

The Influence of Psychological Contracts in Knowledge Sharing Through Startups

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Abstract: Informed by exchange and social capital theories, reasoned action, and psychological contract frameworks, this paper seeks to elucidate the intricate interplay between psychological contracts and their impact on knowledge-sharing motivations within the context of startups. The research adopts a qualitative approach, employing in-depth personal interviews and focus groups, with subsequent content analysis facilitated by NVivo software. Through a comprehensive exploration encompassing startups spanning diverse industries and maturity levels, the investigation draws upon insights from founding partners, directors, and employees. Notably, this study stands apart from the literature that primarily examines established enterprises in Anglo-Saxon nations. Conversely, it distinguishes itself by its novel examination of how psychological contracts exert influence on knowledge sharing across individual, intra-organizational, and inter-organizational strata within startups operating in emerging economies, taking into account their distinctive characteristics. The findings shed light on employees' core perceptions of their reciprocal obligations and the organisation's corresponding commitments. Moreover, the research unveils the nuanced impact of contextual factors on the cultivation of social bonds, consequently moulding knowledge-sharing dynamics within startups, thereby directly shaping individual and organisational outcomes.

Keywords: Psychological contracts; Knowledge sharing; Knowledge management; Startups

1. Introduction

Knowledge in organisations is seen as a critical resource in the race to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage in a dynamic economy, and, in recent years, researchers have concentrated more and more efforts on studying the sharing of knowledge between members, teams, and other organisations (Wang & Noe, 2010). A possible explanation for the growing interest is the recognition that the creation and control of the flow of knowledge, inside and outside the limits of the organisation, are essential factors to positively impact the reduction, shorter time in the development and conclusion of projects of new products, team performance, innovation capabilities, and overall organisation performance (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990).

In this context, there are underlying exchange relationships between employees and employers, which can culminate in psychological contracts, which consist of a process of social exchange where employee actions are motivated by the belief that their employers will reciprocate through rewards, benefits, opportunities, and other positive results (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003; Chen & Kao, 2011). Psychological contracts are subjective, so their content and fulfilment are based on the individual perceptions of the other party (Caldwell et al., 2012). However, both parties tend to assume these commitments are mutual (Rousseau, 2004).

In the context of emerging economies, startups emerge as potential promoters of development since businesses of this nature seek to explore innovative activities in the market, with proposals for scalable business models, using technology from its initial phase, where access to information and sharing of knowledge can be crucial survival factors for the organisation (Marchiori & Franco, 2019). In their early stages, startups rely on something other than significant capital investments. Therefore, they tend to have lean teams composed of founding partners who invest their capital in the business and members who join the group, often due to the expectation of growth. And relational aspects than adequately, by remuneration benefits (Franco & Haase, 2015).

From these statements, this study is the result of research on psychological contracts and how they influence the management and sharing of knowledge in startups and deals with how knowledge is created and flows between individuals, teams, and organisations based on their perceptions about whether or not your expectations have been met. The goal is to understand how psychological contracts interact with individual motivations to share knowledge and how this affects the outcome of startups.

More specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions: (i) How do psychological contracts impact individual motivations to share knowledge? (ii) How do situational factors with the immediate superior

affect the social interactions between individuals, teams and other startups? and (iii) How can psychological contracts affect individual and organisational performance in startups?

This research is justified by the relevance of the theme, confirmed by the growth of scientific production and the lack of similar qualitative studies on startups from emerging economies, considering their idiosyncrasies and emphasising the economic-financial peculiarities of the start-up where psychological contracts are part of a future perspective of growth in the organisation and improvement of remuneration conditions. This study also advances and adheres to the proposed theme from the triangulation of data from startups from different industries and with varying maturity levels from the perspective of their founding partners, directors, and employees.

To provide a coherent picture, the content of the study is represented as follows: the next section presents the theoretical framework associated with knowledge management and psychological contracts in the internal and external context of startups. Next, the criteria used in sample selection and content categorisation are indicated, and the techniques are applied to analyse the interviews. The presentation of the research results follows this and, finally, the final considerations of the work carried out, possible gaps in the study, and implications of the results obtained.

2. Theoretical Background

Startups are a critical source of innovation in high-potential target markets. They aggressively grow their businesses and play an essential role in the progress of emerging markets. However, these organisations often face new administrative activities and unstable economic scenarios. Entrepreneurs seek partners to help fill the "institutional voids" of administrative issues such as market infrastructure, legal and regulatory systems, and financial and market development (Doshmanli et al., 2018; Picken, 2017; Jacobson et al., 2017).

Effective knowledge management is essential to foster innovation by creating new knowledge through adopting new collaborative and innovative technologies. Employees' subjective understanding of their obligations and the company's commitments can positively or negatively influence knowledge-sharing behaviours. Such perceptions of relational obligations constitute the psychological contracts that arise from explicit promises of managers and collective beliefs acquired by employees from interpretations and observations of informal practices (Giardino et al., 2016).

The theories of exchange, social capital, reasoned action and psychological contracts were used to understand the path of information traversed inside and outside startups and how psychological contracts can influence this flow. While the theory of reasoned actions seeks to understand the consequences of alternative behaviours in the face of sharing knowledge, attitudes and subjective norms, the theory of exchange and social capital seeks to understand structural, relational, and cognitive issues such as patterns of connections and influences, interactions between individuals, and interpretations of behaviours and cultural norms (Salamzadeh, 2018).

Overall, startups are crucial for driving innovation in high-potential target markets. Effective knowledge management and understanding employees' psychological contracts are critical for promoting innovation and achieving business success (Luchak & Pohler, 2010).

2.1 Psychological Contracts

The psychological contract refers to the mutual obligations between employees and employers that go beyond the formal employment contract. It includes commitments and expectations based on understanding what the employer owes to the employee and vice versa. Fulfilment of the psychological contract contributes positively to employee performance, organisational performance, and productivity. Breach of the psychological contract occurs when obligations and promises are not met (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998).

Psychological contract obligations can be economical or monetary and relational or socio-emotional. Financial obligations involve compensation for work, while relational obligations involve mutual support and concern between employer and employee. Employment agreements can combine obligations, including compensation and opportunities for future growth (Raeder et al., 2012).

Understanding psychological contract obligations arises from explicit promises made by HR and managers and from beliefs acquired through informal practices and company signals. HR practices can convey the employer's future intentions and contribute to fulfilling the psychological contract (McDermott et al., 2013).

The psychological contract is an intermediary factor that helps transfer HRM practices to organisational performance. HRM practices affect the psychological contract because they are part of the employer's

obligations towards the employee, and employees perceive them as incentives. Thus, the HRM practices carried out by an employer help fulfil the psychological contract (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000).

In summary, the psychological contract is vital to the employment relationship beyond the formal employment contract. Fulfilment of the psychological contract contributes positively to employee performance and organisational productivity, while breach of the psychological contract can lead to negative attitudes and behaviour. Employers can use HRM practices to fulfil the psychological contract and promote organisational performance (Tsai & Cheng, 2012).

2.2 Social Exchange and Share Capital Theory

The social exchange theory explains how knowledge sharing occurs through certain behaviours among individuals in an organisation. Previous research has identified gratitude, trust, personal obligation, justice, and commitment as essential factors in organisational knowledge transfer. Leaders who encourage innovative thinking and empower employees to share information management create a positive organisational climate and enhance corporate trust and commitment. The transfer of knowledge among teams is primarily influenced by the dimensions of social capital: structural, relational, and cognitive. The structural aspect relates to connections and influences in information sharing; relational scope refers to stakeholder interactions. The cognitive perspective concerns resources contributing to shared cultural and social norms systems. Combining exchange and social capital theories with knowledge-sharing fundamentals can accelerate information transfer and benefit startups operating in highly competitive environments. Previous studies have shown that startups can benefit from these theories and accelerate their growth through effective knowledge sharing (Hsu et al., 2007; Renzl, 2008; Hendriks & Romo-Leroux, 2016).

2.3 Grounded Action Theory

Grounded action theory indicates that attitudes toward knowledge sharing are shaped by considering the consequences of alternative behaviours (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Attitudes, subjective norms, communication channel richness, and information absorption ability are predictors of a person's intention to share knowledge (Bock & Kim, 2002; Ryu et al., 2003; Chen et al., 2012). Extrinsic rewards, reciprocity in leader relationships, self-worth, and organisational climate are signs of action theory for encouraging knowledge sharing (Ryu et al., 2003; Chow & Chan, 2008). Although positive attitudes can promote information sharing, no best practices manual has been proposed, and investigations still need to be applied to the context of startups with high relevance.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Methods

This study is classified as exploratory-descriptive research (Cánovas-Saiz et al., 2020), with a qualitative approach (Brandão, 2016), and a multiple case study was carried out (Zhao et al., 2021) as a scrutiny strategy in which one or more processes, activities, or individuals over a limited period. Figure 1 shows the choice of samples.

INTERVIEWED	INDUSTRY	OPERATING TIME	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	TYPES OF INTERVIEWEES	MATURITY	INCUBATION/ ACCELERATION	INVESTMENT SUPPORT
STARTUP A	EduTech	6 years	60	founder & directors	operates in the national market	nacional	bootstrap & capital venture
STARTUP B	SoftTech	3 years	10	founder & directors	operates in the regional market	nacional	bootstrap & capital venture
STARTUP C	HardTech	2 years	5	all team	beginning to selling	regional	bootstrap
STARTUP D	HardTech	6 years	15	founder & directors	internationalized	regional, national & international	bootstrap & economic subsidy
STARTUP E	SoftTech	4 years	8	all team	operates in the national market	nacional	bootstrap & economic subsidy
STARTUP F	HardTech	2 years	6	all team	operates in the regional market	regional	bootstrap & capital venture
STARTUP G	Fintech	7 years	38	founder & directors	internationalized	international	bootstrap & capital venture
STARTUP H	Construtech	5 years	6	all team	internationalized	national & international	bootstrap & capital venture
STARTUP I	Agrotech	2 years	9	all team	beginning to selling	nacional	bootstrap & capital venture
STARTUP J	SoftTech	4 years	47	founder & directors	operates in the national market	nacional	bootstrap & economic subsidy
STARTUP K	Agrotech	1,5 years	12	all team	beginning to selling	nacional	bootstrap & economic subsidy
STARTUP L	Fintech	8 years	69	founder & directors	internationalized	national & international	joint venture

Figure 1: Sample Characterisation

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in a focus group (García-Ruiz & Lena-Acebo, 2019) to realise the information and feelings of individuals on specific issues. Data triangulation was performed (Lauto & Valentin, 2016) to map the institutional practices performed and perceptions about knowledge sharing. The content analysis was structured into categories defined from the literature on knowledge management, social networks, and structural holes so that the core of meanings could be investigated and subsequent recognition of agglomerations in themes (Tanev et al., 2015), as shown in Figure 2.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS TYPES	EXPLICIT (manager promises)		formal training
	IMPLICIT (collective beliefs)		talent and succession management future promotion opportunity
MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS TYPES	ECONOMIC AND MONETARY (transational obligations)		leader's actions informal practices observation high performance heroes
	RELATIONAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC (relational obligations)		financial compensation compensation benefits opportunity for future growth
SHARING EXTENTION	BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS		mutual support and concern Employee Development increase in employability
	INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL		individual results
	INTERORGANIZATIONAL		team results organisational results
SHARING MOTIVATION	EXTERNALS	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	organizational context interpersonal and team characteristics cultural characteristics
			INDIVIDUAL FACTORS
	INTERNALS	MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS BEHAVIORIAL FACTORS	
CONTROL VARIABLES		power contralization inmediate head maturity level industry type company type	

Figure 2: Content Analysis Categorisation Tree

3.2 Research Framework

A study framework of knowledge sharing in entrepreneurship social networks was developed, favouring the visualisation of their motivations, specificities, and perceived results, as shown in Figure 3.

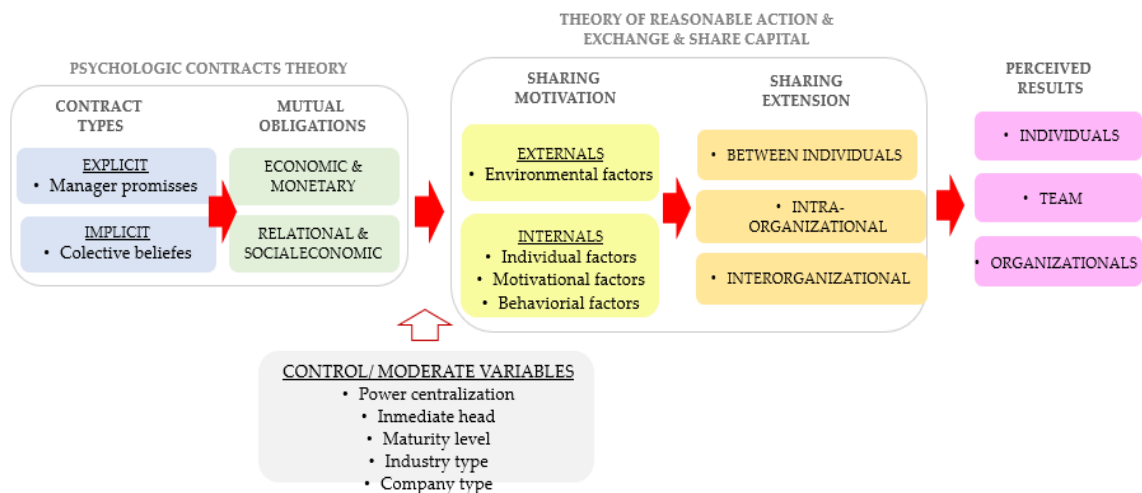


Figure 3: Study Framework of Knowledge Sharing in Startups

4. Results Analysis

Startups had economic and relational contracts and employed mechanisms to manage explicit knowledge. Early-stage startups used face-to-face coaching, while more prominent startups had broader access to repositories. More advanced startups had warehouses with limited access. This policy influenced the integration of new employees and reduced training time. These findings align with Babcock (2004) and Voelpel, Dous, and

Davenport (2005), suggesting that startups know the non-formalized commitments and expectations of all parties involved.

4.1 Control/Moderation Variables

To better express possible similarities and distinctions regarding the influence of psychological contracts on the acquisition and sharing of knowledge between individuals, intra and inter-organizational startups in four different stages of maturity were chosen, namely: SC - beginning of product commercialisation; SB- operating in the regional market with a single product; SA - acting in the national market with more than one product and SD - internationalised. For Steensma et al. (20015) and Tsang et al. (2004), organisations in transition economies have knowledge transfer patterns that can differ depending on their maturity level.

Reaffirming Martinkenaite's (2010) findings, the type of industry directly influenced the HR and sharing practices entrepreneurs adopt. SB, SC and SD, which belong to the *hard tech sector*. It is *softtechs* to embrace the *remote culture first*. At the same time, SA, which belongs to the education area and has a considerably larger team than the others, prioritises face-to-face and teamwork. Although they all adopt feedback meetings and open communication between employees and managers, only *Edutech* presented HR systems capable of formalising the team's intentions and leadership promises through formal records and training suggested to and requested by individuals, with bank management of talents with promotion opportunities based on meritocracy. All employees are encouraged to become partners through exemplary performance in the latter.

As for the number of employees, it was found that the larger the company, the greater the need to develop more robust communication channels so that individual engagement with the team and their relationship with other companies can be monitored. While SC and SB use WhatsApp groups as their primary tools, SA and SD have internal wikis with information flows and processes already mapped and *GitHub* for code storage.

Validating the understanding of Berg et al. (2020), there is a perception among all respondents that "connections move the world" (SA) and that the work environment and relationships between colleagues and immediate superiors are the main reasons for startups to retain talent, since, in its early stages, remuneration is usually below market value given the financial limitations of the organisation. Still, there is an informal agreement on future opportunities for growth through the valuation of results.

Finally, all startups cited the importance of participating in incubation and acceleration programs due to the networking they provide to participating organisations; as stated by SD, "If an incubator or accelerator does not have an extensive and good network of contacts, it will not it is good for nothing" and SC "thanks to the incubation process, we have signed contracts (...) the networking we have is a consequence of these ties we create with the university and the ecosystem". This developed network of relationships was seen as a fundamental factor for promoting knowledge exchange between organisations and the perception of increased organisational performance, corroborating the results of Rousseau (2010). It should be noted that none of the startups understood this external relationship as a risk to retaining talent or leaking information. All interviewees said they believed in their organisations' future, career growth, and increased employability in the labour market (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000).

4.2 Types of Contracts

4.2.1 Explicit

Power equations within the investigated organisations have been shown to guide the paths of dynamic psychological agreements and knowledge sharing but are equally dependent on social relations between individuals (Ipe, 2003). It was identified that in all the interviewed companies, this tends to occur more informally than through formal communication channels, and much of this process depends on the organisational culture.

Startups do not have HR manuals in the initial stages; formal training occurs as their members explain the need to do so. Despite not formalising agreements, all managers and employees claimed to have enough openness and freedom to demonstrate their future intentions with the company and negotiate terms of work. Startups in more mature stages presented robust HR systems, with a talent management database, rotation control, market talent monitoring, and a succession plan. Only *Edutech* gave, transparent and documented, a meritocracy policy disclosed to all members where anyone, regardless of level or sector, can become a partner and acquire shares in the company proportionally to their individual and group performance assessment (Martinkenaite, 2010).

The hierarchical level influences individuals' attitudes and pre-dispositions to interact with colleagues, groups and other organisations and, therefore, the types of agreements and information and the level of access among members. Tacit knowledge and follow-up of results (Nonaka, 1994) are shared in daily face-to-face or virtual meetings, with everyone present and stimulated through coexistence between senior and junior individuals. Because they are organisations with peculiar characteristics, startups have a lean composition, and the dialogue between employees and immediate superiors is intensely stimulated. The result is monitored through feedback meetings. In general, all members have access to all information and only knowledge that is necessarily confidential is restricted to the founding partners (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998).

Explicit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994) is elaborated and formalised mainly by team leaders, does not require approval from the highest leadership and can be proposed by everyone. The most significant benefit pointed out by the investigated startups in formalising knowledge and agreements were the reduction of the integration time of new members and the need to hire basic external training since the internal processes already mapped encourage organisational learning (Tomprou & Nicolaou, 2010).

4.2.2 Implicit

Interorganizational knowledge transfer was seen from the perspective of internal relationships in the investigated startups based on connections and affinities between employees and immediate superiors and practices. The decision to provide and obtain knowledge inside and outside the organisations was up to the members' particular judgment about the absorption capacity of the other party, their motivation to teach and learn and the intra-organizational transfer capacity, corroborating with findings by Easterby-Smith et al., (2008). Here, the leader's actions were essential to reaffirming personal impressions about informal practices and organisational norms (Korsgaard et al., 1997).

Although all startups have shown a pro-knowledge-sharing culture with direct actions from management and managerial support, including some recognition practices, valuing individual and team results along with recognition for high performance were the main reasons given by members for providing knowledge among peers and in communities of practice (Wilkesmann & Wilkesmann, 2011; Zhao et al., 2007).

They were obtaining knowledge, although a generalised practice by the individuals interviewed, was actions based on rules to reaffirm their commitment to the organisation's future to guarantee the fulfilment of implicitly signed psychological contracts (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2008; Rousseau, 1990).

4.3 Mutual Obligations

4.3.1 Economic and monetary

In terms of financial compensation and remuneration benefits, startups in the early stages admitted that they could not make offers compatible with the market, given their low revenues in the first years of operation. Managers and partners, in turn, claimed to offer opportunities for future growth as a measure of equalisation of individual efforts, as they understood that monetary values alone would not be enough to retain talent and establish long-term commitments (Rousseau, 1998; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2008).

In this context, startups in more advanced stages and already capable of guaranteeing market-compatible remuneration for their team demonstrated to act in the sense of creating means to encourage the permanence of their members through the possibility of buying shares or shares of participation in the company and become partners in the medium and long term (Sutton & Griffin, 2004).

4.3.2 Relational and socioeconomic

For managing partners and employees, mutual support and reciprocal concern with personal and interpersonal factors were identified as essential for strengthening long-term, high-commitment relationships. To reaffirm the importance of individual contributions to the performance of organisations, the rewards offered by employers were negotiated in broad terms and using socio-emotional resources.

Although startups in the initial stages have yet to establish a formally established career plan because the team is small, managers and managers demonstrated to know what is expected of both parties. The main aspects indicated were employee development through training, opportunities for career growth that accompany the company's product, with priority given to the oldest and highest performers and the perception of a better level of employability in the job market. In addition, other factors were cited with lesser relevance, such as autonomy of schedules, freedom to create their work routines and free access to communication with the founding partners of organisations (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000).

4.4 Motivations to Share

The investigated organisations claimed to see the acquisition and sharing of information as a discriminating factor for the company's success. Based on the literature, the presented study *framework* organised knowledge management in several areas proposed by Wang & Noe (2010). Each one emphasises topics divided between external and internal motivations to the individual.

4.4.1 External motivations

Related to perceived reciprocity, community knowledge-sharing culture can occur intra- and inter-organizationally (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Chiu et al., 2006). In this sense, it was identified that all startups interviewed actively participate in communities, providing and obtaining knowledge and having a stimulus to the culture of sharing information among employees.

It is also evident that no feeling of rivalry or superiority was identified in sharing information among members. On the contrary, respondents demonstrated a spirit of collectivism and cooperation, which corroborates the understanding of the literature by indicating that an organisational climate that promotes competition between individuals creates a barrier to fostering a culture of sharing (Schepers & Van den Berg, 2007; Wang, 2004; Willem & Scarbrough, 2006).

It also stands out from the interviewees' statements that the return perceived by sharing information results from the recognition and credibility acquired, in addition to a possible approximation that may arise with investors and mentors. This understanding confirms the importance of promoting organisational incentives and rewards to motivate individuals to pass on their knowledge (Kankanhalli et al., 2005; Yao et al., 2007).

Diverging from the understanding of Thomas-Hunt et al. (2003), which indicates heterogeneity as a predictor of integration and sharing difficulties, the study presented heterogeneity as a positive factor among the team. However, SD offers some communication failures among the team members. And their employees due to language differences.

4.4.2 Internal motivations

It is evident in the interviews that the integration of the team inside and outside the work environment influences the sharing of knowledge among employees. This statement confirms the understanding of Wang & Noe (2010) when stating that individuals tend to prioritise sharing their information with people they relate to and trust.

Incentive, recognition and intra-organizational reward campaigns are used as interventions to promote knowledge sharing (Liebowitz, 2003; Nelson et al., 2006), which attests to the findings found in the startups interviewed when reporting having recognition and meritocracy, as one of its pillars to promote greater integration of knowledge. The case of the SA company is also noteworthy, where some members became partners based on the performance achieved.

4.5 Share Extension

Knowledge is massively shared by members of organisations among themselves, between teams and between organisations, individually motivated by peer recognition and a sense of self-efficacy (Chow et al., 2000). Collectively, motivation was attributed to learning mechanisms promoted by participatory and decentralised leaderships (Lin, 2007; Lee et al., 2006; Kim & Lee, 2006), such as participation in skills development programs, external training, promotion of internal workshops and collective assessment of teams.

Individuals who underwent training or considered themselves sufficiently mature in some topic of interest to the organisation voluntarily passed on their learning within their team and to other groups through tacit reproduction of content and availability of explicit knowledge in repositories through manuals and flowcharts promoting cooperation interdisciplinary (Siebenhüner & Arnold, 2007). Internal relationships, values and norms shared by the group were listed as impulses to sharing (Lam, 2000).

Until then, the investigated startups claim not to have presented levels of conflicts that have interfered with the processes of learning and knowledge sharing (Rothman & Friedman, 2001). Instead, all of them listed interference from external factors such as public opinion, organisational reputation and market variations and only SD, which is internationalised, gave relevance to regulatory changes as a preponderant factor for sharing practices (Schön & Argyris, 1996).

All startups participate in online groups and communities of practice on the individual initiative of their members and by encouraging internal leaders, pointing out that strong ties involve more excellent emotional proximity (Granovetter, 1973) and that social relationships facilitate the transfer of knowledge and enhance the quality of the information exchanged (Cross & Cummings, 2004).

4.6 Perceived Results

Individually, the main perceived results were job satisfaction, commitment to the team, and a sense of truth and confidence in the company's future and its immediate leaders. Among groups, the result of psychological contracts was reflected in the improvement of communication channels, in the sense of collectivism, in the maturity of the teams and the low turnover, even in the stages in which startups are still unable to offer economic and financial benefits compatible with the values practised, in the market.

Interorganizational exchanges were seen as a dynamic 'feedback loop' structure where antecedents and consequences of transfer intertwine in ever-changing environments that promote learning. Feedback relationships between peers and immediate superiors and emotional ties were listed as direct influencers of company performance (Van Wijk, Jansen, & Lyles, 2008). Although all startups have stated that they prioritise technical knowledge when hiring new members, founding partners and HR managers were unanimous in postulating that candidates with greater adherence to the company's culture are prioritised in hiring. They understand that it is better to provide technical training than to spend time and effort trying to fit someone who does not adhere to the team, as this would disperse the team's efforts.

All interviewees perceived strategic results in enjoying the benefits of relationships and psychological contracts satisfactorily and balanced. In addition, all cited benefits in sharing knowledge between organisations, especially in terms of achieving visibility and reputation within a network of relationships that can improve the level of future employability and add values such as recognition and a sense of self-efficacy in the long term (Levin & Cross, 2004).

4.7 Emerging Categories

4.7.1 Hybrid and balanced bonds

The hybrid and balanced obligations category emerged during the investigation due to the peculiarity of these organisations regarding the need to be flexible about performance goals and job security and stability in line with changes in socioeconomic conditions (Rousseau & Schalk, 2000; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). Haagard Turban (2012) found that relational aspects and learning and career development opportunities overlap with monetary obligations and accompany relational elements, pointing to a possible middle path for negotiating psychological contracts.

5. Conclusions

This study looked at startups from emerging economies at various stages of maturity and in different sectors to explore the influence of psychological contracts on knowledge sharing and the outcomes for individuals and organisations. The study found that psychological contracts significantly influence individual motivations to share knowledge, resulting in greater job satisfaction, commitment to the team and confidence in the company's future than financial agreements. The work environment and relationships between colleagues and immediate superiors were identified as the main reasons for retaining talent, growth policies and gender equity. Mutual support and concern for personal and interpersonal factors were essential for strengthening long-term relationships. The study also identified the need for flexible performance targets, job security and stability and a new category of balanced obligations that emphasise relational aspects, learning opportunities and career development as possible avenues for negotiating psychological contracts. Future research should focus on identifying managerial behaviours and actions that support psychological contracts and knowledge sharing and developing a guide of best practices and scales to measure individuals' willingness to share different types of knowledge. The sample could be expanded to include more gender diversity and age variations to identify cultural differences between generations and multicultural teams, given the advent of today's ease of remote working and hiring foreigners. Such differences could point to new multicultural perspectives that foster psychological contracts with new perspectives.

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