives the direction of employees towards achieving the strategic objective of MandA and gives some motivational platform. In creating a shared vision, managers should involve all employees of merging organisations to partake in the advancement of efficient vision and new practices values which aim to make employees buy into the vision and realise their support (Mahadewi 2018:55).

5.9.4 Communication during M&As

The respondents here were expected to state how much they either agree or disagree with the statement that the success of the integration process is dependent on the effective communication between managers and employees of merging organisations, and the study findings corroborated this statement. The reviewed literature also viewed

communication as one of the success factors in M&As. For instance, Weber, Tarba and Oberg (2014) and Pratap (2020) state that communication in M&As is the “glue” that holds the two merging organisations together. Similarly, McKinney et al. (2017) and Rodríguez-Sánchez et al. (2019) posit that a lack of communication in mergers and acquisitions is directly related to employee departure and retention. However, sufficient communication among managers and employees lessens uncertainty, rumours, distrust and anger towards management.

Furthermore, Pratap (2020:1) underscores that when two organisations merge, there is a lot of confusion and only successful communication can dispel this confusion and help conduct the merger successfully. To ensure the success of a merger or acquisition, it is important to focus on communication (Pratap 2020:1). Saralaa et al. (2019:313) also aver that communication is one of the most useful HR tools in the context of M&As. Importantly, pre-acquisition targeted communication that accurately carries strategic objectives, and integration plans can lessen suspicions and worries related to M&As.

5.9.5 Retention of senior staff members in M&As

The respondents were requested to state the extent to which they either agree or disagree with the statement that retention of senior staff members is paramount for the success of the integration process. The findings show that respondents agree. Consistent with these findings, the literature likewise confirms that the retention of senior staff members is particularly important for the smooth integration as well as knowledge retention between the two organisations. For example, Goecke et al. (2018), Bilgili, Calderon, Allen and Kedia (2017) and McKinney et al. (2017) posit that, normally, high top management turnover has a negative impact on the overall success of M&As because the top management is vital for a smooth integration and knowledge retention between the merging entities. Similarly, Buono and Bowditch (2003), Goecke et al. (2018) opine that the general employee turnover may disturb the acquisition and integration processes, particularly in the high-technology sectors such as telecommunications. Staff

members are the firm's most important resources because they are the carriers of organisational knowledge (Goecke et al. 2018:167).

Contrary to that, there is evidence showing that organisational employee turnover is not only detrimental to the organisational performance, but it can also be advantageous. For instance, Mello (2011:100) postulates that turnover provides an organisation with the opportunity to engage new employees with recent training and who are not locked into existing ways of doing things. Some more positive results are higher quality, less expensive replacements, displacement of poor performer, innovation, flexibility, adaptability offer opportunities to encourage talented, and high performer (Mello 2011:101).

5.10 Challenges of retaining knowledge in the post-merger

This objective sought to identify the challenges confronting knowledge retention in mergers and acquisitions. In particular, staff turnover through retirements and forced retirements are discussed. Additionally, poor communication and staff turnover, resulting from uncertainty as a result of mergers, are also discussed.

5.10.1 Staff turnover

The respondents were here requested to mention how far they either agree or disagree with the statement that staff turnover through process like retirement, forced resignation and other means impedes knowledge retention after the merger and the findings show that indeed participants agree with the statement. These findings are also consistent with the literature review. Allen et al. (2010:55) note that staff turnover negatively affects organisational performance. In the same vein, Martins and Meyer (2012) and Raudeliūnienė, Davidaviciene and Petrusėvicius (2018) agree that many organisations are confronted with the challenge of losing organisational knowledge and competitive advantage as a result of employee layoffs, retirements, staff turnover, organisational mergers and acquisitions, and competitive recruitments.

Furthermore, Goecke et al. (2018) and Steigenberger and Mirc (2020) posit that knowledge retention is naturally problematic throughout the post-acquisition integration, while staff re-think their imminent situation in the acquired firm and experience doubts relating to the future state of their organisation as well as their daily work.

Basford, Offermann and Wirtz (2012) argue that effective leadership can curb employee turnover by encouraging employees to remain in organisations for longer time because of the involvement with the organisational leadership. Given the findings on this research objective, organisations undergoing mergers should make knowledge retention the priority in order to improve their performance after the merger. McKinney et al. (2017:44) argue that unless management offer retention packages to discourage employees from launching job searches, head-hunters with well-paid guaranteed job offers will lure even the most faithful employees. McKinney et al. (2017) further note that, even with good retention packages, key employees will leave the organisation as they see that their power and influence diminished in the new company.

5.10.2 Poor communication

During the process of mergers, employees are usually kept in the dark about the whole transaction until they hear it through the corporate media grapevine or media. In this regard, Singh and Chitranshi (2016:17149) note that “this can lead to a misrepresented or distorted picture of the merger's repercussions and to counterproductive exercises by staffs, which might be on edge about possible employment losses”. Additionally, Frantz (2015:114) notes that improved collaboration and communication between group members in M&As increased collaboration and communication among group members and this abates the effects of demographic variations and improves the psychological bond among them. Furthermore, with poor communication, employees rely on any information they can find, which includes rumours (Sarala et al. 2019; Rodriguez-Sanchez et al. 2019). Consistent with the literature review, the findings of this study showed the importance of communication in M&As and that poor communication may lead to difficulty

in retaining knowledge in M&As. Participants therefore felt that knowledge leaders in organisations undergoing M&As should use their communication channels optimally with the employees before and after cross-border M&As.

Yen et al. (2017) feel that because communication is crucial in M&As, it becomes vital for knowledge leaders to offer decisive real-time information to employees to avoid confusion. Yen et al. (2017:6) further argued that in order for organisations to retain knowledge in the cross-border M&As, communication should be implemented from the top to the bottom and it is important that accurate information is communicated at all levels in the organisation so that the employees know what to expect next. Clear communication, particularly from the knowledge leaders, is important during the M&A process because it successfully lessens uncertainty and encourages teams to be more engaged in the cross-border knowledge transfer which will ultimately lead to retention (Angwin et al. 2016; Yen, et al. 2017; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al. 2019).

5.10.3 Uncertainty in M&As

Mergers and acquisitions usually result in large profits for organisations. However, on the other hand, employees often have to face uncertainty brought about by M&As and this lowers morale in the workplace. Kangetta and Kirai (2017: 104) argue that low staff morale leads to absenteeism, refusal by employees to provide services, strike, murmuring and a lack of motivation and interest. M&As do not only involve financial transactions, but they also cause conflicts and dissatisfaction among staff members. In fact, Goecke et al. (2018:168) remark that “employees often experience acquisitions as emotional shocks, resulting in high occupational and private stress, separation anxiety, uncertainty and fear about future and career”. Consistent with literature, the study reveals that M&As are synonymous with uncertainty and confusion. Bari, Fanchen and Baloch (2016) argue that M&As bring transformational vicissitudes which causes uncertainty, tension, and a sense of panic amongst the employees. Kale and Singh (2016:950) therefore, suggest that this can be mitigated by an effective coordination approach as an effective strategy tailored

towards improving M&As performance. On the other hand, Ahammad et al. (2016:69) feel that these psychological changes may be managed by the introduction of effective coping programmes, including individual motivation and counselling sessions.

5.11 Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter provided the interpretation and discussion of the findings related to this study. The interpretation and discussion were based on data, literature reviewed, and it was driven by the Doan et al.'s (2011) knowledge retention model on which this study is anchored on. The literature was constantly consulted to compare it to the findings to see if they concur or contradict the literature. It is argued that organisations, including those in the telecommunications industry, are faced with a challenge of knowledge loss resulting from different organisational activities like mergers and acquisitions. The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the process of knowledge retention in the context of organisational cross-border mergers in Lesotho, particularly in the telecommunication industry.

The study has found that although there were no formal policies in place, somehow knowledge was retained during the merger process. On the other hand, valuable knowledge may have been lost because employees who either left voluntarily or those who were forced to resign just left the organisation without any proper knowledge transfer arrangement. On the issues of culture which appear to be very important in cross-border mergers, the results from the interviews and those collected through questionnaires were in harmony, particularly revealing that there were visible cultural differences during the merger process which became a challenge to knowledge retention.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five interpreted and discussed the study findings for the current study. The current chapter concludes the study by providing summary of the study findings, conclusions as well as the recommendations. Kalusopa (2011) and Maluleka (2017) considered the following factors when writing conclusions and recommendations of a study:

- Conclusions and recommendations should be aligned to the study findings
- The researcher should avoid making unjustified conclusions and generalisations
- Study conclusions should cover all research questions

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the process of knowledge retention in the context of organisational cross-border mergers in Lesotho, particularly in the telecommunication industry.

6.2 Summary of the study findings

This section provides the summary of the study findings as they relate to the last research objectives above.

6.2.1 Purpose of ETL merger

It has been established from the literature that mergers and acquisitions are motivated by a number of factors. Among those motives is to penetrate the foreign market and to have access to human capital resources. However, in an African milieu, it has been established that the motive of pursuing mergers and acquisitions differs from the other regions. For instance, Adegoroye and Oladejo (2012:170) argue that the motive behind M&As in Africa seems to be the need for organisations to comply with government directives and regulatory reforms. An example provided is the mergers of banks which took place due to

directives from respective central banks from African countries.

Another example is university mergers in South Africa that happened after the apartheid era as a result of the directive from the minister of Education and the Council on Higher Education (CHE). The purpose of this section was to find out what the motive was behind the ETL merger and the results are contradictory in that the majority argued that the purpose was to gain valuable resources, including employees' knowledge and culture. On the other hand, quite a number of responses from the questionnaires are consistent with the reviewed literature that the purpose of the merger was the need to comply with government directives and regulatory reforms. The responses from interviews also corroborated those of the questionnaires that government reforms had to be adhered to.

6.2.2 Existence of a knowledge management policy at ETL

The reviewed literature established that knowledge management practices are influenced by the existing relevant practices, policies and implemented technologies. However, the results of the study are contradictory in that almost half of the responses to the questionnaires indicated that ETL had a knowledge management policy/strategy while the other half said there was no such thing as a knowledge management policy or strategy. What is interesting is that all interviewed respondents noted that such a policy did not exist, not before or after the merger. In terms the management of explicit knowledge, the interview findings revealed that physical documents were stored before the merger, but this no longer exist.

6.2.3 Mergers and acquisitions staff turnover at ETL

Mergers and acquisitions are synonymous with high staff turnover due to uncertainties. The results of the study indicated that all responses are consistent with the reviewed literature that even the ETL merger was faced by the challenge of very high staff turnover. The findings also indicated that at ETL staff turnover resulted from both voluntary and forced

resignations.

6.2.4 Knowledge retention strategies during the merger process

This section discussed knowledge retention activities that were used at ETL to capture and retain knowledge. The results of the study indicated that the following were used during the merger namely: job rotation, communities of practice, mentorship, job shadowing and storytelling. However, the interview findings showed that nothing was done to retain knowledge during the merger process.

6.2.5 Technologies used for knowledge retention at ETL

All respondents revealed that they are computer literate and therefore are able to use the different knowledge retention technologies the organisation has and these technologies included, the internet, email, social networks such as Facebook, documents management system, and others.

6.2.6 Role of culture in cross-border mergers in relation to knowledge retention

This objective sought to find out what role organisational culture plays in cross-border mergers considering the fact that the two organisations were from different geographical boundaries. The results revealed that indeed there were visible cultural differences between the two organisations. The cultural differences appeared noticeable even at the managerial level. Furthermore, the findings also pointed to the fact that those cultural variations tended to impede knowledge retention between staff members as they had different cultural backgrounds.

6.2.7 Role of HRM practices in knowledge retention at ETL

It has been argued in this study that human resources management practices play a pivotal role in retaining knowledge in the context of cross-border mergers. Particularly, the

findings indicated that the organisation does provide training and development that are important knowledge acquisition techniques, and these were paid for by the organisation. Additionally, the study findings also showed that staff members were not compensated for sharing knowledge as suggested by the reviewed literature.

6.2.8 Key factors in transferring and retaining knowledge in mergers

The aim of this objective was to identify the factors that are essential in the transfer of knowledge in the context of cross-border mergers. Of those identified and which the study found to be relevant were ETL's constant meetings and visits that need to take place during the cross-border mergers. The study also highlighted the importance of trust between employees of merging organisations. Apart from that, the findings of the study revealed the importance of having a shared vision, constant communication and the retention of senior staff members in cross border merger.

6.2.9 Challenges of retaining knowledge in the post-merger

The last objective for this study related to identifying challenges confronting knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers and the study revealed the following: high staff turnover, poor communication as well as uncertainty.

6.3 Study conclusions

This section provides the conclusions of this study as per the finding and these conclusions are based on the study objectives. The section also proposes a knowledge retention framework in the context of organisational cross border mergers.

6.3.1 Knowledge management strategies in place at ETL

In the first objective of this study, the respondents had to state the purpose of the study where the findings seem mixed and contradictory. For instance, almost half of the respondents noted that the merger was intended to gain valuable resources, including employees' knowledge. On the other hand, the findings established that the merger was

a result of the need to comply with government directives and regulatory reforms.

Furthermore, it was established that there was a very high staff turnover during the merger and no strategies were implemented to retain the knowledge of the departing employees. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the absence of any knowledge retention mechanisms in place, knowledge may have been lost at the same time

With regard to the availability of either a knowledge management policy or strategy for guiding the merger process, the findings concluded that such a policy was non-existent, both before or after the merger.

6.3.2 Knowledge retention strategies

The study concludes that even though knowledge management is not formalised at ETL, either before or after the merger, some of its processes are visibly applied, namely knowledge retention strategies such as job rotation, mentoring, communities of practice, job shadowing and mentorship.

6.3.3 Role of ICTs in the knowledge retention process

Information and telecommunications technology plays a pivotal role in knowledge retention and has been regarded as an enabler. The study established that ETL staff members are computer literate and they make use of different technologies such as email, the internet, intranet and video-conferencing.

6.3.4 Role of culture in cross-border mergers in relation to knowledge retention

The study established that ETL does promote the culture of knowledge retention. However, it has been revealed that cultural differences that existed before and during the merger impeded this process.

6.3.5 Role of HRMP in retaining knowledge retention

The findings of this study are consistent with the reviewed literature that HRMP plays an important role in knowledge retention. The following RHMP was found to exist at ETL, namely training and development and that ETL pays for them. However, the findings also revealed that employees are not compensated for sharing knowledge.

6.3.6 Key factors in transferring and retaining knowledge in mergers

The reviewed literature identified a number key factors that enable knowledge retention in the context of cross border mergers, namely frequent meetings and visits during the process, trust between employees of the merging organisations, shared vision where employees of both organisations deal with the sense of a combined organisation. Effective communication during the process to keep employees updated of the latest developments and the retention of senior staff members have also been identified as key factors to consider during the process of merging.

6.3.7 Challenges of retaining knowledge in the post-merger

With regard to the challenges confronting knowledge retention after the merger, the finding of this study pointed to the uncertainty among staff members regarding their jobs. This uncertainty, the findings found, led to high staff turnover as people always want to be in a stable work environment.

6.4 Study recommendations

The following section provides the recommendations based on the issues the study raised.

6.4.1 Knowledge management policy

The findings of this study revealed that ETL does not have a knowledge management

policy, now and even before the merger. It is important to have a knowledge management policy in place to guide all knowledge management activities in organisations, including those in the telecommunications industry. This is supported by Mavodza and Ngulube (2011:19) who suggest that in order to manage knowledge in an organisation, it is necessary to have a knowledge management policy that will be well understood by all the employees. This study therefore recommends the development of a knowledge management policy for organisations willing to engage in a cross-border merger. This will guard against high staff turnover that is synonymous with cross-border mergers.

6.4.2 The role of ICTs in the knowledge retention process

ICTs have been identified as one of knowledge management enablers. In fact, this study identified a number of technologies used in the knowledge retention process, such as emails, internet, intranet, and others. However, there is no evidence of the existence of a knowledge management system from the findings of this study. This study thus recommends the development of a knowledge management system at ETL. Knowledge management systems will assist the organisation to capture all the tacit and explicit organisational knowledge, thus making the knowledge readily available at all times. This system will also improve collaboration among staff members in their daily work, thus minimising knowledge loss in case of any staff departures.

6.4.3 The role of organisational culture as a change factor in CBM&As

Studies on the role of organisational culture in cross-border mergers in relation to knowledge retention are confusing and inconsistent. While other researchers posit that organisational culture has a negative impact on cross border mergers, other researchers believe different organisational cultures have a positive impact on cross-border mergers. The findings of this study revealed that there were visible cultural differences at the time of the ETL merger, although that is no longer the case because the two organisations have merged with one culture. The findings further revealed that the cultural variations encumbered knowledge retention between employees. This study therefore recommends

a thorough cultural due diligence exercise for future cross-border mergers.

Daniel et al. (2016:55) define cultural due diligence as the process of gathering and analysing important cultural elements. If this is done correctly, organisational cultural due diligence can assist organisations to discover essential issues that can impede organisational integration, including knowledge retention. There are two objectives for carrying out cultural due diligence, according to Denison and Ia Ko (2016:55). The first one is to notify the merger negotiating team so that they can make informed decisions. The second one is to underline the culture gaps and to clarify the integration challenges caused by the cultural variations so that the merged organisation can be prepared for those challenges.

6.4.4 The role of HRM practices in knowledge retention

One of the study's objectives had to do with the role that HRMP plays in knowledge retention in the context of cross border mergers. The findings of this study show that a number of HRMPs are in place at ETL. These HRM practices are important in the context of knowledge management, particularly knowledge acquisition. However, the study findings also revealed that critical HRM practices such as compensation and rewards that are aimed at encouraging knowledge retention among employees do not exist. This is inconsistent with the assertions of Pillai (2016), Noopur and Dhar (2019), and Papa et al. (2018) who argue that HRM practices like compensation and reward are positively related to knowledge retention behaviour of employees.

Furthermore, it is recommended that ETL should align their recruitment policy with a knowledge management policy or strategy. Knowledge retention should be mandatory by stating it in job descriptions of all positions, including those of management.

6.4.5. The key factors in transferring and retaining knowledge in mergers

One of the key factors in transferring and retaining knowledge in mergers that have been identified by this study is to have regular meetings and visits between the acquiring

organisation and the target organisation. It has been established that regular meetings and visits may be an important platform for knowledge transfer in mergers and acquisitions. However, the findings of this study revealed that there were no meetings and visits organised between the acquiring and the target organisation that were meant solely for knowledge retention. This study therefore recommends the use of regular meetings and visits between the acquiring and the target firm in the future mergers and acquisitions.

6.4.6 The challenges of retaining knowledge in the post-merger

One of this study's objectives was to identify the challenges of retaining knowledge after the merger. Those that have been identified and discussed in this study are staff turnover, poor communication and uncertainty brought by mergers. The views of respondents from both the questionnaires and the interviews corroborated the reviewed literature. In this case, it is recommended that a clear communication strategy should be developed for future mergers. This communication strategy should address the following objectives: goals, target audience, communication plan and communication channels, in terms of the means of communicating and this communication strategy will ease the uncertainty that is usually synonymous with mergers.

6.4.7 Proposed framework

A framework specifies how the investigator views the concept that is being studied, particularly the relationship among concepts (Ngulube et al. 2015; Mamun and Hasan 2017). A framework can guide research by presenting an illustration of theoretical constructs and variables of interest (Mamun and Hasan 2017; Van der Waldt 2020).

Developing a framework that may be used in facilitating knowledge retention in the cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry is the last objective of the current study. The proposed framework is based on the review of literature that was presented in Chapter Two as well as the study findings as presented and discussed in Chapters Four and Five (Van der Waldt 2017; Van der Waldt 2020). The assumption with the proposed

framework is that it will be able to easily explain in detail how the process of cross-border merger should be undertaken, not only in the telecommunication industry but in other industries as well.

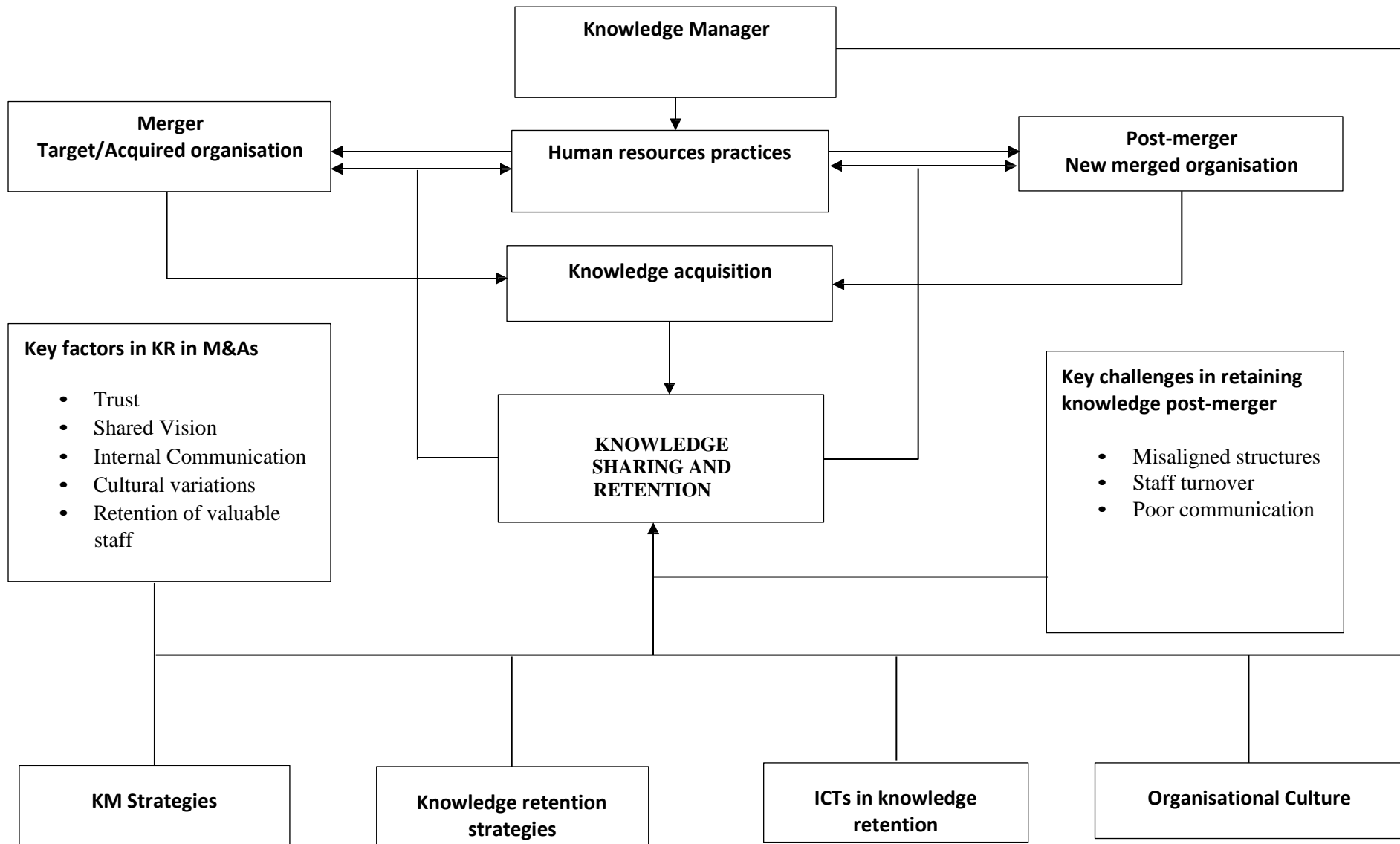


Figure 6.1: Proposed framework for knowledge retention in the organisational cross-border mergers

The proposed framework suggests the link factors targeted at facilitating knowledge retention in the context of cross-border mergers. The suggested factors include knowledge manager; human resources practices; knowledge acquisition; key factors of knowledge retention in M&As; knowledge management strategies; knowledge retention strategies; the role of ICTs in knowledge retention process; organisational culture and key challenges of knowledge retention in the post-merger period. The suggested factors have been connected to each by arrows showing their interrelatedness (Van der Waldt 2020). Each of the suggested factors are now explained below.

- *Knowledge manager*

Knowledge managers are individuals who are given the task of making sure that the knowledge management process is successful in an organisation. For the knowledge management initiative to be successful, Micic (2015:47) argues that a knowledge manager should have qualities and skills that enable the creation, sharing and use of knowledge in an organisation. It has been revealed in this study that retaining knowledge is critical in the context of M&As. It is, therefore, suggested that the qualified knowledge manager should be identified before the start of the exercise in order to champion it. Hofmann-Füchtner (2018:1) establish that a successful knowledge management initiative does not happen spontaneously, and therefore someone must take the initiative to see things through. As depicted in figure 6.1, the knowledge manager should be identified well in the pre-merger period in order to lay the required foundation, being a link between all other relevant factors suggested in the proposed framework.

- *Human resources practices*

HRMPs are described as a set of logical and consistent organisational practices that is intended to strengthen and support employee skills, motivation and commitment (Elrehail, Harazneh, Abuhjeeleh, Alzghoul, Alnajdawi and Ibrahim 2019; Cherif 2020). KM and HRM are two concepts based on people focusing on the creation, use and sharing of knowledge and that neither one can be managed without the other (El-Farr and Hosseingholizadeh 2019; Khawaldeh 2020). This study identified and discussed the following HRM practices; recruitment and selection, compensation and reward, performance appraisal, teamwork and training and development

- *Knowledge acquisition*

Knowledge acquisition, as one of the processes of knowledge management, is described as a process in which employees or an organisation acquires knowledge and applies that knowledge to realise organisational objectives (Kaba and Ramaiah 2020:1). In the context of cross-border mergers, knowledge acquisition is described as an organisation's learning of production, the processes, technologies, management as well as skills and competencies from its partner (Yang et al. 2019:506). The organisational learning theory states that "a firm is a knowledge system, and the process of acquiring and creating knowledge through inter-organisational learning is the source of a firm's sustainable competitive advantage" (Grant 1996).

- *Key factors of knowledge retention in M&As*

The key factors of knowledge retention in M&As refers to those factors that facilitate knowledge retention in the M&As context. This study identified the following key factors: trust, shared vision, internal communication, cultural variations and retention of valuation staff. Trust means that when organisational employees trust each other, they will be able to share their knowledge which is important for knowledge retention (Ouakouak and Ouedraogo 2019). Shared vision is a linking instrument that supports different groups of personnel (Zulkifly, Ismail and Hamzah 2019:16).

Shared vision could potentially improve employees' motivation to be actively engaged in the knowledge retention process. Internal communication is assumed to be positively related to employees' motivation and, therefore, can positively influence the knowledge transfer process. Organisational culture is widely assumed to be a success factor for knowledge retention. This means that for knowledge retention to take place, an organisation should create a culture that is conducive for knowledge sharing. Cultural variations mean that when organisations with different cultures are combined, a clash may occur and should be managed. Retention of valuable staff is related to the fact that if knowledgeable staff members are not retained in M&As, valuable knowledge may be lost.

- *Knowledge sharing and retention*

This study proposes that knowledge sharing should be at the centre of the merging process because it enables knowledge retention by ensuring that the knowledge of both the merging partners is retained.

- *Key challenges in retaining knowledge post-merger*

These refer to those factors that inhibit knowledge retention that needs to be taken into account in the post-merger period and this study identified misaligned structures, staff turnover and poor communication. Misalignment of structures refers to how the restructuring process is accepted by both organisations post the mergers. Organisations should ensure that they align themselves to the predetermined strategies in order to avoid the attrition of talent from their teams as well as the organisation. Therefore, it becomes imperative for organisations to always be aligned to the predetermined strategies. Communication is not only important in the post-merger period, but also in the pre-merger period as well. In the pre-merger, communication that realistically conveys the key goals and integration plans can alleviate fears and concerns of staff members. With no communication, staff members base their expectations on any information they can find and this include rumours (Sarala et al. 2019:7).

It is essential for the acquiring firm to identify who knows what and to retain key employees (McKinney et al. 2017:41). Nonetheless, conflicts that arise during mergers it could lead to employees' turnover, which can be a precondition for knowledge loss.

- *Knowledge management strategies*

KMSs have turned to be vital for organisations. Organisations undergoing M&As, therefore, should ensure that they implement these strategies. This study identified two types of knowledge management as codification and personalisation. Codification strategy is concerned with obtaining and storing explicit knowledge for use in the future. Personalisation strategy, on the one hand, is about people-to-people interaction with the aim of sharing tacit knowledge.

- *Knowledge retention strategies*

Knowledge retention strategies should be implemented or incorporated into the organisation from the beginning, from the time that the employee is recruited into the organisation. Implementation of strategies should ensure that knowledge circulates within the organisation and therefore is not lost in case of any employee departing. Those that have been identified in this study include mentorship, CoPs, job rotation, storytelling and job shadowing.

- *ICTs in knowledge retention*

Technology is at the heart of knowledge retention and it helps to store and retrieve knowledge embodied in various knowledge management systems, including databases, documents management systems, institutional repositories and others. Such knowledge may be explicit (documented) or tacit (embedded in people's minds).

- *Organisational culture*

Culture is often identified as one of the determining success factors of knowledge retention. Dube and Ngulube (2012) and Mat Nor et al. (2020) describe organisational culture as the common assumptions espoused by the organisation and this assumption may be visibly and invisibly. In the context of the organisation, culture occurs if there is adequate communal history. Organisations undergoing M&As should ensure that their organisation have a culture that supports knowledge retention.

6.5 Implications for theory, policy and practice

The 21st century, which is information driven, has resulted in paradigm shifts that affected all disciplines including KM (Mavodza 2010; Chigada 2014). The findings of this study may be of assistance in influencing policy and practice. This study discovered the absence of knowledge retention practices during the merger of Econet Ezi-cel and telecom Lesotho and is not the practice even after the merger. This has been evidenced by the lack of its guiding policy. The study revealed that where there are elements of knowledge management, the management is not even aware of it. This, therefore, implies that a lot of organisational knowledge might have been lost owing to the merger process.

The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge through the topic studied where the importance of knowledge retention in the context of cross-border mergers is highlighted. This study is going to be of assistance not only at ETL, but also across the country.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SCIENCE RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW

Date: 30 November 2017

COMMITTEE

Ref #: 2017_TTseole_46745807_001

Name of applicant: T Tseole

Dear T Tseole

Student #: 46745807

Decision: Ethics Approval

Name: Title & name of principle applicant, address, e-mail address, & phone number

T Tseole, Unisa Information Science, 46745807@mylife.unisa.ac.za; &
+266 587 291 05

Proposal: Facilitating knowledge retention in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho.

Qualification :PhD Degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Department of Information Science Research Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Final approval is granted for 4 years.

For full approval: *The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the Department of Information Science Research Ethics Review Committee on 30 November 2017.*

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

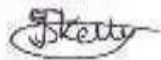
- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values & principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Department of information Science Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*

3) *The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines & scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*

Note:

The reference number 2017_TTseole_46745807_001 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the Department of Information Science RERC.

Kind regards



Signature

Dr Isabel Schellnack-Kelly
Department of Information
Science Research Ethics
Review Committee

012 429 6936

Approval template 2014



APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET Date:
09th July 2019

Title: Facilitating knowledge retention in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Tahleho Tšeole & I am doing research & I am supervised by Patrick Ngulube, a professor in the Department of information science towards a PhD at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Facilitating knowledge retention in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho.**

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to describe & explain the process of knowledge retention in the context of organisational cross border mergers in Lesotho, particularly in the telecommunication industry.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Please note that given the nature of this study, all staff members who were available before & during the merger process have been selected to participate in this study & permission to conduct this study has been granted by ETL.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

The study involves questionnaires & semi-structured interviews. You are therefore, expected to have a week within which to complete the questionnaires & the interview will be conducted with the selected few chosen by way of purposive sampling.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary & you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to

keep & be asked to sign a written consent form. Because this questionnaire does not indicate your identity, please note that it will not be possible to withdraw once they have submitted the questionnaire.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The main benefit resulting from this study is that its results when shared with ETL, may assist them to improve their skills, share knowledge & consequently retain it within the organisation.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There are currently no foreseeable negative consequences in participating in this study.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER & MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Please note that your name will not be recorded & no one, apart from the researcher & the identified members of the research team will know your involvement in this research. Also note that your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym & you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. Other than this thesis, please be aware that your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles &/or conference proceedings.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be scanned & stored by the researcher in an electronic format for a period of five years in a password protected compute. The scanned copies will be destroyed by way of shredding. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review & approval if applicable.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this research wholly out of goodwill & no incentive will be provided.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the department of Information Science, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact **Tšeoletse Tahleho** on **58729105**. The findings are accessible for a period of six months. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact the researcher at **tahleho.tseole@gmail.com**.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact **Professor Ngulube**, my supervisor +27 12 429 2832 or ngulup@unisa.ac.za. Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Department of Information Science, Dr Isabel Schellnack-Kelly on 012 429 6936.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet & for participating in this study.
Thank you.

TAHLEHO TŠEOLE

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____, confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits & anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had been explained to me) & understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions & am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary & that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications &/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname.....

Participant

Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname: Tahleho Tšeole

Researcher's

signature.....Date.....

APPENDIX C: REQUEST LETTER FOR ETL

PO Box 15379

Maseru 100

Lesotho

14th January 2019

Human Resources

Econet Telecom Lesotho

PO Box 1037

Maseru 100

Lesotho

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for approval to conduct a research study at Econet Telecom Lesotho

The above subject matter refers.

I am currently studying towards the **Doctor of Literature & Philosophy (PhD)** with the University of South Africa in the field of Information Science. My research topic is **“Facilitating knowledge retention in cross-border mergers in the telecommunications industry of Lesotho”** & I have selected Econet Telecom Lesotho as my case study.

I, therefore, wish to request your permission to conduct interviews with your staff members. My aim is to interview staff members who were with the company particularly during the merger process. Please note that this study has been ethically cleared & the recommendation is available on request.

Your consideration in this regard will be highly appreciated.



Mr. Tahleho Tseole

PhD student

(Cell: +266 58729105)

APPENDIX D: APPROVAL LETTER FROM ETL

Kingsway Road, Maseru, Lesotho Tel: +266 22211000

Fax: +266 22310183

PO Box1037

Maseru 100, Lesotho

Econet Telecom Lesotho

24 July 2019

Mr TE Tseole

C/O University of South Africa

Dear Sir

Re: Permission to conduct research at Econet Telecom Lesotho

The above captioned matter refers.

With reference to your letter of request for approval to conduct a research study at Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) dated 14th January 2019 please be advised that management has granted such permission.

However, ETL expects you to collect such data solely for purposes of the Doctor of Literature & Philosophy (PhD) studies that you have indicated to be undertaking with the University of South Africa. The company also reserves the right to withdraw this permission should management feel that confidential information of the company will in anyway be compromised.

Please do not hesitate to contact the HR Office for any queries.

Regards,



Matli Lesitsi

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE

COVERING LETTER FOR THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COLLECTING DATA ON FACILITATING KNOWLEDGE RETENTION IN CROSS-BORDER MERGERS IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OF LESOTHO

PO Box 15379
Maseru, 100
Lesotho

Dear participant

My name is Tahleho Tšeole, a student in the Department of Information Science at the University of South Africa. I am conducting a research study in fulfilment of the requirements of a **Doctor of philosophy & literature in Information Science** titled **“Facilitating Knowledge Retention in Cross-Border Mergers in the Telecommunications Industry of Lesotho”**.

Please be assured that your views on this study will not be used for any other purpose other than those advanced by this study. The study has been accorded ethical clearance by the Department of Information Science at the University of South Africa. As ETL staff member, your participation is voluntary, & you are assured that information you provide will be treated confidentially. Please be honest in your input. Thank you for your time & participation in this study.

Yours Sincerely

Tahleho Emmanuel Tšeole
University of South Africa
Department of Information Science
SA
Mobile: +266 58729105

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COLLECTING DATA ON FACILITATING KNOWLEDGE RETENTION IN CROSS-BORDER MERGERS IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OF LESOTHO

SECTION A:

Introduction

Background Information

Please write your answers to the spaces provided.

1. a) Position.....
- b) Gender.....
- c) Which year did you start working for ETL.....
- d) How many years have you worked for ETL?.....

0-5	
6-10	
11-20	
21-30	
31-40	
More than 41	

2. Are you currently still working for ETL?

Yes [] No []

3. If your answer is No, which year did you leave?

2008	
2009	
2010	
Other, please specify	

4. Also, if you answered NO to question 2 above, please state how you left the organisation by ticking in the box below.

Voluntary resignation	
Forced resignation	
Retirement	
Early retirement	

5. At the time of your exit, were you interviewed to ensure that your knowledge as an employee was captured for later use by the organisation?

Yes [] No []

6. Please state the extent to which you agree to the statement below.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The purpose of ETL merger was to gain valuable resources including employees knowledge & culture					
The purpose of ETL merger was the need to comply with government directives & regulatory reforms					

Section B: Knowledge management strategies

7. Does ETL have a knowledge management policy or strategy?

Yes [] No []

SECTION C: Knowledge retention strategies

8. Please state the extent to which you agree to the statement below.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There is a sharing of perceptions & opinions about work issues among colleagues					

9. Mergers & Acquisitions are popular with high staff turnover. Were there any resignations either forced or voluntary during the merger process?)

Yes [] No []

10. If you agree to the question above, were they ever interviewed before leaving to retain their knowledge? (Please tick in the box)

Yes [] No []

11. Which one of the following knowledge retention strategies are used for sharing knowledge at ETL?

Communities of Practice (CoPs)	
Mentorship	
Job rotation	
Storytelling	
Job shadowing	

SECTION D: Role of ICTs in knowledge retention process

12. ICTs allows connections that facilitate knowledge retention in organisations. Are you computer literate?

Yes	
No	

13. Does ETL have internet connection?

Yes [] No []

14. If your answer is yes to question 10 above, please state if it is accessible to everyone in the organisation?

Yes	
No	

15. Which one of the following technologies do you use in your organisation?
(Please tick in the box)

Internet	
Intranet	
E-mail	
Video conferencing	
Wikis	
LinkedIn	
Facebook	
Document & Records Management System (DRMS)	

SECTION E: Role of culture in cross-border mergers in relation to knowledge retention

Organisational culture is a group of internal **values & behaviors** that organisation espouses. Organisational culture includes experiences, ways of thinking, beliefs & future expectations.

16. Please tick where appropriate

Statement	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There were noticeable cultural differences between the merging organisations especially relating to the attitudes & believes					
Organisational cultural variations impede knowledge sharing					
ETL promotes the culture of knowledge sharing					
cultural variations are important because they combine different capabilities together					

17. In terms of managerial approaches, were there any differences noticeable?

Yes []

No []

SECTION F: Role of human resources management (HRM) practices in knowledge retention at ETL

HRM practices refers to the practices, systems, & policies that influence the behavior, performance, & attitudes of employees.

18. To what extent agree to the following statements?

Statement	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
ETL provides training & development to its staff members					
ETL pays for the training & development of staff member					
Employees are compensated & rewarded for sharing knowledge at ETL					

SECTION G: Key factors in transferring & retaining knowledge in mergers

19. Please mention the degree to which you agree to the following.

Statement	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A number of meetings were held during integration with the sole purpose of transferring knowledge between employees					

With more trust, staff members from one organisation are able to share their knowledge with staff from another organisation during integration					
--	--	--	--	--	--

With stronger trust, the integration process becomes smooth because there is no need to worry about potential problems					
If employees have the same vision, they have a deeper understanding of the benefits they could receive from sharing their knowledge					
The success of the integration process is dependent on the effective communication between managers & employees of merging organisations					
The retention of senior staff members is paramount for the integration process success					

Section H: Challenges of retaining knowledge in mergers & acquisitions

20. Which of the following factors impede knowledge sharing at ETL? (Please tick where appropriate).

Statement	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Staff turnover through process like retirement, forced resignation & other means impedes knowledge retention in the post-merger					
Poor communication where staff members are not enlightened their future & processes involved in a merger					
Organisational mergers brings uncertainty & therefore staff members may resign & seek employment elsewhere					

Thank you very much for taking your time to complete this questionnaire.

APPENDIX F: CODEBOOK

As far as you know, does ETL have a knowledge management policy/strategy?			
Participant	Response	Code	Theme
A	No we do not have a KM Policy	Nonexistence	Significance of a knowledge management strategy/policy for knowledge retention
B	As for the strategy, I don't think we have	Uncertainty	
C	No, I wouldn't say we have that, not to my knowledge	Nonexistence	
D	For now I don't remember seeing such a particular document	Uncertainty	
How does ETL keep its explicit knowledge, knowledge in the form of documents?			
A	We do have archives where all our documents are kept for purpose of knowledge sharing	Existence of archives	Management of explicit knowledge
B	We used to have a records office where a number of files were kept but it has since been dismantled. I don't even know where those files are now but wherever they are, I don't think they are been taken care of.	Non-existence of explicit knowledge storage	
C	We used to have libraries but everything is now electronic. However, I don't even know where those documents are now but I keep mine in my office as an individual	Non-existence of explicit knowledge storage	
D	We used to have a library but it is no longer there, but soon its going to be resurface	Non-existence of any explicit knowledge storage	

Particularly during the merger process, how did ETL ensure that employees leaving for various reasons did not leave with the knowledge accumulated over the years?

Participant	Response	Code	Theme
A	What happened before the merger is that staff members were requested to retire voluntarily & soon afterwards retrenchment process started? However, the organisations made sure that the 'star performers' were retained, & the rest of the staff members were interviewed before leaving the organisation	voluntary retirement for staff & retention of star performers	
B	Things were never handled properly particularly for people who left as a result of the merger & am saying this because not even exit interviews were held with them. I even talked to the executive management then, making them aware that whenever people are released from work for a variety of reasons, they are first taken through a process to heal them. So briefly nothing was done to retain the knowledge of staff members who left during the merger.	nothing done to retain knowledge	
C	Organisations should always ensure that the process of knowledge retention is ongoing at all times such that there is no problem when people leave organisations. However, I don't recall anything been done to retain knowledge of staff members who left the organisation during the merger	Nothing done to retain knowledge	Significance of KM practices on the merger

D	I don't recall anything been done to retain knowledge of staff members who left the organisation during the merger	Not sure if anything was done to retain knowledge	
---	--	---	--

Which knowledge retention strategies were employed to ensure knowledge is retained during the merger process?

Participant	Response	Code	Theme
A	Our technicians used to be specialists in power, switches & transmission. The rotation of these technicians in these special areas enabled knowledge acquisition & therefore I can say there was job rotation.	Importance of job rotation	Knowledge retention strategies used by ETL during the merger
B	There was nothing in as far as knowledge retention strategies are concerned.	Nonexistence of knowledge retention strategies	
C	I am not sure if it was successful or if it took off in the first place, but I think coaching as a knowledge retention strategy did exist.	Existence of coaching as a knowledge retention strategy	
D	Job rotation used to happen at the operational level	Existence of job rotation as a knowledge retention strategy	

Which technology does ETL use for knowledge storage during the merger process?

A	We do have a knowledge repository & it once crashed but we had to retrace our steps to look for the source & it's now up & running	Existence of a repository	Application of technology in knowledge
---	--	---------------------------	--

B	We do have an intranet although mostly it consists of human resources related issues. I have not seen anything related to our daily operational issues	Existence of an Intranet	retention in M&As
C	We do have system called terra station when we keep our soft copies of documents.	Terra station system existence	
D	We do not have any repository & my understanding is that our management think knowledge is in abundance in the street where new graduates can just be picked & be mentored to fit in well in the company in case of any resignation	Nonexistence of a repository	

In your view, were there any noticeable differences in culture between the two organisations, especially regarding employees' attitudes or beliefs?

Participant	Response	Code	Theme
A	Yes there was a difference in that the home based company (Telecom Lesotho) had the culture of lazy people particularly because it was previously a government owned entity while the other organisation (Econet Ezi-cel) was a private & therefore consisted of people who were willing & doing their job.	Existence of cultural differences	
B	I have heard that there was a perception from employees who came from Ezi-cel that they thought they were somehow better than those that were from Telecom Lesotho. But personally, I did not experience or notice any cultural difference & maybe it is because of the level of work I was doing at that time.	doubtful	Effect of cultural differences in M&As

C	There will always be those noticeable cultural differences because they used to call us fixed because previously, we were in fixed communications sector while we called them mobile because they were in the mobile telecommunications industry. Particularly, Ezi-cel because they were from Zimbabwe & therefore, they had a different culture to that of Telecom Lesotho.	Existence of cultural differences	
D	Yes there was a difference because management of Ezi-cel consisted of people from Zimbabwe & they always wanted to pray before we begin daily work.	Existence of cultural differences	
Are both separate organisational cultures still noticeable after the merger?			Theme
A	There is no longer any cultural differences now. All cultures have been aligned	Similar culture	Cultural alignment post-merger
B	For me I did not notice any difference so even now I see only one culture	Similar culture	
C	Since its now new people, they are still here & there but not to the point we can say they are noticeable	Existence of cultural differences	
D	Not much really	Existence of cultural differences	
How do you view culture in M&As, positive or negative? Explain			

Participant	Response	Code	Theme
A	I would say culture plays an important role in cross border mergers. What is equally important is when people are always enlightened about all the happening in the merger process. In other words, if there is a constant communication between management & staff members, then all cultural variations would not have any negative impact. Now all cultures have been aligned & its now one culture of self-driven team.	Positivity of culture	
B	I would say organisational culture is positive because it normally brings different capabilities together.	Positivity of culture	
C	It is in very rare cases where cultural variations are positive	Negativity of cultural variation	
D	The majority of people on the ground percieved that exercise to be very bad to have happened so I would say it was negative	Negativity of cultural variations	role of culture in M&As
What recommendation would you provide in bridging the cultural variations in M&As?			
Participant	Response	Code	Theme
A	First of all, it is important to have clear strategy & map individual employee's profiles to that strategy. The second step is to discuss that with relevant individuals. The other important aspect is to monitor progress & provide support. In that way I believe cultural variations may be bridged.	Communications with relevant individuals	Importance of communication in bridging cultural differences in M&As

B	If there is going to be a merger of companies, there should be an informal meeting where employees talk to each other about issues related to their work. Management should also be available. In that way management may notice very important issues & take positives & to work on the negative.	Communication	
C	I can't remember because they were even prolonged	uncertainty	
D	We were constantly reminded that the business is a multinational & therefore, we should avoid unnecessary clashes	communication	

What do you think is the role of trust & motivation during the merger integration stage?

Participant	Response	Code	Theme
A	Trust is important & without it, people may be not be able to share their knowledge	Acknowledgement of trust importance	Role of trust during the merger integration station
B	First of all you cannot work with someone you don't trust, so it is important for employees to trust each other	Acknowledgement of trust importance	
C	If employees don't trust each other, they will never share their knowledge. For instance, if one employee is knowledgeable in procurement procedures, the absence of trust means he is only going to be the only person with that knowledge.	Acknowledgement of trust importance	
D	Trust is very important that people trust each other because in the absence of trust there is not going to be any coordination between staff member.	Acknowledgement of trust importance	

Is there any compensation & reward system in place to encourage employees to share their knowledge either now or before the merger?			
<i>Participant</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Theme</i>
A	We had before the merger & we also have a reward system in plays aimed at encouraging knowledge retention among employees.	Acknowledgement of reward existence	Impact of compensation on knowledge retention in M&As
B	Not reward itself but knowledge retention is always encouraged at all levels	Non-existence of rewards	
C	Not that I know	Non-existence of rewards	
D	No, there is nothing like that	Non-existence of rewards	

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE

FACILITATING KNOWLEDGE RETENTION IN CROSS-BORDER MERGERS IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OF LESOTHO

PO Box 15379

Maseru, 100

Lesotho

Introduction

My name is Tahleho Tšeoale. I am conducting a research for my PhD dissertation at the University of South Africa (UNISA) & my topic is **FACILITATING KNOWLEDGE RETENTION IN CROSS-BORDER MERGERS IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OF LESOTHO**. You have been selected to participate in this study through a purposive sampling.

The study has the following objectives:

- To identify knowledge management strategies in place at ETL
- To investigate which knowledge retention strategies were adopted in order to capture & protect knowledge during the merger process at ETL
- To establish the role of ICTs in the knowledge retention process
- To identify the role of organisation culture as an organisational change factor in the successful cross border merger in relation to knowledge retention
- To identify the role of Human Resources Management (HRM) practices in knowledge sharing & retention at ETL.
- To identify key factors in transferring & retaining knowledge in organisational mergers
- To identify challenges in retaining knowledge in the aftermath of organisational mergers
- To make recommendations based on the findings

Please be assured that your views on this study will not be used for any other purpose other than those advanced by this study. As a librarian, your participation is voluntary & you are assured that information you provide will be treated confidentially. Please be honest in your input. Thank you for your time & participation in this study.

Yours Sincerely

Tahleho Emmanuel Tšeole
University of South Africa
Department of Information Science
SA
Mobile: +266 58729105

SECTION A: General Information

1. a) Position.....
- b) Gender.....
- c) Year of starting employment with ETL.....

SECTION B: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Knowledge management refers to all the activities involved in the creation, storage & sharing of knowledge in the organisation.

1. As far as you know, does ETL have a knowledge management policy/strategy?
2. How does ETL keep its explicit knowledge, knowledge in the form of documents?
3. Particularly during the merger process, how did ETL ensure that employees leaving for various reasons did not leave with the knowledge accrued over the years?

SECTION C: KNOWLEDGE RETENTION STRATEGIES

Knowledge retention refers to the process of capturing & storing of knowledge for future use.

One of the major challenges confronting organisations today is loss of knowledge owing to different attrition related issues.

1. If indeed any knowledge sharing happened between organisations, at what level of the organisational hierarchy did it take place?

SECTION D: ROLE OF ICTs IN KNOWLEDGE RETENTION PROCESS

Information Technologies ensures connectivity & therefore, knowledge sharing & retention in an organisation.

1. Does ETL have a knowledge repository?

SECTION E: ROLE OF CULTURE IN CROSS-BORDER MERGERS IN RELATION TO KNOWLEDGE RETENTION

Organisational culture includes the values & beliefs that contribute to the unique social & psychological environment of a business.

1. In your view, were there any noticeable differences in culture between the two organisations, especially regarding employees' attitudes or beliefs?
2. Are both separate organisational cultures still noticeable today?
3. How do you view culture in M&As, positive or negative?
4. What recommendation would you provide in bridging the cultural variations in M&As?
5. What do you think is the role of trust & motivation during the merger integration stage?

SECTION F: ROLE OF HRM PRACTICES IN KNOWLEDGE RETENTION AT ETL

Human resources management practices (HRMPs) concerns policies, practices & systems that an organisation can use to sway employees' behaviour, attitudes & performance. These practices are required in order to retain employees or to at least minimize the staff turnover & build on the long term workforce. For the purpose of this study, the following HRPs have been identified namely, recruitment & selection; compensation & reward; performance appraisal; teamwork; & employee training & development.

1. Is there any compensation & reward system in place to encourage employees to share their knowledge either now or before the merger?

2. If the answer is yes to the above question, what reward system is in place?