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# Assessing knowledge management readiness in higher education: An institutional self-assessment from Gorontalo, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT.** Knowledge management (KM) has been widely recognized as a strategic enabler for organizational performance and information systems development, yet its systematic adoption in higher education institutions (HEIs) remains limited, particularly in Indonesia. This study presents an institutional KM readiness assessment at two universities in Gorontalo Province, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo (UNG, public) and Universitas Ichsan Gorontalo (UNISAN, private), as an initial descriptive baseline in this regional context. A quantitative descriptive survey was conducted using an instrument grounded in the Knowledge Management Critical Success Factors (KMCSF) framework, covering three aspects: Abstract (conceptual awareness), Soft (human and organizational factors), and Hard (technology and infrastructure). Data were collected from 226 respondents through purposive sampling. The study aims to assess KM readiness levels at both institutions and compare readiness profiles across the three aspects to identify strengths and priority areas for IS-informed governance improvement. Validity and reliability of the instrument were confirmed on this study's data prior to main data collection. Readiness levels were interpreted using a five-level readiness scale, where classifications reflect overall average scores across all dimensions. Results indicated that UNISAN obtained a score corresponding to Level 4 (Receptive) while UNG obtained Level 5 (Optimal), with both institutions showing relative strengths in technology infrastructure and organizational structure. However, knowledge hub and centers, explicit knowledge management, and organizational culture emerged as shared areas requiring priority attention. These findings establish a descriptive KM readiness baseline for HEIs in Gorontalo Province and offer evidence-based directions for knowledge management system design and IS governance improvement.



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## INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are, by nature, knowledge-intensive organizations. Universities produce, disseminate, and apply knowledge as their core business through teaching, research, and community service (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023; Vyas, 2024). The effective management of this knowledge is increasingly recognized as a strategic imperative: without systematic knowledge management (KM) practices, institutional knowledge risks remaining fragmented, undocumented, and inaccessible across units. However, despite knowledge being their primary asset, many universities have yet to manage it systematically through formal KM practices (Prabowo, 2010). This gap has been widely documented and remains persistent even as digital transformation accelerates knowledge creation in university environments (Natek & Zwilling, 2021; Al-Emran et al., 2020). Research on KM in Asian higher education consistently confirms that implementation gaps between institutional infrastructure and actual knowledge practices remain a defining challenge across the region (Ranjan et al., 2025).

KM can be broadly understood as a collaborative and integrated approach to creating, capturing, organizing, accessing, and using an organization's intellectual assets (Dalkir, 2005; Tiwana, 2001). In the higher education context, KM encompasses a wide range of institutional functions, from curriculum development and research dissemination to administrative improvement and community engagement (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023). It becomes evident that the systematic management of these knowledge assets requires not only organizational commitment but also supportive information systems infrastructure, including digital repositories, knowledge portals, and IS-based governance mechanisms. When implemented effectively, KM serves as a strategic enabler for institutional competitiveness and mission achievement (Shujahat et al., 2019; Raudeliuniene & Matar, 2025). In private higher education institutions specifically, KM has been shown to strengthen dynamic capabilities and build sustainable competitive advantage (Elistia et al., 2024).

Despite its potential, KM implementation in universities is not straightforward. Key challenges include leadership commitment, organizational culture, technology integration, resource constraints, and individual reluctance to share knowledge (Ramachandran, 2010; Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2015). Reports indicate that KM implementation failures can reach 70% in organizations (Prabowo, 2010). A systematic review of KM success variables confirms that infrastructure-oriented, management-related, and culture-oriented factors each operate through distinct mediating pathways to organizational performance (Alam, 2025). It therefore becomes critical to assess institutional readiness before embarking on KM initiatives. Readiness, defined by Mohammadi et al. (2009) as the degree to which an organization is prepared to adopt, use, and benefit from KM, serves as a diagnostic foundation for evidence-based KM system design and IS governance planning (Alajmi, 2024).

In Indonesia, KM readiness studies in HEIs have been conducted at Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya, Universitas Amikom Purwokerto (Ratwiyanti et al., 2020), and Polstat STIS (Prabowo et al., 2019). Research in Indonesian government institutions confirms that organizational culture remains the most persistent barrier to KM adoption (Sensuse et al., 2018), while studies on IT governance adoption indicate that institutional readiness for technology-based knowledge systems varies significantly across Indonesian higher education contexts (Amali et al., 2022). Studies of KM readiness in public versus private sector organizations reveal systematic differences in awareness, infrastructure, and cultural readiness (Al-Mahruqi et al., 2020), while readiness model development for HEIs continues to identify people, process, and technology as the three foundational dimensions (Sardjono & Firdaus, 2020). Globally, Altawe et al. (2026) and Adman et al. (2023) confirm that HEI KM readiness assessments in developing countries remain an active and underexplored frontier, a finding corroborated by recent bibliometric analyses of KM research trends in higher education (Altawe et al., 2026; Vyas, 2024). However, no published study has examined universities in Gorontalo Province, a region in eastern Indonesia where higher education institutions play a central role in provincial knowledge economy development.

This study addresses that gap by presenting an institutional KM readiness assessment at two universities in Gorontalo Province: Universitas Negeri Gorontalo (UNG), the largest public university, and Universitas Ichsan Gorontalo (UNISAN), the largest private university. Beyond being an initial KM readiness assessment in this regional context, the study offers three specific contributions relevant to the scope of informatics research: (1) it provides a descriptive baseline for KM readiness that is directly actionable for knowledge management system (KMS) design and digital repository planning at both institutions; (2) it applies the KMCSF framework in a comparative public-private institutional design within a single regional context, contributing to empirical validation of the framework in developing-country HEI settings; and (3) it identifies dimension-level readiness gaps that have direct implications for IS governance policy and IT-supported knowledge infrastructure development. The study aims to: (1) assess KM readiness levels at both institutions based on the KMCSF framework; and (2) compare readiness profiles across the Abstract, Soft, and

Hard aspects to identify institutional strengths and priority areas for IS-informed university governance improvement.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey method. Data were collected at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo (UNG) and Universitas Ichsan Gorontalo (UNISAN) in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. As the only state university and the largest private university in Gorontalo Province respectively, both institutions represent the most established higher education providers in the region, making them appropriate sites for an initial regional KM readiness assessment. The overall research procedure is presented in Figure 1. Data were collected from April to November 2021, providing a pre-digital transformation baseline that documents institutional KM readiness prior to the accelerated adoption of digital systems in Indonesian higher education following the COVID-19 pandemic.

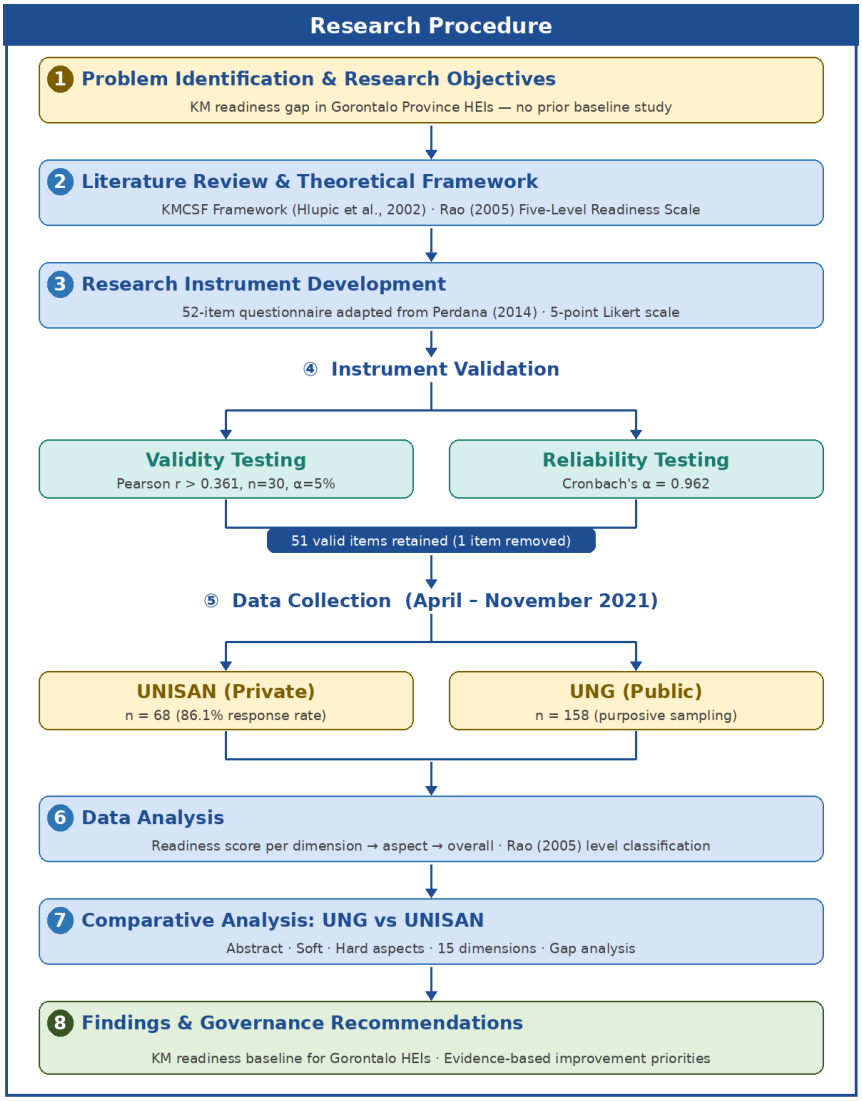


Figure 1. Research procedure

### KM Readiness Framework

The assessment was grounded in the KMCSF framework by Hlupic et al. (2002), which classifies KM readiness across three aspects: (1) Abstract, encompassing understanding of KM definitions and organizational initiative toward KM adoption; (2) Soft, covering human and organizational factors

including leadership, culture, organization, processes, explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge, measures, exploitation, people/skills, and learning; and (3) Hard, comprising technology infrastructure, knowledge hub and centers, and physical environment. The three aspects reflect a continuum from conceptual awareness to behavioral readiness to technological infrastructure, providing a comprehensive view of organizational KM preparedness. The KMCSF framework continues to be applied and validated in KM implementation studies across diverse organizational contexts (Sensuse et al., 2025; Alam, 2025). Readiness levels were interpreted using the five-level Rao (2005) scale, ranging from Level 1 (Not Ready, 0-25%) to Level 5 (Optimal/Institutionalized KM, 87.5-100%). It should be noted that level classification is based on the overall average score across all dimensions; a Level 5 classification therefore reflects overall readiness and does not imply that all individual dimensions have reached that level. This aggregation approach follows common practice in KM readiness assessment studies.

### Research Instrument

The research data were collected using a questionnaire instrument adapted from Perdana (2014), which was originally developed based on the KMCSF framework by Hlupic et al. (2002). The instrument consists of items categorized into three dimensions corresponding to the Abstract, Soft, and Hard aspects of KM readiness. The original instrument comprised 52 items scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), distributed across the Abstract aspect (9 items), Soft aspect (33 items), and Hard aspect (10 items). Prior to the main data collection, validity was re-confirmed on this study's data through Bivariate Pearson correlation testing ($r_{table} = 0.361$, n=30, alpha=5%), ensuring that the adapted instrument remained valid within the specific institutional contexts of this study. One item failed the validity threshold and was removed, yielding a final instrument of 51 valid items. Reliability was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha = 0.962, indicating high internal consistency.

### Respondents and Sampling

Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, targeting academic and administrative staff in structural positions including department heads, study program chairs, laboratory heads, library heads, and administrative section chiefs on the basis that these individuals possess sufficient institutional knowledge and KM literacy to meaningfully respond to the instrument. At UNISAN, 79 questionnaires were distributed and 68 valid responses were obtained (response rate: 86.1%). At UNG, 158 valid responses were collected, yielding a total of 226 respondents across both institutions.

### Data Analysis

For each dimension, readiness percentage = (total weighted score divided by maximum possible score) x 100. Aspect-level readiness was derived by averaging dimension scores within each aspect. Overall institutional readiness was the average of all three aspect scores. Scores were then classified according to the Rao (2005) five-level scale. As this study employs a descriptive design, no inferential statistical comparison was performed between the two institutions; differences in scores are reported descriptively and interpreted with appropriate caution.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of respondents from both institutions. At UNISAN (n=68), respondents were predominantly S2 degree holders (63.2%), in the 36–45 age group (60.3%), with 2–10 years of service (54.4%), reflecting a mid-career workforce profile. In terms of gender, UNISAN showed a slight male majority (58.8%). At UNG (n=158), the profile was more senior: S2 holders predominated (42.4%), with a substantial doctoral proportion (14.6%), most in the 36–45 age group (54.4%), and a majority with over 10 years of service (60.8%), with a slight female majority

(52.5%). Three respondents (1.3%) did not indicate gender and are excluded from this category. UNG's higher proportion of doctoral staff and longer-tenured respondents is consistent with its status as an established state university. These institutional differences may partly explain KM readiness variation between the two universities, as research confirms positive associations between higher educational qualifications, institutional experience, and KM engagement (Kumari et al., 2023; Sensuse et al., 2018).

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

| Characteristic | UNISAN (n=68) | | UNG (n=158) | | Total (n=226) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| **Education level** | | | | | | |
| SMA / High school | 0 | 0.0 | 6 | 3.8 | 6 | 2.7 |
| S1 (Bachelor's) | 25 | 36.8 | 62 | 39.2 | 87 | 38.5 |
| S2 (Master's) | 43 | 63.2 | 67 | 42.4 | 110 | 48.7 |
| S3 (Doctoral) | 0 | 0.0 | 23 | 14.6 | 23 | 10.2 |
| **Gender** | | | | | | |
| Male | 40 | 58.8 | 72 | 45.6 | 112 | 49.6 |
| Female | 28 | 41.2 | 83 | 52.5 | 111 | 49.1 |
| **Age group** | | | | | | |
| < 36 years | 21 | 30.9 | 23 | 14.6 | 44 | 19.5 |
| 36–45 years | 41 | 60.3 | 86 | 54.4 | 127 | 56.2 |
| > 45 years | 6 | 8.8 | 49 | 31.0 | 55 | 24.3 |
| **Years of service** | | | | | | |
| < 2 years | 4 | 5.9 | 12 | 7.6 | 16 | 7.1 |
| 2–10 years | 37 | 54.4 | 50 | 31.6 | 87 | 38.5 |
| > 10 years | 27 | 39.7 | 96 | 60.8 | 123 | 54.4 |

## KM Readiness Results UNISAN

UNISAN obtained an overall KM readiness score of 79.05%, corresponding to Level 4 (Receptive) on the Rao (2005) scale. Aspect scores were: Abstract 78.77%, Soft 77.76%, and Hard 80.63%. The highest-performing dimensions were Organization (85.78%, Level 5), Technology Infrastructure (85.41%, Level 5), and Physical Environment (85.15%, Level 5), indicating strong structural and digital readiness foundations.

Three dimensions remained below 75%, warranting priority attention: Knowledge Hub and Centers (71.32%), Explicit Knowledge (71.84%), and Culture (71.88%). This pattern reveals that while UNISAN possesses adequate physical and technological infrastructure to support KM, it has not yet institutionalized systematic knowledge documentation practices or a knowledge-sharing culture. This infrastructure–culture imbalance is consistent with patterns observed in comparable HEIs at similar readiness stages (Ratwiyanti et al., 2020; Al-Busaidi & Olfman, 2017). Research on knowledge-sharing culture change in HEIs of developing countries confirms that cultural transformation requires sustained management commitment and structured socialization programs, which are often underdeveloped in institutions at this readiness level (Mazorodze & Mkhize, 2022).

## KM Readiness Results UNG

UNG obtained an overall KM readiness score of 81.32%, corresponding to Level 5 (Optimal) on the Rao (2005) scale. Aspect scores were: Abstract 80.77%, Soft 79.76%, and Hard 83.43%. Five dimensions reached Level 5: Technology Infrastructure (86.81%), Organization (84.60%), Measures (82.72%), Exploitation (81.39%), and Process (81.24%), reflecting well-established formal KM structures.

It is important to note that this Level 5 classification reflects the overall average score across all dimensions and does not imply uniform readiness at the dimension level. Nine of fifteen dimensions remain at Level 4, including Culture (75.65%), Explicit Knowledge (76.14%), Tacit Knowledge (77.47%), People/Skills (78.61%), Knowledge Hub and Centers (79.87%), and Leadership (79.94%). This pattern indicates that UNG's overall readiness score is primarily driven by technology infrastructure and organizational structure, while people-centered and knowledge practice dimensions lag behind, a distinction with important implications for long-term KM sustainability (Natek & Zwilling, 2021; Maravilhas & Martins, 2019). From an IS governance perspective, strong infrastructure readiness without corresponding culture and knowledge practice readiness creates a risk of underutilized knowledge systems, where digital platforms exist but are not actively used for knowledge creation and sharing (Ranjan & Joshith, 2026; Alves & Pinheiro, 2022).

## Comparative Analysis: UNG vs UNISAN

Table 2 presents the comprehensive comparison of KM readiness across all dimensions for both institutions. UNG obtained a slightly higher overall readiness score than UNISAN (81.32% vs 79.05%), a difference of 2.27 percentage points. Given the descriptive nature of this study, this difference is reported as an observed gap and should not be interpreted as a statistically confirmed superiority of one institution over the other. Both institutions fall within a comparable readiness band, with UNG at the lower boundary of Level 5 and UNISAN at the upper boundary of Level 4. Two patterns emerge as particularly notable from the descriptive comparison. First, both institutions share the same three lowest-scoring dimensions: Knowledge Hub and Centers, Explicit Knowledge, and Culture. This observed convergence suggests shared challenges in KM adoption within the studied institutions, which may tentatively reflect broader patterns in the regional higher education context, though generalization beyond these two institutions requires caution. These findings are consistent with broader patterns in Indonesian HEIs, where knowledge repositories, documentation practices, and knowledge-sharing culture consistently score lower relative to technological infrastructure (Ratwiyanti et al., 2020; Adman et al., 2023). The convergence across public and private institutions is also consistent with Al-Mahruqi et al.'s (2020) observation that both sector types tend to face similar fundamental barriers. From an information systems standpoint, weak scores on Knowledge Hub and Centers and Explicit Knowledge directly translate to gaps in digital knowledge repository adoption, knowledge codification systems, and IS-supported knowledge governance, areas that are central to informatics research (Budur et al., 2024; Sensuse et al., 2025).

Second, UNG's Level 5 classification is infrastructure-led while people-centered dimensions remain at Level 4. Shujahat et al. (2019) argue that sustainable KM requires embedding knowledge-sharing behaviors within organizational culture, not merely providing technological platforms. The infrastructure–culture gap at UNG thus represents a strategic risk for long-term KM institutionalization. This finding echoes Natek and Zwilling (2021), who found that even in institutions with strong KM systems, the cultural and behavioral dimensions of knowledge creation remain the most challenging to develop. Research on KM readiness improvement models further confirms that government and educational institutions at Level 4–5 readiness typically require targeted initiatives focused on people-centered dimensions rather than additional technology investment (Sensuse et al., 2025). The connection between KM processes and sustainability outcomes

in HEIs further underscores that knowledge codification and sharing not infrastructure alone, but also knowledge practices, are the critical drivers (Budur et al., 2024).

Table 2. Comparative KM readiness scores: UNG vs UNISAN

| Aspect / Dimension | UNISAN (%) | Level | UNG (%) | Level | Gap (pp) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ABSTRACT** | **78.77** | **4** | **80.77** | **4** | **2.00** |
| Definition & benefits of KM | 79.45 | 4 | 80.96 | 4 | 1.51 |
| Organizational initiative | 78.09 | 4 | 80.57 | 4 | 2.48 |
| **SOFT** | **77.76** | **4** | **79.76** | **4** | **2.00** |
| Leadership | 77.94 | 4 | 79.94 | 4 | 2.00 |
| Organization | 85.78 | 5 | 84.60 | 5 | −1.18 |
| Culture | 71.88 | 4 | 75.65 | 4 | 3.77 |
| Process | 80.98 | 4 | 81.24 | 5 | 0.26 |
| Explicit Knowledge | 71.84 | 4 | 76.14 | 4 | 4.30 |
| Tacit Knowledge | 76.32 | 4 | 77.47 | 4 | 1.15 |
| Measures | 76.47 | 4 | 82.72 | 5 | 6.25 |
| Exploitation | 78.97 | 4 | 81.39 | 5 | 2.42 |
| People/Skills | 77.75 | 4 | 78.61 | 4 | 0.86 |
| Learning | 79.71 | 4 | 79.87 | 4 | 0.16 |
| **HARD** | **80.63** | **4** | **83.43** | **5** | **2.80** |
| Knowledge Hub & Centers | 71.32 | 4 | 79.87 | 4 | 8.55 |
| Technology Infrastructure | 85.41 | 5 | 86.81 | 5 | 1.40 |
| Physical Environment | 85.15 | 5 | 83.61 | 5 | −1.54 |
| **OVERALL** | **79.05** | **4 — Receptive** | **81.32** | **5 — Optimal** | **2.27** |

The KM readiness gap between the two institutions can be partly attributed to structural and demographic differences: UNG's larger size, longer history, higher proportion of doctoral staff, and more established quality assurance mechanisms provide stronger organizational foundations for KM formalization (Norawati et al., 2026; Elistia et al., 2024). In a broader context, these findings align with Adhikari and Shrestha (2023), who found that culture, leadership, and knowledge documentation are the most frequently cited barriers to KM readiness in developing-country HEIs, and with Prabowo et al. (2019), who identified knowledge-sharing infrastructure and leadership as priority areas at comparable Indonesian institutions.

## Implications for University Governance and Information Systems

For both institutions, priority recommendations converge on three areas: (1) developing formal digital knowledge repositories with clear governance policies for knowledge capture, storage, retrieval, and access control; (2) implementing structured knowledge documentation programs that leverage existing IT infrastructure for best practice sharing across academic and administrative units; and (3) cultivating a knowledge-sharing culture through management-led initiatives, routine inter-unit knowledge exchange, and embedding KM values into institutional IT governance policy. These recommendations align with Good University Governance principles and are directly relevant to the design and implementation of knowledge management systems in higher education (Norawati et al., 2026; Raudeliuniene & Matar, 2025).

For UNG specifically, deepening people-centered KM dimensions is the strategic priority: strengthening leadership engagement in KM beyond structural endorsement, developing staff competency frameworks for knowledge-based roles, allocating institutional time for organizational learning, and establishing tacit knowledge transfer mechanisms. Research confirms that individual-level competencies and intrinsic motivation are stronger predictors of actual knowledge exchange than structural provisions alone (Ranjan & Joshith, 2026; Alves & Pinheiro, 2022). Both institutions would benefit from developing IS-supported knowledge governance frameworks, including role-based access to knowledge repositories, metadata standards for knowledge assets, and dashboard-based monitoring of KM activities, as concrete next steps toward institutionalizing KM through information systems.

### Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, data were collected in 2021 and represent a pre-digital transformation baseline; while this temporal context is analytically valuable, the KM readiness landscape may have shifted following post-pandemic digital acceleration in Indonesian HEIs, and a follow-up study is warranted. Second, the purposive sampling approach and the inclusion of only two institutions limit the generalizability of findings; results should be interpreted as descriptive observations about the studied institutions rather than representative conclusions about all HEIs in Gorontalo Province. Third, the absence of inferential statistical testing means that observed score differences between institutions cannot be attributed to systematic factors with statistical confidence. Fourth, reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias; future research incorporating KM system audits, interview-based methods, or IS artifact analysis would complement the survey findings.

## CONCLUSION

This study assessed KM readiness at two higher education institutions in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo (UNG, public) and Universitas Ichsan Gorontalo (UNISAN, private), using the KMCSF framework and a five-level readiness scale. UNG obtained an overall readiness score of 81.32%, corresponding to Level 5 (Optimal), while UNISAN obtained 79.05%, corresponding to Level 4 (Receptive). Both scores reflect overall averages across fifteen dimensions, and both institutions demonstrated meaningful KM foundations alongside areas requiring further development. The most notable descriptive finding is the convergence of the lowest-scoring dimensions across both institutions: knowledge hub and centers, explicit knowledge management, and organizational culture. This convergence suggests the presence of shared challenges in KM adoption within the studied institutions, which may provisionally indicate broader patterns in the regional higher education context. These shared weaknesses have direct implications for information systems development: gaps in knowledge hub infrastructure and explicit knowledge management correspond directly to deficiencies in digital repository systems, knowledge codification platforms, and IS-supported knowledge governance, priority areas for future KMS design and implementation in both institutions. Additionally, UNG's overall Level 5 score is primarily driven by technology infrastructure and organizational structure dimensions, while people-centered dimensions remain at Level 4, indicating that infrastructure readiness has outpaced cultural and practice readiness. As the first descriptive KM readiness baseline for HEIs in Gorontalo Province, this study provides a foundation for longitudinal monitoring as digital transformation continues to reshape Indonesian higher education. The findings offer evidence-based direction for governance bodies at both institutions to prioritize KM investments in knowledge documentation systems, knowledge-sharing culture, and people development. Future research should extend this baseline longitudinally, incorporate inferential methods to enable more robust institutional comparison, explore IS artifact

analysis to complement self-reported data, and examine the relationship between KM readiness and specific institutional performance outcomes.

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