Importance of Knowledge Management on Women Reflected in Jane Austen’s Novel *Persuasion*

Moch. Ricky Ramadhan

1. Departement of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, Kampus UI Depok, Indonesia 16424

*E-mail: moch.rickyramadhan@yahoo.co.id*

**Abstract**

*Persuasion* is a novel completed by Jane Austen and published in 1818. The protagonist of the novel, Anne Elliot, encounters the common knowledge of Austen’s era that marriage is the only realistic course of action for a woman in order to live a good life. This paper aims to determine the importance of Anne Elliot’s knowledge management in overcoming her surrounding issues. The qualitative research method was used to examine the issue, along with a structuralism approach as a supporting technique to complete the paper. Also, the SECI model was used to explain knowledge management. The results of the paper show that the protagonist receives a new kind of knowledge that helps her overcome the surrounding issues that arise through her experiences in a limited social sphere. The conclusion of this paper is that Anne Elliot used the new knowledge that she gained from her knowledge management to recreate the first embedded knowledge that she received from her family when she was 19 years old. This paper offers a new point of view related to female perspective.

**Keywords**— Anne Elliot; eighteenth century; Jane Austen; knowledge management; women’s perspective

1. Introduction

Research topics such as knowledge management have attracted the attention of researchers. Among these there are ample discussions of the implementation or application of knowledge management in corporations and online. This paper alternatively seeks to determine how important knowledge management is to an individual person, especially a woman.

According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), knowledge management is a tool that justifies the belief that knowledge becomes an asset to increase the efficiency of the organization. Prusak and Davenport (1998), on the other hand, defined knowledge management as an attempt to record the factual implicit and explicit knowledge within the company to achieve business objectives.

Knowledge management serves as one of the strategies to create value, improve organizational effectiveness and productivity, and develop an organizational competitive advantage. Many corporations begin to apply knowledge management in order to improve the business performance and endurance of their organization. In a rapidly changing environment, knowledge will experience obsolescence, and therefore, it needs to be constantly updated through the learning process.

Knowledge management is not only applied in the organizational sphere, but it can also be applied in order to achieve personal gain. Personal knowledge is unique because no one has the exact same knowledge. It is shaped by the formal and non-formal education that the person obtains, i.e., life experiences, habits, cultural heritage formed through the family, or the influence of a person’s social sphere.

When knowledge is owned and remembered by individuals or stored well in the form of writing or digital form, then knowledge will be easily accessible when needed. It also allows individuals to exercise more creativity. However, if knowledge is forgotten or inaccessible, the person will repeat things that have already existed or, in this case, run backward to collect the required knowledge.
According to Stan Garfield in Tjakraatmadja (2015), the aim of personal knowledge management is learning how to manage personal knowledge when learning something new or seeking the needed information. When knowledge management is used well, it helps in obtaining potential and significant sources of information needed to develop self-knowledge and enhance the effectiveness of personal work.

The protagonist of *Persuasion* is the object of this paper. Anne Elliot is the second daughter of Sir Walter Elliot and Lady Elliot. She has two sisters, Elizabeth and Mary Musgrove. She falls in love and accepts a marriage proposal from a man named Commander Frederick Wentworth. However, there is common knowledge that an individual cannot marry someone below his/her class. The embedded knowledge of her surroundings affects her decision, and her godmother, Lady Russell, successfully persuades Anne to break the engagement with Wentworth.

Later, Anne’s family is in financial trouble because of overspending. The family adviser suggests that Anne and her family settle in a different location until their finances improve. This residential change also has an effect on Anne’s knowledge. A different location means different people that will contribute new kinds of information.

On the basis of the explanation above, the purpose of the paper is to assess the importance of women’s knowledge management as reflected in Jane Austen’s novel *Persuasion*.

2. Literature Review

Previous Research

Jane Austen is one of the most favored British literary authors, and her works have been read everywhere. Besides *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, *Persuasion* is one of her most notable works. Jane Austen’s works have been analyzed by students and researchers in universities around the world.

A Seattle University student named Claire Tarlson in 2006 wrote a journal article entitled *Jane Austen, Persuasion, and the Pursuit of Happiness*. In the article, she argued that there is a romantic shift and individualistic ideology in Jane Austen’s work. Even though there is no connection in terms of themes between Tarlson’s journal article and this one, it provides an overview of how someone’s ideology changes as time goes by and how it affects the person’s life.

Five years later, N.G. Nandana (2012), a research scholar from Bangalore University, wrote a journal article entitled *Emphasis on Education in Jane Austen’s Novels*. The main topic of the article is the importance of education in an individual’s life. Although Nandana talked about general factors, this article seeks to look through the smaller scope of knowledge management.

Aside from those journals, there is also a journal article that relates to knowledge management, and its model is entitled *Knowledge Creation and The SECI Model* by Harpreet Kaur (2015). Kaur’s article contributes to our understanding of knowledge creation by developing a SECI model and assists this article in terms of the comprehensive model that is used in knowledge management.

Existing Conditions

As shown in the title, this paper talks about the importance of women’s knowledge management. Nowadays, there are still a lot of women who are narrow-minded. These women confine themselves to their old knowledge without any awareness of how important it is to gain newer knowledge and how to manage it. If women were capable of renewing their knowledge or even managing their former and developing knowledge, it would create an opportunity for them to make a greater life than before. It is expected that this paper provides insight into the importance of knowledge management in real life using Jane Austen’s novel as a medium.

Knowledge Management

Conceptually, knowledge management is an organizational activity in managing knowledge as an asset. Through various strategies, the right knowledge is channeled to the right people in a short time so that they can interact, share knowledge, and apply it to their daily work to improve their organizational performance.

According to Prusak and Davenport (1998), knowledge management is an attempt to record the factual implicit and explicit knowledge within a company to achieve business objectives. Also, knowledge management is a management tool
that justifies the belief that knowledge becomes an asset to increase the capacity of the organization to be able to work more effectively (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Personal knowledge management is often seen as a change of liability in personal learning, growth, and knowledge sharing from the organizational level to the individual level. Organizations must realize that they cannot control the individual’s desire to create, initiate, or develop knowledge and expertise. However, organizations should help develop the individual’s desire to acquire such characteristics (creative, initiative, and knowledge and expert development) (Jefferson, 2006).

Jefferson (2006) concluded that the benefits of personal knowledge management are not only felt by the individual. By combining individual styles and preferences into traditional knowledge management, organizational productivity can be improved without imposing knowledge on workers. Traditional knowledge management focuses on improving the effectiveness of an organization, whereas personal knowledge management is directed more toward individual improvement. However, in line with the achievement of the effectiveness of the individual, it can directly enhance the collaboration between individuals, which can affect the level of effectiveness of a company or organization.

SECI Model

One of the most famous theories of organizational knowledge formation is the Nonaka Spiral of Knowledge. Since his first basic article in 1991, Nonaka has further developed this theory in collaboration with several other authors. The main goal in developing this model is to provide an understanding of how to create organizational knowledge so that organizations or people can understand how they can maximize the management, application, and transfer of knowledge.

On the basis of the SECI model, there are four types of interactions between and outside an organization or individual based on clear differences between tacit and explicit knowledge. They are socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization.

Socialization is the most basic process of disseminating knowledge. In the process of socialization, there is social interaction between individuals, resulting in interactions between tacit knowledge, generally in the form of socialization processes such as discussion, storytelling, or experience sharing.

Externalization is the process of converting or translating knowledge from its tacit form into explicit knowledge, generally in the form of writing or drawing. The externalization process can help transform a person’s tacit knowledge into a form of explicit knowledge that can be easily understood by others.

In the combination process, there is the dissemination and/or development of existing explicit knowledge. Knowledge that has been documented can be disseminated through a meeting in the form of documents or through an education or training process. Knowledge can be further developed by combining and/or processing various pieces of knowledge, or it can include obtaining or producing new knowledge through existing data or information.

In the process of internalization, there is a change of explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge, commonly done through the process of learning, research, or the experiences of an individual person.

Persuasion’s Plot Summary

*Persuasion*, published in 1818, was Jane Austen’s last novel. The novel tells of a woman named Anne Elliot. The story begins seven years after an engagement between Anne Elliot and Commander Frederick Wentworth ends.

At 19 years old, Anne Elliot begins to take interest in a maritime officer named Frederick Wentworth and later receives a proposal of marriage from him. He is a keen, aggressive, and certain man. Be that as it may, he doesn’t have a place with the rich or privileged, and he doesn’t have a family that advises him to wed a lady.

Anne’s father, Sir Walter, and her more established sister, Elizabeth, demand that Wentworth is not fit for the Elliot family of Kellynch Hall. Anne’s guardian, Lady Russell, induces Anne to end the engagement since she feels Anne is too young, making it impossible to wed. Only Sir Walter, Elizabeth, and Lady Russell know about this short engagement since Anne’s younger sister Mary is at school when it took place.

The Elliot family becomes stuck in an unfortunate situation. Their family resource, Kellynch Hall, is to be sold, and they will move to a zone called Bath until the point when their accounts are settled. Sir Walter, Elizabeth, and another companion named Mrs. Earth need to move soon. In any case, Anne doesn’t know that she will appreciate living in Bath. Anne’s sister Mary weds a man, Charles Musgrove, who is the beneficiary of one of the regarded proprietors in the zone around Uppercross Hall. Afterward, Anne visits Mary and her family in Uppercross Hall.
After the war ends, the mariners return home, including the new proprietor of Kellynch Hall, Admiral Croft, and his better half, Sophia. Sophia is the sister of Frederick Wentworth, who is presently an extremely rich maritime commander. Wentworth goes to visit his sister at Kellynch Hall and meets with the Uppercross family, including Anne herself.

The Musgrove family, including Mary, Charles, and Charles’ two sisters, Henrietta and Louisa, respect the entry of Croft and Wentworth. He advises everybody that he is prepared to get married. Henrietta is engaged to her cousin who is a minister named Charles Hayter.

Obviously, Anne still cherishes Wentworth, and any meeting with Wentworth leaves her with a readiness to conquer the feelings that exist inside her. Anne overhears a discussion when Louisa reveals to Wentworth that Charles had once proposed to Anne, yet Anne rejected the proposition. Wentworth is astounded. Anne sees that Wentworth still couldn’t excuse himself for what had happened a couple of years prior.

Anne, along with the youths from the Uppercross family, go with Captain Wentworth to visit two officers named Captain Harville and James Benwick in a seaside town called Lyme Regis. Benwick is grieving the death of his fiancée, who is the sister of Captain Harville. It values Anne’s sensitivity and concern, and they share an enjoyment of sentimental verse.

Anne draws the attention of a man going through the town of Lyme. The man is William Elliot, her cousin and the beneficiary of Kellynch Hall. William Elliot had cut ties with Sir Walter years prior. On the most recent day of the visit to Lyme, Louisa experiences a mental crisis because of her conduct with Wentworth. Startlingly, Anne benevolently orchestrates individuals to call for help with a push to help Louisa. Seeing this, Wentworth is hypnotized by Anne. He feels remorseful for what he did with Louisa from the beginning and tries to reevaluate his affections for Anne.

After the episode, Anne joins her father and sister in Bath with Lady Russell, and Louisa and her parents live in Harvilles in the town of Lyme during her recuperation. Wentworth visits his more established sibling in a town called Shropshire. Anne sees that her father and sister were complimented by the consideration given by the recently widowed William Elliot. William had made peace with Sir Walter who had beforehand cut ties with him. Anne’s sister believes that William needs to propose to Anne. In spite of the fact that Anne likes William Elliot and makes the most of his conduct, she does not think much of his character.

Chief naval officer Croft and his significant other Sophia touch base in Bath with the news that Louisa is engaged to Captain Benwick. Afterward, Wentworth likewise comes to Bath, where his envy is activated on the grounds that he sees William Elliot bother Anne. He and Anne renew their association. Anne goes to Mrs. Smith, who was her old classmate. Presently, Mrs. Smith is a dowager who lives in the city of Bath with exceptionally troublesome conditions.

During this visit, Anne at long last discovers that behind his dazzling state of mind, William Elliot is an icy entrepreneur who had caused his late spouse Mrs. Smith to owe obligations. As Mrs. Smith’s significant other’s inheritor, William did not find a way to make Mrs. Smith’s circumstances cheerful. Despite the fact that Mrs. Smith trusts that William Elliot is truly keen on Anne, she feels that the principle reason for William is to forestall Mrs. Dirt wedding Sir Walter. This is on the grounds that William fears the nearness of somebody who will supplant his position as a beneficiary, and the wedding of Mrs. Dirt and Sir Walter raised the likelihood of William’s dread.

The Musgrove family goes to Bath to purchase a wedding dress for Louisa and Henrietta’s wedding. Chief Wentworth and Harville meet them and Anne at the Musgrove family lodging in Bath. From this meeting, Wentworth catches a discussion among Anne and Harville about the relative reliability of a man and lady in affection. Wentworth’s sentiments are profoundly moved when he hears Anne say that ladies won’t let go or surrender their emotions until all trust has been lost. Hearing this, Wentworth composes a note about his affections for Anne Elliot.

Outside the inn, Anne and Wentworth at long last make up, express their adoration, and restore their engagement that was once wiped out. William Elliot leaves Bath and Mrs. Dirt goes with him to London as his darling, so it is likely that Mrs. Earth’s marriage to Sir Walter was unavoidable. Lady Russell concedes that she wasn’t right about what she once thought about Wentworth and, after that, makes friends with the new couple. When Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth get married, he helps Mrs. Smith reestablish her lost resources so her life can be better than anyone might have expected. At last, Anne settles into life as the spouse of a maritime commander who might one day be called when his nation requires him.
3. Research Methodology

This paper uses the qualitative research method with a structuralism approach. The qualitative method was chosen because the research uses descriptions and analysis, and the structuralism approach was used as a supporting device to determine the characteristics of Anne Elliot in order to understand better how her knowledge management occurs.

Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, theory is only used as a guideline for research and does not deviate from the facts in the field. The theoretical foundation of qualitative research also serves as the background of research and discussion. In conducting qualitative research, the researcher conducts research on the basis of his/her data by utilizing the theory as a reference and ends with the discovery of a theory. The resulting theory is the end result of all conclusions that are taken based on the data and statements obtained during the study period.

In qualitative research, process and meaning (subject perspective) are highlighted. A theoretical basis is used to focus the research in accordance with the facts in the field. In addition, the theoretical foundation is also useful to provide an overview of a study and a material discussion of research results.

Structuralism Approach

The approach is defined as a way to analyze the object. The approach should be mentioned more extensively with the consideration that the approach implies ways to understand the particular nature of science and is the first step in realizing the purpose of the research. In order to carry out the research, an understanding of the approach is first necessary, which is then followed by the determination of theory and methods.

Structuralism is an approach toward literary texts that emphasizes the overall relationship between the various elements of the text—independent text elements are not important. These elements only acquire meaning in relation to other elements, either through association or opposition. Relations can be studied with regard to micro-text (words and phrases), extensive text (verses and chapters), and intellectual pieces (other works within a certain period). The relations can be either a repetition, gradation, or contrast and parody.

Like the new criticism, structuralism seeks to bring to literary studies a set of objective criteria for analysis and a new intellectual precision. Structuralism can be viewed as an extension of formalism. Both structuralism and formalism focus their attention on matters of literary form rather than social or historical context. The structuralism approach requires close reading to analyze the intrinsic elements.

4. Results and Discussion

Anne Elliot’s Structural Aspects

Anne Elliot is a 27-year-old woman and is not the prettiest of the young ladies in *Persuasion*. She is the middle daughter of Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch Hall, who is an extravagant and narcissistic baronet. Unlike her father, she is clever, considerate, witty, calm-minded, and kind-hearted like her deceased mother.

Anne Elliot became a woman who was obviously more interesting if her good qualities were taken into account. Anne was proud of her performance, and she felt hurt after hearing that Captain Wentworth assumed that Anne was becoming uglier. Unlike her father, Anne Elliot is a practical, intellectual, and patient woman. She is feminine without showing the negative side of her own gender. Rather, Anne is a woman who is always calm in the face of difficult situations using the love she has. This quality makes her the ideal woman to marry. She was the first choice of three men: Charles Musgrove, Captain Wentworth, and Mr. William Elliot.

Anne Elliot’s mind is clear. This is evident from how she rebels against the vanity and arrogance of her own father and sister. However, that does not mean that Anne ignores her responsibilities and obligations as an upper-class lady who is respected by many people. She understands and respects the importance of class around her. Anne Elliot is a woman who is conscious of the social structure in which she exists, and although she has a desire to seek more flexibility, she does not intend to seriously challenge the class system.

Anne Elliot is very reflective of her initial relationship with Captain Wentworth. She is happy to remember the good times she had with Wentworth and regrets that she broke off her engagement to the one she loved. Anne is a very private
and friendly woman, but she is compelled to remember the past, which is reflected when she refuses a proposal from someone else. Anne continues to sacrifice her own happiness to please others, to perform tasks that others do not want to do, to be a servant to her sisters, and even to remain silent when insulted by her own father.

She seldom shared her thoughts with others and preferred to write in a personal journal that only she could read. Anne trusts her own ability to make decisions and find solutions to all problems she faces and senses that her cousin William Elliot is not what she wants.

**The Process of Anne Elliot’s Knowledge Management**

On the basis of the research, there are four processes of knowledge experienced by Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*. The processes are socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization.

The first is socialization. In *Persuasion*, there is common knowledge of the time that women achieve independence through marrying into a wealthy family, and class status must be considered before the marriage process. Thus, the socialization process starts when Anne learns from her godmother about the importance of marrying a man who matches her class and who can adequately provide for her.

Since she was young, Anne has had tacit knowledge about the class system. She possesses a sense of family pride and is contained by her recognition of dignity of integrity. Even so, she falls for Captain Frederick Wentworth because of his openness and lack of arrogance.

Nevertheless, this early romance is ended through the intervention of knowledge gained by the social interaction between Anne and Lady Russell. Lady Russell interrupts Anne’s decision by giving her knowledge in the form of an advice that Anne should not marry Wentworth because there are status and social class considerations that restrict the actions of someone to fulfill their desires.

The second process is externalization. The externalization process in *Persuasion* is not in the form of drawing or writing. Instead, it comes in the form of a statement from Anne Elliot. The result of tacit knowledge from Lady Russell caused a change of decision. Anne, as the receiver of Lady Russell’s knowledge, converts or translates knowledge into explicit knowledge by telling Wentworth that she is breaking the engagement.

The third process is combination. This includes the development of existing explicit knowledge. Normally, the existing explicit knowledge is disseminated through a meeting or educational process. However, in *Persuasion*, Anne develops her explicit knowledge through her relocation to a new city because of her father’s debt.

Breaking the engagement (part of the externalization process) left a mark on Anne. She lost her beauty because of heartbreak, and she never replaced Wentworth with another man, even rejecting another man’s proposal. Eight years is a fairly long time for Anne to obtain new knowledge about how she feels about Wentworth. However, she maintains her original tacit knowledge as she continues to believe the class system is superficial, even after the intervention of knowledge from Lady Russell. When Wentworth comes to the city where Anne lives, the various pieces of knowledge inside Anne are combined. She reconsider if her judgment to break up the engagement was correct.

The result of that knowledge combination indicates that Anne still loves Wentworth. Each time she meets Wentworth, it is a challenge to contain her emotions. Also, Anne realizes that Wentworth has not yet forgiven her because of the intervention of knowledge from Lady Russell years ago.

The last process is internalization. It is a process that changes explicit knowledge into new tacit knowledge obtained through learning or individual experience. In Anne’s case, it is gained through her experience. In the end of the story, Anne obtains a new kind of knowledge through the combination process. She concludes that it was right of Lady Russell to have interfered eight years ago, even if the knowledge itself was misguided. From that conclusion, she forms a new piece of tacit knowledge that women should not give up their feelings of love, even when all hope is gone, and she reveals her true feelings to Wentworth.

**5. Conclusions**

The conclusion of the paper is that knowledge management is important not only to organizations but also to individual lives. In *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot’s knowledge began growing during her first influential knowledge reception from Lady Russell. The result of her knowledge management is interesting because she studied her first influential tacit knowledge, combined it with her experiences over eight years, and then created a new tacit knowledge that appears similar to the first tacit knowledge but, in fact, includes significant differences. If she had not developed her knowledge after breaking the
engagement, Anne would have lived in pain forever without caring about love. It takes an independent and strong mind to pull off Anne’s particular knowledge management.

On the basis of this paper, it is suggested that good and proper knowledge management is necessary for women. Reflecting on the results of the knowledge management process experienced by the main characters in *Persuasion*, we can see that Anne Elliot’s initial tacit knowledge is not much different from what she has after her knowledge management process has ended. This could mean that Anne Elliot does not experience any change in knowledge at all. Therefore, we need to develop our knowledge management process in a way that simplifies the decision-making processes that affect our daily lives. Ultimately, individuals can improve their lives by learning to differentiate between good and bad knowledge.

**Acknowledgment**

This paper partially fulfills the requirements of a Knowledge Management and Preservation course.

**References**


