

# MAPALUS AS A KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PRACTICE TO IMPROVE INNOVATION CAPABILITY: SUCCESS OR NOT SUCCESS?

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## MAPALUS AS A KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PRACTICE TO IMPROVE INNOVATION CAPABILITY: SUCCESS OR NOT SUCCESS?

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### ABSTRACT

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**Purpose:** This study aims to describe the relationship between local *Mapalus* culture as a practical form of knowledge transfer from academic literature.

**Theoretical framework:** Knowledge nowadays is considered valuable and can keep increasing along with its use. Therefore, knowledge transfer was believed to be an essential factor in implementing knowledge resources and fostering innovation in organizations. Knowledge transfer is a form of information, expertise, experience, idea, and suggestion exchange, which is thought to have a relationship with the *Mapalus* culture. Therefore, it is also presumed that *mapalus* is knowledge transfer in practices.

**Method/design/approach:** Literature review approach to see the deeper links between knowledge transfer and local culture *mapalus* and interviews with several knowledge management experts and *mapalus* cultural experts.

**Results and conclusion:** The study found contradictory results relating to *mapalus*. Several national researchers explain that *mapalus* culture is still well implemented; some researchers explain *mapalus* has started to lose its original identity due to the entry of financial transactions.

**Research implications:** contradictory research about *mapalus* raises doubts that knowledge transfer could be practiced through *mapalus* cultural activities that may not be able to foster innovation capabilities in society and *Mapalus'* goal of reducing poverty may not be realized if lost its original identity.

**Originality/value:** The present study is unique, where it offers the meaningful explanation *mapalus* culture and its relation on knowledge transfer in local society.

**Keywords:** *Mapalus*, Innovation Capabilities, Knowledge Transfer, Cultural Activities.

## MAPALUS COMO PRÁTICA DE TRANSFERÊNCIA DE CONHECIMENTO PARA MELHORAR A CAPACIDADE DE INOVAÇÃO: SUCESSO OU NÃO SUCESSO?

### RESUMO

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**Objetivo:** Este estudo tem como objetivo descrever a relação entre a cultura *Mapalus* local como uma forma prática de transferência de conhecimento da literatura acadêmica.

**Referencial teórico:** O conhecimento hoje em dia é considerado valioso e pode continuar crescendo junto com seu uso. Portanto, acreditava-se que a transferência de conhecimento era um fator essencial para implementar recursos de conhecimento e fomentar a inovação nas organizações. A transferência de conhecimento é uma forma de troca de informações, conhecimentos, experiências, ideias e sugestões, que se pensa ter uma relação com a cultura *Mapalus*. Portanto, presume-se também que *mapalus* é transferência de conhecimento nas práticas.

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**Método:** Literature review approach to see the deeper links between knowledge transfer and local culture *mapalus* and interviews with several knowledge management experts and *mapalus* cultural experts.

**Resultados e conclusão:** O estudo encontrou resultados contraditórios em relação ao *mapalus*. Vários investigadores nacionais explicam que a cultura *mapalus* ainda está bem implementada; alguns pesquisadores explicam que o *mapalus* começou a perder sua identidade original devido à entrada de transações financeiras.

**Implicações da pesquisa:** pesquisas contraditórias sobre *mapalus* levantam dúvidas de que a transferência de conhecimento poderia ser praticada por meio de atividades culturais *mapalus* que podem não ser capazes de promover capacidades de inovação na sociedade e o objetivo de reduzir a pobreza de *Mapalus* pode não ser realizado se perder sua identidade original.

**Originalidade/valor:** The present study is unique, where it offers the meaningful explanation *mapalus* culture and its relation on knowledge transfer in local society.

**Palavras-chave:** *Mapalus*, Capacidades de Inovação, Transferência de Conhecimento, Atividades Culturais.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge today is considered a valuable resource that can still develop when organizations tend to use it (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). In the knowledge management literature, it can be concluded that knowledge transfer is an essential factor in implementing knowledge resources in organizations. Many studies related knowledge transfer with innovation (detailed in the next section). Innovation was needed for small or large companies to achieve sustainable competitiveness (Johannessen et al., 2001).

Knowledge transfer could associate with one of the local cultures in Indonesia, namely *Mapalus*. *Mapalus* is a collective work that aims to reduce the community's poverty level (Turang, 1983). In contrast to the condition of 'Gotong royong' (Indonesian teamwork), which only takes the form of joint work in one community activity. *Mapalus* culture, in its noble meaning, is a form of cooperation that is usually scheduled and requires the involvement of all family members with other family members in agricultural activities (Wuryaningrat et al., 2017). Furthermore, *mapalus* emphasizes the existence of energy and mind exchange, which could be interpreted as an exchange of energy, information, thoughts, expertise, and experience.

This study is a part of the trilogy research, where this research is the next phase of the first part of the trilogy. In the first part of 2015-2017, it was explained that *mapalus*, which is proposed as a practical form of knowledge transfer between generations in villagers. However, *Mapalus* has begun to fade from its original meaning due to millennial villagers, after completing their undergraduate studies, choosing to make their careers in the city and less interested in returning to the village and helping to build the village. Furthermore, they prefer to work as employees rather than return to being entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector in villages because they consider the agrarian sector less promising. In other words, *mapalus* is indicated to be only a concept as knowledge transfer in practice due to the lack of its implementation. This result can be seen in Wuryaningrat et al. (2017).

This research is entering the second trilogy to deepen the relationship between *mapalus* and knowledge transfer. It is believed that knowledge transfer and *mapalus* are related to each other due of knowledge resources can be made from experience, ideas, suggestions, expertise, and information as the fruit of knowledge transfer (Srivastava et al., 2006). In contrast, *mapalus*



were a form of implementing the exchange of energy, experience, information, thoughts, expertise, and experience between involved families. Thus, it can still be concluded that mapalus and knowledge transfer are practical forms of how knowledge is shared with the community. However, referring to the first phase results, where the conjecture can be said to have no objective evidence, while theoretically and concepts appear to be related, further research is needed. Therefore, the study stage is divided into two steps: the first step is a literature review of the deeper links between knowledge transfer and local culture mapalus. The second step is interviews with several knowledge management experts and mapalus cultural experts. This step is to see the views of the experts regarding the relationship between mapalus and knowledge transfer. These articles presented the first step of the second part of the research trilogy. Therefore, it can be said that this second part is a literature review approach, which describes the phenomenon of the nowadays mapalus and how it is related to knowledge transfer defined by previous research.

## 2 THEORITICAL FRAME

Below will present a detailed literature review to described the logical relationship between factors.

### 2.1 Mapalus Culture as a System in Community

National culture is an important factor in creating shaping attitudes, values, behaviors, and management effectiveness, and can support opportunities for social responsibility in the community (Margarete & Brizolla, 2022). In the daily life of Minahasa culture, there is a principle of life commonly referred to as '*si tou tumou to*,' which means humans live to support other humans. One of the manifestations of the life principles of the Minahasa people is mapalus culture. Mapalus is a form of voluntary activity in the form of cooperation passed down from generation to generation and is still practiced today. Mapalus culture as a working system began to develop from the 1680s and grew until the 1970s, which is valid until now; then, mapalus has now shifted to a more modern model from the agricultural sector to the social, economic, government, and public health sectors (Nelwan et al., 2018). In addition, mapalus has also developed into mapalus financial assistance, housing and raw materials (materials), and other forms where the community needs help (Umbas, 2014). However, this form of the Mapalus system, especially the Money Mapalus, seems to have lost its roots as a form of the traditional Mapalus system, namely a working system that prioritizes solidarity and kinship (see next section).

Mapalus can be defined as collective community work with the entire nuclear family with a regular schedule (Turang, 1983). Mapalus was initially an agricultural management system in which all community members and families contributed by providing energy, experience, and abilities/skills in community business development efforts (e.g., agribusiness). In addition, mapalus can be seen as a working system with common ethos, participatory ethos, solidarity, responsibility, cooperation, good leadership, discipline, transparency, equality, and trust (Nelwan et al., 2018).

Mapalus's cultural characteristics lie in the agricultural management activities carried out from one farm to another. As previously stated, Mapalus is a farming management system with a rotating system that is identical to the 'arisan' system. For example, if there are ten agricultural lands in a village, the land may be cultivated by other community members and the landowner; it is even possible that the landowner may be on the ground of other community members. With this pattern, between landowners and community members managing their lands, it is possible to establish communication that exchanges information, ideas, suggestions,





input, expertise, and experience. Thus, the practice is consistent with the theoretical concept of knowledge transfer.

Mapalus culture can empirically increase community participation in the development of an area (Polii et al., 2020); thus, the higher the mapalus culture is good and following the original values of Mapalus can be practiced, the better community participation will be in regional development. However, community participation marked by community associations in mapalus culture can also impact public health (Nelwan et al., 2018).

## 2.2 Knowledge Transfer

Knowledge transfer or knowledge sharing is a fundamental stage in the knowledge management literature. Knowledge has become an essential component in competitive business settings. Knowledge as a resource is unique because the more often it is used, the wealthier an organization will be with these resources. Knowledge can be felt more valuable if it can be shared or transferred from one individual to another. The definitions of knowledge transfer are pretty diverse; table 1 explains the meaning of knowledge transfer and the number of uses of that definition in journal articles and or research proceedings conducted in Indonesia and carried out outside Indonesia and has been cited by a minimum of 50 citations. Database search using Google Scholar from 2010- August 2021 with POP (Publish or Perish) application.

**Table 1.** Definition of Knowledge Transfer

Author / Scholar	Definition
Van Den Hooff & Ridder, (2004)	Knowledge transfer is a process in which individuals exchange tacit or explicit knowledge to produce new knowledge.
Nonaka & Takeuchi, (1995)	Knowledge transfer is a social interaction between individuals that one person cannot do
Davenport & Prusak, (1998)	Knowledge transfer is a process for transferring knowledge from one party to another, including communication, translation, conversion, and sorting.
Lee, (2001)	Knowledge sharing is an activity that transfers or disseminates knowledge from one person, group, or organization to another that various methods can execute.

The various definitions of knowledge transfer in table 1 are quite popularly used in society, especially in the global academic community, including Indonesia; this can be seen from many researchers using the definitions from the authors above. In addition, researchers who use these definitions have also been referred to in other studies. In addition, the limitation on the use of the years published 2010-2021 indicates that the above descriptions are still relevant and are still being used in assisting the operationalization of research. Therefore, based on the various definitions mentioned in table 1, it can be concluded that knowledge transfer is a form of activity to gain new knowledge from the process of exploring information, ideas, and experiences that are disseminated through communication and social interaction to all members of the organization.

## 2.3 Knowledge Transfer and Innovation

Knowledge transfer as a positive factor for the organization and strategic innovation (de Assis Alves de Araujo & Scafuto, 2021). The strategic transfer of knowledge is significant for the organization's innovation process. According to the resource-based view (RBV) theory, knowledge is considered the primary source of good results in carrying out entrepreneurial



practices, especially knowledge gained from individual experience (Dalkir, 2005). Numerous research found that knowledge transfer will lead to new knowledge and enhance organizational innovation performance in large and small companies. More than 170 research articles from the Scopus index journal database between 2018-2021 explained the cause-effect relationship between knowledge transfer and innovation capabilities and performance.

The majority of the research found that knowledge transfer will lead positively to innovation capabilities; for instance, the conceptual paper is based on a systematic literature review of 23 peer-reviewed journal articles indicating that organizational contextual factors, relationship strength, internal knowledge brokers, communication, and transparency, and link duration positively support tacit knowledge transfer and innovation (Sikombe & Phiri, 2019). Moreover, knowledge transfer could foster innovation in all business sectors, for instance, in healthcare ecosystems by the knowledge flow among different players and exploiting their motivation to be more innovative (Secundo et al., 2019).

Many research said positive results of knowledge transfer on innovation, but some articles found the contrary, which found knowledge transfer could not impact innovation capabilities or even found a negative effect on innovation capabilities. For instance, knowledge collecting as knowledge transfer dimension (Van Den Hooff & Ridder, 2004) could probably lead to a negative impact on innovation capabilities (Machmud et al., 2022). However, these different results can be assumed that knowledge transfer will hardly transfer without enough absorptive capacity for the knowledge (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Therefore, much research about innovation generally accepted at all business scales needs to improve innovation capability to survive competitiveness.

### 3 METHOD

As mentioned in the previous section, this research was a literature review study approach. A literature study collected considerable previous research on the topic: the research article and books collected in Mendeley application. Data were collected using the Publish or Perish application and the Google Scholar search engine. This application can find scientific works from various trusted journal indexing institutions. The scientific papers collected have the following criteria: 1). Preference will be given to indexing institutions (e.g., Scopus, Google Scholar) and trusted publishers. 2). Scientific works are widely used by the public, as measured by the citation. 3). For topics related to local culture (Mapalus), using accredited or unaccredited national (Indonesian) journals that Google Scholar search engine can still find is considered feasible. 4). Using books that are not open access or have very limited book units that can be obtained from the North Sulawesi regional library, especially the topic of mapalus.

After the necessary scientific work could be obtained, the next step is to do a literature review and extract the essence of each relationship from the variables or topics raised. The following section discusses the relationship between knowledge transfer and innovation, mapalus in research, and knowledge transfer in mapalus perspective.

### 4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mapalus culture, in general, is a form of cooperation in society. However, the current implementation is causing controversy. Some experts call it the mapalus culture has begun to disappear and erode with the times, but others say it is still relevant and still practiced in Minahasa land. Mapalus culture is considered to be successfully implemented as a character learning model, especially for young people and students in vocational education (Polii et al., 2020). Then in another study, it was explicitly explained that mapalus culture could improve the character of young people (Salaki, 2014). Then mapalus, which is associated with the social gathering work system, is still often done to strengthen brotherhood between families and local



communities, especially in North Minahasa, Indonesia (Tangkudung & Senduk, 2016). Mapalus has even been practiced as an effort to overcome the Covid-19 problem in North Sulawesi (Kanonang Village) by building cooperation and communication involving all elements of society (Poli et al., 2021).

However, several studies reveal the contradictive result, and the research has concluded that although mapalus is still often practiced in the community, its meaning, spirit, and values have begun to erode. For instance, the indigenous culture of mapalus has now shifted from an exchange of knowledge to a financial exchange, mapalus member replace their turn with other people with a financial transaction. Furthermore, it is also said that the arisan system in Mapalus has begun to turn into money gathering and a form of showing off wealth (Nelwan, 2020).

Mapalus culture still exists in the community until now, but probably the true values of mapalus were changed. Even though, in theory mapalus as knowledge transfer practices could make good opportunities for developing regional innovation capabilities, even the reality is still in doubt. In other words, the goal of Mapalus to reduce community poverty, may be still in doubt. Table 2 below describes some of the researchers involved in the contradictive result;

**Table 2.** Controversy in Mapalus Research

Positive Implementation of Mapalus	The Erode of Mapalus
(Poli et al., 2020) (Salaki, 2014) (Tangkudung & Senduk, 2016) (Poli et al., 2021)	(Wuryaningrat et al., 2017) (Nelwan, 2020; Nelwan et al., 2018)

Table 2 describes different scholars on their views about nowadays of mapalus implementation. The right side of table 2 discusses the erosion of the original cultural values of Mapalus. While on the left side of table 2, the authors on different perspectives on the mapalus implementation. Mapalus is a culture that has existed in Minahasa lands for generations, from the 1680s until now, with some changes in the mapalus system from agricultural system to various forms of economic, social, and government (Parengkuan, 2006; Nelwan et al., 2018). Based on the shifting in mapalus, it can be concluded mapalus is not a rigid concept, mapalus could adapt to changes in social situations and conditions—the changing mapalus from knowledge exchange to financial exchange perhaps caused by the urbanization of society. Apart from having completed their studies in the city, villagers may also have worked there. This is what makes the community members of mapalus start losing their time to conducted mapalus turn and choose to replace their turn with someone else in exchange for some money (Wuryaningrat et al., 2017).

Another reason the contradictive appears perhaps is due to the differences in viewing the mapalus system. Authors which support that Mapalus is still relevant and still practiced well may not explain which system of mapalus was being studied. On the other hand, mapalus considered to have experienced a decline in meaning, arises because the authors judge mapalus from its cultural roots and original system of mapalus. They considered the ideal mapalus system as a form of an exchange of energy, expertise, and knowledge. Therefore, they felt a change in mapalus system with the financial transaction is a mistake and obscured the true meaning of mapalus culture. Money involvement in mapalus culture is like ‘kryptonite’ of the original mapalus (Parengkuan, 2006).

The relationship between mapalus as local wisdom of the Minahasa community and knowledge transfer can be seen in the relationship between culture and knowledge transfer. The success or success of knowledge transfer carried out in organizations depends on motivation and social behavior (Zhang & Jiang, 2015). In other words, knowledge transfer is closely related to culture; numerous studies linking culture to knowledge transfer rely on Hofstede's taxonomy.





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Culture is "the collective mental programming of the human mind" which distinguishes the members of one human group from another (Hofstede, 2001).

This definition explains that personal values can be built from cultural patterns that the individual knows and practices from year to year and even from generation to generation. Mapalus is a form of Minahasa culture that puts forward the human spirit to be able to support other humans (Spirit of *Sitou Tumou Tou*). The culture has existed since the 17th century (see previous explanation) and is still claimed to exist today. Therefore, mapalus culture is likely to shape the personal values of the Minahasa people themselves.

Culture is one of the factors driving or inhibiting knowledge transfer activities, depending on the prevailing culture in the region. For instance, subsidiaries' location will significantly or lower impact the possibility of knowledge transfer between subsidiaries due to local culture (Lucas, 2006). Furthermore, knowledge transfer activities in organizations are highly dependent on the flexibility of the culture (Tuan, 2012). Referring to these arguments and the definition of Mapalus, Mapalus as a local culture is very oriented towards strengthening knowledge transfer activities. It can even be said that mapalus activities in the Minahasa community are a practical form of knowledge transfer itself. The origin mapalus concept should always be open to innovation through their strong kinship. In other words, mapalus may provide opportunities for people and society to be more innovative. As explained earlier, the original mapalus culture is a form of work system that involves the exchange of energy, information, skills, and experience; therefore, it is very natural that in the eye of Mapalus, that exchange is the way to create an innovation in the community, which is in line with many previous knowledge transfer research. However, this explanation is likely to occur if indigenous mapalus culture is still implemented well. Due to the dynamics of mapalus, further studies are needed regarding Mapalus' ability to produce newness in the community.

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATION

This literature study generates a general overview that Mapalus culture as a social system in Minahasan. This culture has continued and developed according to the community's situation and conditions. Mapalus is a kinship that aims to reduce poverty through community innovation.

In logical theory, the indigenous culture of Mapalus is a form of community knowledge exchange that is identical to the knowledge transfer literature. According to the collected literature, it is agreed that knowledge transfer can produce innovation for organizations. However, this literature study also raises a debate about whether the implementation of mapalus in the community could make the community more innovative or vice versa. This debate was raised due to mapalus research were produced contradictory results. Some researchers conclude that mapalus is still often implemented and produces a positive result for the community. On the other hand, mapalus has begun to lose its original identity as a form of kinship and knowledge transfer. The presence of money in mapalus culture has been suspected to be the main reason mapalus probably lost their noble values.

The implication that can be conveyed in this literature study is that the role of knowledge transfer is assumed to will not give positive impact in the development of innovations, for instance, village innovation in Minahasa. However, this is only an assumption that could not be proven empirically. The reason behind this assumption is that if Mapalus is consider as a practical form of knowledge transfer, then the differences in the results of Mapalus' research may raise doubts that Mapalus can affect the innovation ability of Mapalus people. Hence, Mapalus' goal of reducing poverty may not be realized if Mapalus has lost its original identity.

However, we still convinced, different mapalus implementations based on research results do not propose that mapalus is a practical form of knowledge transfer to be lost or failed. As explained in the introduction, this research is the first step of the second part of the research





trilogy. Hence, due of literature study, this research has not been able to provide generalize and strong scientific evidence. In other word, further research is needed. The next research will be qualitative ethnographic research to capture or confirm this research's results directly to scientific and ordinary people. Thus, in the future, it is hoped that this research trilogy will produce research that can provide general results.

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