NOVA IMS Information Management School

MDDM

Master's Degree Program in

Data-Driven Marketing

The impact of knowledge sharing between sellers on sales performance

Renilson Silva de Lima

Master Thesis

presented as partial requirement for obtaining a Master's Degree in Data-Driven Marketing

NOVA Information Management School

Instituto Superior de Estatística e Gestão de Informação

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by

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Supervised by

Catarina Paisana Pires Costa das Neves, PhD, NOVA Information Management School

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STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism, any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Rules of Conduct and Code of Honor from the NOVA Information Management School.

Recife, 30/04/2025

Renilson Silva de Lima

ABSTRACT

Contemporary organizations face numerous challenges, with sales force training emerging as a strategic priority. Training sales teams remains a critical task for companies of all sizes — large or small, national or multinational, manufacturers or service providers — especially in the context of a rapidly evolving global economy. Organizations are investing millions of dollars in employee development, with sales training accounting for a significant share of these resources. Consequently, identifying salespeople's skills and competencies, along with establishing structured knowledge-sharing processes, is essential to maximizing sales performance and optimizing sales routines. Building on this perspective, this study examines a sample of 202 salespeople to analyze how individual factors and different dimensions of social capital influence knowledge sharing, and to determine which type of knowledge — tacit or explicit — has a greater positive impact on sales performance. Theoretical and managerial implications are discussed, and directions for future research are proposed.

KEYWORDS

Explicit knowledge; Knowledge sharing; Sales performance; Sales training; Tacit knowledge.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):

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1. INTRODUCTION

Any initiative that an organization adopts to facilitate the sales training process — such as mentoring programs, simulations, or observations — tends to be more beneficial than the absence of training. Thus, there is both a need for and a justification for implementing training programs (Attia et al., 2014). Organizations have been investing millions of dollars in employee training, with sales training accounting for a significant share of these budgets (Tan, Kim & Newman, 2013). However, what truly matters are the characteristics of these training programs — the methods employed and, most importantly, the topics addressed during implementation — rather than the amount of financial resources invested (Román, Ruiz & Luis Munuera, 2002).

Despite these significant investments, a knowledge gap persists regarding which aspects of training programs are truly effective and how they impact not only sales performance but also the daily routines of salespeople. Moreover, most of these programs focus on the transmission of explicit knowledge, with little evidence that this type of knowledge is more decisive for sales success compared to the tacit knowledge already possessed by salespeople. In other words, companies invest heavily in explicit knowledge-based sales training while allocating little or no resources to fostering the sharing of tacit knowledge among salespeople. This raises an important question: is this the most effective strategy?

In the field of knowledge sharing, many studies have explored various influencing factors, such as individual factors and social capital. However, no specific studies have been found examining knowledge sharing among salespeople and its impact on sales performance, highlighting a relevant gap in the literature. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to expand the existing body of knowledge by addressing the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Which factors — individual or related to social capital — affect knowledge sharing among salespeople?

RQ2: Which type of knowledge sharing — tacit or explicit — has a greater positive impact on salesperson performance?

Several factors can influence knowledge sharing. Previous research has consistently emphasized the importance of individual factors in this process (Bock et al., 2005; Constant et al., 1994; Nonaka, I., 1994). Wang and Noe (2010) and McAdam et al. (2007) argue that these factors are significant predictors of knowledge sharing and therefore warrant empirical investigation. Among these individual factors, the following stand out: individual attitude, knowledge self-efficacy, organizational commitment, and enjoyment in helping others. Beyond individual factors, social capital has been widely recognized as influential in the knowledge-sharing process (Gooderham, Minbaeva & Pedersen, 2011; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005;

Wei, Zheng & Zhang, 2011). Social capital has become a crucial catalyst for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, thereby enhancing organizational performance (Yli-Renko, Autio & Sapienza, 2001). According to the literature, social capital enables access to valuable resources, such as new knowledge and innovation-supporting information flowing through social networks (Uzzi, 1997; Burt, 1987), being composed of cognitive, structural, and relational dimensions (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Therefore, our study will be grounded on both individual factors and social capital theory.

Accordingly, this study aims to evaluate how individual factors and different dimensions of social capital affect the sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge among salespeople, as well as to analyze how this knowledge transfer influences sales outcomes. It first contributes to both theory and practice by comparing the two types of knowledge to determine which has a greater impact on sales performance. Second, it deepens the understanding of how knowledge sharing influences sales performance, offering practical insights for companies and sales managers to implement practices that encourage knowledge exchange within sales teams. Finally, it contributes to developing more effective strategies for the allocation of training resources, aiming to enhance sales outcomes.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical framework; Section 3 presents the research model and hypotheses; Section 4 describes the methodology and data collection process; Section 5 presents the results and discussion; and Section 6 concludes the study and offers directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Tacit and explicit knowledge

In organizational settings, knowledge exists in two main forms: tacit and explicit. Understanding and managing both is crucial for fostering innovation, improving processes, and maintaining competitive advantage. Regarding the differences between tacit and explicit knowledge, explicit knowledge refers to "know-what," associated with documented information and data (Gamble, 2020). Explicit knowledge is usually shared in organizations through formal, structured methods that make it easy to access, transfer, and reuse.

On the other hand, tacit knowledge is traditionally understood as "know-how" that resides exclusively in individuals' minds without being formalized into tangible records. Tacit knowledge is typically shared through mentorship, collaboration, and on-the-job training. Organizations often struggle to retain this knowledge when key employees leave, making it important to create systems for knowledge transfer, such as shadowing programs or communities of practice. Compared to the above, the implicit nature of tacit knowledge makes its dissemination particularly challenging, often rendering its effective transfer through systems such as CRM difficult or even impossible. Thus, transferring tacit knowledge requires more than technology; it necessitates building trust-based relationships (Arnett, Wittmann & Hansen, 2021).

2.2. Prior research

Prior studies usually address tacit and explicit knowledge in an individual way, highlighting factors such as individual attitudes, self-efficacy, mutual understanding between departments (such as sales and marketing) and the influence of social capital dimensions. Overall, the methods used include structural equation modeling (SEM), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and literature reviews, with data collected from university professors and companies, including SMEs. Overall, the articles demonstrate that effective knowledge sharing — especially when mediated by strong social relationships — positively impacts performance outcomes and organizational adaptability. **Table 1** presents a summary of academic studies published between 2020 and 2021 that investigate the relationship between knowledge sharing, individual factors, social capital and organizational performance, with an emphasis on sales, marketing and organizational change contexts.

Table 1: Literature Review.

Author	Year	Title	Journal	Keywords	Abstract	Research Questions / Objectives	Data
Dennis B. Arnett, C. Michael Wittmann, João D. Hansen	2021	A process model of tacit knowledge transfer between sales and marketing	Industrial Marketing Management	Sales, Marketing, Sales and marketing interface, Tacit knowledge exchange, Mutual understanding	This article presents and examines a theoretical model that captures the process by which tacit knowledge transfer occurs between the two functions, sales and marketing.	The model highlights the importance of mutual understanding, positioning this variable as the critical axis linking relational antecedents and tacit knowledge transfer between sales and marketing functions.	A total of 261 respondents completed the survey; however, 46 were excluded. Thus, the final sample consisted of 215 respondents.
Hassabelrasul Yusuuf Altom Shihabeldeen, Nahid Osman Ali Babiker, Nazar Omer Abdallah Ahmed	2020	Tacit knowledge sharing: the role of individual factors	Management Science Letters	Strategic assets; Self-efficacy; Competitive advantages	This study focuses on examining the relationship between the individual (individual attitude, organizational commitment, and knowledge self-efficacy) and tacit knowledge sharing.	The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of individual factors on knowledge sharing (KS). The central question: Do individual factors relate to tacit knowledge sharing?	The study distributed 650 questionnaires among professors from public higher education institutions. Of the 650, only 320 were returned.
Jordan R. Gamble	2020	Tacit vs explicit knowledge as antecedents for organizational change	Journal of Organizational Change Management	Tacit knowledge, Explicit knowledge, Organizational knowledge, Knowledge management, Organizational change	This study seeks to conduct an analytical review of seminal and contemporary literature on knowledge management to identify the differences between tacit and explicit knowledge in organizational change.	The objective of this article is to explore the dichotomous role of knowledge through an examination of tacit and explicit knowledge in organizational change contexts.	Literature sources for this review were drawn from 64 articles and books.
Tri Minh Ha and Phuoc Kim Nguyen	2020	Social capital, knowledge sharing and firm performance	Management Science Letters	Knowledge sharing; Firm performance; Social capital	The study demonstrates the association between dimensions of social capital, knowledge sharing, and firm performance.	How do different dimensions of social capital affect tacit and explicit knowledge sharing, and thus lead to better firm performance? This study investigates the systematic relationships between social capital (SC), knowledge sharing (KS), and firm performance, especially in the context of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Vietnam.	700 questionnaires were distributed between November and December 2019, with a response rate of 77.6%, resulting in 543 valid responses.

3. RESEARCH MODEL

As suggested by prior research, knowledge sharing practices may be influenced by a set of internal and external factors. Accordingly, we proposed an holistic model that comprises both individual factors and social capital ones, evaluating its impact in the tacit and explicit knowledge, aiming to explore which type of knowledge sharing is more decisive for sales success. **Figure 1** presents the research model.

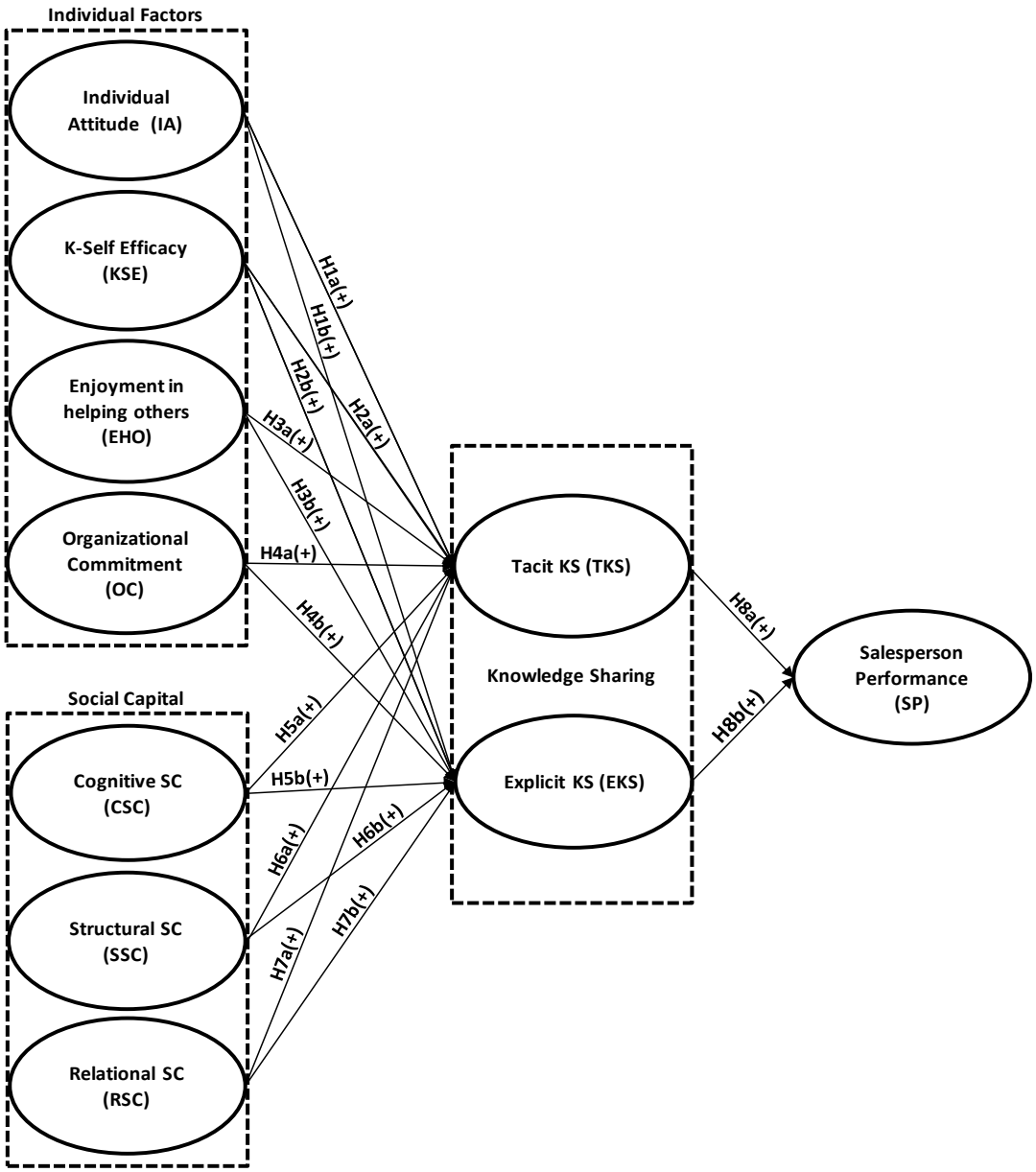

Figure 1: Research Model.

3.1 Hypotheses

As explored in previous studies, this research considers individual factors as key determinants in the knowledge-sharing process. Among the "individual factors" highlighted are individual attitude, defined as the positive feeling toward sharing one's knowledge (Hutchings & Michailova, 2004; Bock et al., 2005; Huang et al., 2006). Attitude has been showed to be a strong predictor of behavior, therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1a: Individual attitude (IA) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing.

H1b: Individual attitude (IA) positively affects the sharing of explicit knowledge.

Another important factor individual is "knowledge self-efficacy," which influences employees' propensity to share their knowledge (Wasko & Faraj, 2005) by fostering the confidence necessary for effective knowledge dissemination. Accordingly, if the employee feels confident in their capacities, it will tend to greatly share its knowledge. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H2a: Knowledge self-efficacy (KSE) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing.

H2b: Knowledge self-efficacy (KSE) positively affects explicit knowledge sharing.

Additionally, the "enjoyment in helping others" variable is considered, related to the concept of altruism, defined by Organ (1988) as discretionary behaviors aimed at assisting colleagues with organizationally relevant tasks or problems. We therefore suggest that if an employee feels enjoyment and satisfaction by helping others, it can easily see knowledge sharing as a way of supporting its colleagues, and therefore positively affecting its knowledge practices. Hence, we hypothesize:

H3a: Enjoyment in helping others (EHO) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing.

H3b: Enjoyment in helping others (EHO) positively affects explicit knowledge sharing.

Organizational commitment also emerges as a significant individual factor influencing knowledge sharing (McKenzie et al., 2001), and for this reason, it is included in the present study. Accordingly, recognizing knowledge sharing as a practice that increases the organization's success and performance, we posit that someone that is committed to its own organization will greatly contribute to knowledge sharing practices. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H4a: Organizational commitment (OC) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing.

H4b: Organizational commitment (OC) positively affects explicit knowledge sharing.

Social capital in an organization refers to the networks of relationships, trust, shared norms, and mutual understanding among employees that enable cooperation and coordination for mutual benefit.. Social capital also plays a significant role in promoting knowledge sharing and creation processes (Ganguly et al., 2019), and is composed of several dimensions. The "cognitive dimension", which encompasses shared values, goals, and visions among organizational members, directly impacts knowledge collection and evaluation (Kogut & Zander, 1996). Common goals and visions further act as linking mechanisms for internal knowledge sharing and the integration of new knowledge (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). Additionally, the literature highlights that the cognitive dimension of social capital significantly fosters knowledge sharing, particularly of more complex knowledge (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H5a: Cognitive Social Capital (CSC positively affects tacit knowledge sharing.

H5b: Cognitive Social Capital (CSC positively affects explicit knowledge sharing.

The "structural dimension" of social capital refers to networks and ties that define access to and support among individuals (Granovetter, 1992). Strong social networks, marked by close and frequent interactions, enhance knowledge transfer (Krackhardt, 1992; Sorenson et al., 2006). Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H6a: Structural Social Capital (SSC) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing.

H6b: Structural Social Capital (SSC) positively affects explicit knowledge sharing.

The "relational dimension" of social capital refers to the level of trust established among individuals through social interactions (Ha & Nguyen, 2020). In the context of knowledge creation and sharing, trust-based relationships play a crucial role (Collins & Hitt, 2006; Holste & Fields, 2010; Nonaka & Von Krogh, 2009).Hence, we hypothesize:

H7a: Relational Social Capital (RSC) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing.

H7b: Relational Social Capital (RSC) positively affects explicit knowledge sharing.

The knowledge-based view identifies tacit and explicit knowledge as key sources of sustained competitive advantage (Felin & Hesterly, 2007). While firms may retain knowledge for value creation, sharing it drives innovation and enhances performance (Gao, He & Wang, 2009). Knowledge sharing through documents, reports, and training initiatives improves customer responsiveness and strengthens firm outcomes (Wang & Wang, 2012), also supporting cost reduction and performance gains (Ganguly et al., 2019). Based on this, we propose the following hypotheses:

H8a: Tacit KS (TKS) positively influences the seller's performance.

H8b: Explicit KS (EKS) positively influences the seller's performance.

Following the development of the research model, the proposed hypotheses will be empirically tested using quantitative methods. Age, gender and sales experience will be used as control variables to preserve the impact of the independente variables.

4. METHODOLOGY

For the quantitative study, an online questionnaire was created, consisting of the items of each construct, and adapted as necessary, as shown in **Table 2**. Most of the questions were measured on a seven-point numerical scale (1-strongly disagree; 7-strongly agree). The questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Portuguese. The questionnaire was reformulated from English to the corresponding language and vice versa, ensuring that all questions had the same meaning (Cha et al., 2007). **Appendix A** contains proof of approval by the Ethics Committee of Universidade NOVA IMS. Finally, a pilot test was carried out with a total of 30 responses, confirming that the items adequately measured the constructs. Therefore, the questionnaire was considered valid and reliable.

Table 2: Measurement.

Construct	Code	Item
Individual Attitude (IA) (Items adapted from Bock et al., 2005)	IA1	Sharing my knowledge with other sales team members is good.
	IA2	Sharing my knowledge with other sales team members is harmful.
	IA3	Sharing my knowledge with other sales team members is a pleasant experience.
	IA4	Sharing my knowledge with other sales team members is valuable to me.
	IA5	Sharing my knowledge with other sales team members is a sensible attitude.
K-Self Efficacy (KSE) (Items adapted from Lin, 2007)	KSE1	I am confident in my ability to provide knowledge that others in my sales team find valuable.
	KSE2	I have the necessary experience to provide valuable knowledge to my sales team.
	KSE3	It really makes no difference whether I share my knowledge with sales colleagues.
	KSE4	Most other salespeople can provide more valuable knowledge than I can.
Enjoyment in Helping Others (EHO) (Items adapted from Lin, 2007)	EHO1	I enjoy sharing my knowledge with sales colleagues.
	EHO2	I like helping sales colleagues by sharing my knowledge.
	EHO3	It feels good to help someone by sharing my knowledge.
	EHO4	Sharing my knowledge with sales colleagues is pleasant.
Organizational Commitment (OC) (Items adapted from Jones et al., 2007)	OC1	I would be willing to change companies if the new job offered a 25% salary increase.
	OC2	I would be willing to change companies if the new job offered more creative freedom.
	OC3	I would be willing to change companies if the new job offered more status.
	OC4	I would be willing to change companies if the new job offered friendlier people.
SC Cognitive (CSC) (Items adapted from Chow & Chang, 2008)	CSC1	My sales colleagues and I always agree on what matters at work.
	CSC2	My sales colleagues and I are interested in pursuing the common goals and missions of the entire organization.
	CSC3	My sales colleagues and I have the same vision and objectives.
SC Relational (RSC) (Items adapted from Chow & Chang, 2008; Nahapiet & Ghosal,	RSC1	I feel connected to my sales colleagues.
	RSC2	I know my sales colleagues try to help me overcome difficulties all the time.
	RSC3	I will trust my sales colleagues when I need help.
	RSC4	I can count on my sales teammates when I need them.
SC Structural (SSC) (Items adapted from Chow & Chang, 2008; Nahapiet & Ghosal,	SSC1	I have a very positive working relationship with my sales colleagues in general.
	SSC2	I am aware of which skills/knowledge/competencies could be useful to which sales colleague.
	SSC3	My sales colleagues know what skills/knowledge/competencies I have.
	SSC4	I am aware of which person on my sales team has the skills/competence/knowledge that is useful to me.
Explicit KS (EKS) (Items adapted from Wang & Wang, 2012; Reychav & Weisberg, 2009)	EKS1	Members of my sales team generally share documents and reports with each other.
	EKS2	Members of my sales team generally share the documents and reports they prepare with each other.
	EKS3	Members of my sales team often collect documents and reports from each other for their work.
	EKS4	Members of my sales team are often motivated by knowledge transfer.
	EKS5	Members of my sales team generally participate in various professional development programs and training activities.
	EKS6	Members of my sales team are supported by IT systems designed for knowledge exchange/sharing.
Tacit KS (TKS) (Items adapted from Wang & Wang, 2008; Reychav & Weisberg, 2009)	TKS1	Members of my sales team often share or transfer experience-based knowledge.
	TKS2	Members of my sales team often acquire knowledge based on other team members' experience.
	TKS3	Members of my sales team often share or transfer practical work routine knowledge.
	TKS4	Members of my sales team often acquire practical work routine knowledge from other team members.
	TKS5	Members of my sales team often share or transfer knowledge related to expertise.
	TKS6	Members of my sales department usually acquire knowledge related to the expertise of other team members.
	TKS7	Members of my sales team are happy to share lessons learned when necessary.
Salesperson Performance (SP) (Items adapted from Jones et al., 2007)	How do you compare yourself to other salespeople who work for your company in terms of...	
	SP1	Contributing to your company securing a good market share.
	SP2	Selling high-margin products.
	SP3	Generating a high level of sales revenue.
	SP4	Quickly generating sales of new company products.
	SP5	Identifying key accounts in your territory and selling to them.
	SP6	Exceeding monthly sales targets.
	SP7	Exceeding annual sales targets.
	SP8	Helping your sales manager achieve their goals.

4.1 Data

Data collection was conducted during March and April 2025. After the data cleaning process and the removal of incomplete responses, the final sample consisted of 202 participants. This number meets the recommended guidelines for PLS-SEM analysis, particularly the rule of having at least ten times as many observations as the number of predictors in the model, and satisfies the requirements for statistical power analysis, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014). Common method bias was evaluated using two methods. The Harman one factor test, in wich no indicator individually explained more than 50% of the variance, and by adding a theoretically irrelevante marker variable that presented a maximum shared variance with the other constructs of 0.052 (5.2%), suggesting no common-method bias.

Table 3 presents the sample characteristics, showing a balanced gender distribution among respondents. Most participants are between 30 and 49 years old (78%), are married (65%), and hold a bachelor's degree (77%). Additionally, all respondents are Brazilian and reside in Brazil, with 98% living in urban areas. Regarding other demographic data, 93% are employed, most earn between R$5.000 and R$15.000 (62%), 72% have extensive sales experience (more than 6 years), and 72% work in the B2B (Business-to-Business) sector. Most participants are employed in the Medical and Hospital Devices sector (58%), followed by the Technology and Software sector (17%) and the Retail sector (13%).

Table 3: Sample characteristics.

Sample characteristics	Descriptive statistics	
Nationality	Brazilian	100%
Country of current residence	Brazil	100%
Type of area where live	Urban area	98%
Gender	Male	50%
	Female	48%
	Others	2%
Age	18 – 29	9%
	30 – 39	41%
	40 – 49	37%
	50 +	13%
Marital status	Married	65%
	Single	21%
	Others	14%
Education level	High school	10%
	Bachelor's degree	77%
	Master's degree	10%
	Doctorate (PhD)	2%
Employment	Employed worker	93%
	Self-employed	7%
Monthly net income (R$)	<=5.000	14%
	>5.000 - 10.000	40%
	>10.000 - 20.000	34%
	>20.000	12%
Sales experience	<=1 year	5%
	2 - 5 years	23%
	6 - 10 years	27%
	11 - 15 years	17%
	16 - 20 years	16%
	>21 years	12%
Sales segment	B2B (Business to Business)	72%
	B2C (Business to Consumer)	22%
	Telesales / Inside sales	4%
	E-commerce	2%
Sales sector	Medical and Hospital Devices	58%
	Technology and Software	17%
	Retail / Storefront	13%
	Others	12%

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To estimate the model proposed in this study, the structural equation modeling approach using partial least squares (PLS-SEM) was adopted. This technique proved to be particularly suitable, as it is widely recommended for evaluating theoretical models that have not yet been empirically validated, as is the case in this exploratory research (Ke et al., 2009). One of the main advantages of the PLS method is that it does not require strict assumptions of data normality, which broadens its applicability across various research contexts (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982). The model was implemented using SmartPLS 4 software. The analytical procedure followed two sequential steps: first, the measurement model was evaluated, followed by the assessment of the structural model.

5.1 Measurement model

Several indicators were analyzed to assess the quality of the measurement model. As shown in **Table 4**, we first evaluated the mean values, highlighting the constructs EHO, IA, and KSE, which presented high means (above 6), indicating positive evaluations by respondents. In contrast, the OC construct showed a low mean (below 4). We then examined the standard deviation, where only the OC construct stood out with a value of 1.7, indicating high variability in responses and significant differences among respondent profiles.

Following that, we assessed the validity and reliability of the constructs using two criteria: composite reliability (CR), which should be above 0.7, and average variance extracted (AVE), which should exceed 0.5. The results confirmed that all constructs are reliable. Still in **Table 4**, and with the aim of ensuring discriminant validity — meaning that constructs are distinct and not measuring the same concept — we applied the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to this method, the square root of a construct's AVE should be greater than its correlations with all other constructs. Based on this criterion, all constructs were validated.

In addition to the Fornell-Larcker approach, we employed two other criteria: the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which should be below 0.9, and the loadings and cross loadings table, which verifies whether each indicator loads more strongly on its own construct than on any other. According to the results shown in **Table 5**, we found that only constructs IA and EHO had a value above 9.9, however the confidence interval was calculated showing an upper limit that did not exceeded 1 — thus, there is no issue with discriminant validity. Moreover, we show in **Table 6** the constructs that were validated in the analysis of loadings and cross-loadings. Finally, six items were excluded: IA2 and KSE4 were removed due to loadings below 0.4, indicating low correlation with their respective constructs; SSC1, EHO2, EKS5 and EKS6 were removed due to issues with discriminant validity.

Table 4: Mean, Standard deviation, CR, AVE and Fornell-Larcker.

	Mean	STD	CR	AVE	CSC	EHO	EKS	IA	KSE	OC	RSC	SP	SSC	TKS
CSC	4.831	1.130	0.886	0.722	**0.850**									
EHO	6.502	0.815	0.932	0.819	0.290	**0.905**								
EKS	4.927	1.339	0.902	0.699	0.481	0.376	**0.836**							
IA	6.402	0.810	0.912	0.721	0.305	0.815	0.353	**0.849**						
KSE	6.214	0.934	0.807	0.592	0.235	0.533	0.320	0.642	**0.769**					
OC	3.392	1.741	0.889	0.669	-0.082	-0.178	-0.145	-0.230	-0.168	**0.818**				
RSC	5.351	1.101	0.929	0.767	0.676	0.381	0.565	0.406	0.239	-0.185	**0.876**			
SP	5.738	0.980	0.948	0.695	0.251	0.355	0.352	0.481	0.553	-0.273	0.296	**0.834**		
SSC	5.599	1.076	0.920	0.793	0.371	0.409	0.570	0.489	0.447	-0.116	0.502	0.547	**0.890**	
TKS	5.671	1.153	0.966	0.828	0.387	0.403	0.719	0.476	0.376	-0.326	0.592	0.528	0.614	**0.910**

Note: Social capital cognitive (CSC); Enjoyment in helping others (EHO); Explicit knowledge sharing (EKS); Individual attitude (IA); Knowledge-self efficacy (KSE) (KSE); Organizational commitment (OC); Social capital relational (RSC); Salesperson performance (SP); social capital structural (SSC); Tacit knowledge sharing (TKS).

Table 5: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio.

	CSC	EHO	EKS	IA	KSE	OC	RSC	SP	SSC	TKS
CSC										
EHO	0.341									
EKS	0.558	0.419								
IA	0.359	**0.938**	0.386							
KSE	0.305	0.702	0.414	0.819						
OC	0.124	0.226	0.165	0.294	0.270					
RSC	0.784	0.425	0.635	0.443	0.288	0.222				
SP	0.282	0.386	0.384	0.502	0.686	0.335	0.321			
SSC	0.435	0.462	0.652	0.534	0.568	0.149	0.565	0.602		
TKS	0.427	0.431	0.795	0.502	0.459	0.337	0.632	0.551	0.668	

Note: Social capital cognitive (CSC); Enjoyment in helping others (EHO); Explicit knowledge sharing (EKS); Individual attitude (IA); Knowledge-self efficacy (KSE) (KSE); Organizational commitment (OC); Social capital relational (RSC); Salesperson performance (SP); social capital structural (SSC); Tacit knowledge sharing (TKS).

Table 6: Loadings and cross-loadings.

	CSC	EHO	EKS	IA	KSE	OC	RSC	SP	SSC	TKS
CSC1	**0.819**	0.184	0.332	0.206	0.183	0.008	0.461	0.168	0.201	0.251
CSC2	**0.842**	0.346	0.375	0.370	0.246	-0.051	0.651	0.244	0.428	0.339
CSC3	**0.886**	0.210	0.493	0.208	0.176	-0.137	0.595	0.221	0.304	0.377
EHO1	0.298	**0.910**	0.362	0.734	0.534	-0.149	0.357	0.365	0.354	0.385
EHO3	0.251	**0.879**	0.293	0.752	0.464	-0.163	0.331	0.313	0.338	0.311
EHO4	0.238	**0.926**	0.358	0.733	0.449	-0.172	0.345	0.285	0.414	0.391
EKS1	0.453	0.377	**0.892**	0.390	0.355	-0.186	0.524	0.344	0.491	0.657
EKS2	0.403	0.328	**0.879**	0.251	0.245	-0.066	0.454	0.285	0.466	0.595
EKS3	0.329	0.220	**0.836**	0.214	0.219	-0.160	0.378	0.251	0.374	0.595
EKS4	0.402	0.304	**0.727**	0.298	0.232	-0.075	0.506	0.281	0.550	0.547
IA1	0.284	0.561	0.365	**0.831**	0.627	-0.140	0.407	0.572	0.539	0.500
IA3	0.262	0.806	0.322	**0.915**	0.562	-0.221	0.389	0.411	0.455	0.405
IA4	0.288	0.788	0.267	**0.863**	0.480	-0.211	0.298	0.318	0.346	0.327
IA5	0.187	0.650	0.204	**0.781**	0.468	-0.230	0.241	0.249	0.245	0.338
KSE1	0.280	0.493	0.322	0.625	**0.907**	-0.112	0.298	0.536	0.460	0.382
KSE2	0.046	0.351	0.185	0.470	**0.809**	-0.121	0.064	0.482	0.368	0.258
KSE3	0.172	0.368	0.204	0.330	**0.546**	-0.182	0.132	0.197	0.138	0.185
OC1	-0.104	-0.203	-0.123	-0.233	-0.262	**0.696**	-0.205	-0.316	-0.214	-0.190
OC2	-0.051	-0.140	-0.128	-0.179	-0.113	**0.907**	-0.127	-0.187	-0.055	-0.300
OC3	-0.118	-0.193	-0.067	-0.244	-0.139	**0.768**	-0.152	-0.281	-0.083	-0.159
OC4	-0.038	-0.103	-0.139	-0.153	-0.090	**0.882**	-0.149	-0.185	-0.069	-0.348
RSC1	0.593	0.381	0.479	0.379	0.211	-0.274	**0.825**	0.345	0.376	0.555
RSC2	0.543	0.280	0.542	0.316	0.151	-0.090	**0.855**	0.195	0.496	0.531
RSC3	0.620	0.346	0.469	0.374	0.247	-0.134	**0.906**	0.280	0.457	0.494
RSC4	0.611	0.325	0.479	0.351	0.234	-0.149	**0.913**	0.213	0.424	0.483
SP1	0.300	0.458	0.343	0.533	0.535	-0.238	0.328	**0.806**	0.531	0.440
SP2	0.218	0.323	0.335	0.418	0.490	-0.239	0.282	**0.869**	0.453	0.493
SP3	0.145	0.285	0.253	0.402	0.498	-0.240	0.200	**0.895**	0.386	0.402
SP4	0.235	0.255	0.364	0.347	0.383	-0.153	0.246	**0.774**	0.542	0.514
SP5	0.202	0.211	0.266	0.360	0.449	-0.204	0.214	**0.812**	0.458	0.401
SP6	0.190	0.261	0.252	0.349	0.441	-0.228	0.254	**0.850**	0.455	0.410
SP7	0.150	0.221	0.190	0.359	0.414	-0.253	0.195	**0.835**	0.381	0.383
SP8	0.219	0.339	0.311	0.430	0.470	-0.269	0.242	**0.820**	0.422	0.445
SSC2	0.329	0.357	0.473	0.443	0.422	-0.058	0.415	0.473	**0.894**	0.511
SSC3	0.328	0.342	0.527	0.406	0.404	-0.090	0.415	0.478	**0.892**	0.540
SSC4	0.335	0.392	0.519	0.457	0.372	-0.157	0.507	0.509	**0.886**	0.584
TKS2	0.337	0.393	0.681	0.437	0.304	-0.239	0.515	0.455	0.568	**0.891**
TKS3	0.385	0.355	0.678	0.435	0.336	-0.330	0.586	0.469	0.557	**0.932**
TKS4	0.316	0.286	0.654	0.377	0.288	-0.298	0.464	0.477	0.484	**0.909**
TKS5	0.357	0.367	0.689	0.408	0.382	-0.297	0.567	0.485	0.556	**0.934**
TKS6	0.298	0.354	0.667	0.413	0.363	-0.294	0.501	0.485	0.541	**0.930**
TKS7	0.407	0.436	0.562	0.516	0.371	-0.315	0.581	0.504	0.629	**0.861**

Note: Social capital cognitive (CSC); Enjoyment in helping others (EHO); Explicit knowledge sharing (EKS); Individual attitude (IA); Knowledge-self efficacy (KSE) (KSE); Organizational commitment (OC); Social capital relational (RSC); Salesperson performance (SP); social capital structural (SSC); Tacit knowledge sharing (TKS).

5.2 Structural model

Multicollinearity among the constructs was assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF). All VIF values were below the critical threshold of 5, indicating no multicollinearity issues, as recommended by Hair et al. (2021). **Figure 2** presents the path coefficients, whose significance was evaluated through bootstrapping with 5.000 resampling iterations (Hair et al., 2021). The model explains 55.2% of the variance in tacit knowledge sharing (TKS), 48.5% in explicit knowledge sharing (EKS), and 37.0% in salesperson performance (SP).

Regarding the impact of individual factors on knowledge sharing (tacit and explicit), only four hypotheses were statistically significant: H1b ($\hat{\beta}$ = -0.214, $p < 0.1$), H2b ($\hat{\beta}$ = 0.133, $p < 0.1$), H3b ($\hat{\beta}$ = 0.210, $p < 0.05$), and H4a ($\hat{\beta}$ = -0.193, $p < 0.01$). H1b and H4a exhibited negative effects, contradicting the proposed hypotheses and thus were not supported, while H2b and H3b showed positive effects, providing support for the corresponding hypotheses. Concerning the influence of social capital on knowledge sharing (tacit and explicit), five hypotheses were found to be statistically significant: H5b ($\hat{\beta}$ = 0.160, $p < 0.05$), H6a ($\hat{\beta}$ = 0.355, $p < 0.01$), H6b ($\hat{\beta}$ = 0.356, $p < 0.01$), H7a ($\hat{\beta}$ = 0.351, $p < 0.01$), and H7b ($\hat{\beta}$ = 0.248, $p < 0.01$). All demonstrated positive effects, thereby confirming the respective hypotheses. Finally, in analyzing the impact of knowledge sharing (tacit and explicit) on sales performance, only one hypothesis was statistically significant: H8a ($\hat{\beta}$ = 0.565, $p < 0.01$), which had a positive effect, thus supporting the hypothesis. In summary, of the sixteen hypotheses tested, eight were statistically supported, while the remaining eight were not, either due to a lack of statistical significance or the presence of effects opposite to those proposed, as detailed in **Table 7**.

Table 7: Hypotheses Results.

Hypotheses
H1a: Individual Attitude (IA) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing. **(Not supported – lack of significance)**
H1b: Individual Attitude (IA) positively affects the sharing of explicit knowledge. **(Not supported – opposite effect)**
H2a: K-Self Efficacy (KSE) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing. **(Not supported – lack of significance)**
H2b: K-Self Efficacy (KSE) positively affects explicit knowledge sharing. **(Supported. $\hat{\beta}$ = 0.133, $p < 0.1$))**
H3a: Enjoyment in helping others (EHO positively affects tacit knowledge sharing. **(Not supported – lack of significance)**
H3b: Enjoyment in helping others (EHO positively affects explicit knowledge sharing. **(Supported. $\hat{\beta}$ = 0.210, $p < 0.05$)**
H4a: Organizational Commitment (OC) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing. **(Not supported – opposite effect)**
H4b: Organizational Commitment (OC) positively affects explicit knowledge sharing. **(Not supported – lack of significance)**
H5a: Cognitive Social Capital (CSC positively affects tacit knowledge sharing. **(Not supported – lack of significance)**
H5b: Cognitive Social Capital (CSC positively affects explicit knowledge sharing. **(Supported. $\hat{\beta}$ = 0.160, $p < 0.05$)**
H6a: Structural SC (SSC) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing. **(Supported. $\hat{\beta}$ = 0.355, $p < 0.01$)**
H6b: Structural SC (SSC) positively affects explicit knowledge sharing. **(Supported. $\hat{\beta}$ = 0.356, $p < 0.01$)**
H7a: Relational SC (RSC) positively affects tacit knowledge sharing. **(Supported. $\hat{\beta}$ = 0.351, $p < 0.01$)**
H7b: Relational SC (RSC) positively affects explicit knowledge sharing. **(Supported. $\hat{\beta}$ = 0.248, $p < 0.01$)**
H8a: Tacit KS (TKS) positively influences the seller's performance. (**Supported. $\hat{\beta}$ = 0.565, $p < 0.01$)**
H8b: Explicit KS (EKS) positively influences the seller's performance. **(Not supported – lack of significance)**

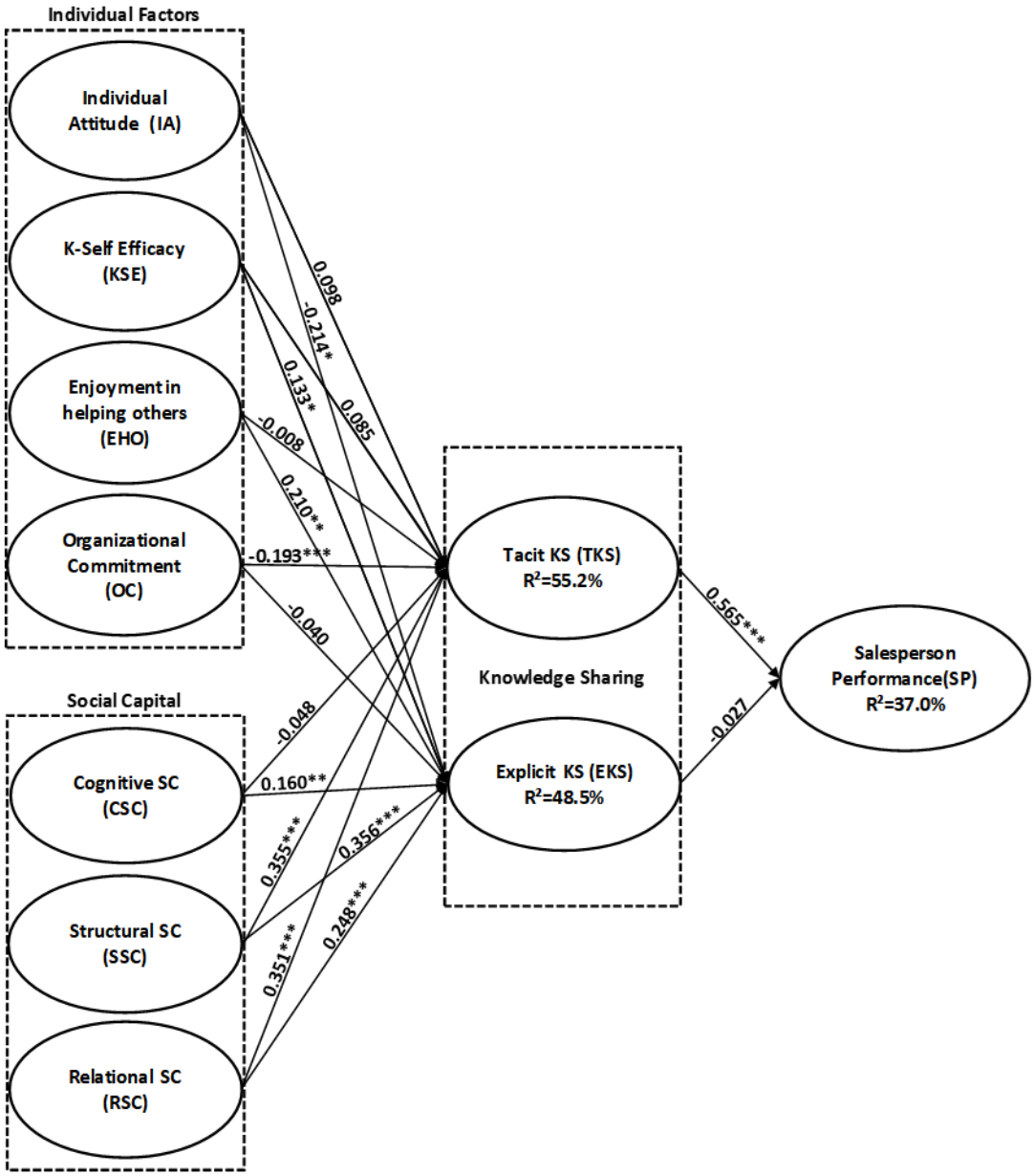

Figure 2: Structural model

Nota: ***p<0.01; **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

5.3 Discussion

Given the growing relevance of training strategies for sales forces, there is also an increasing need to understand the role of knowledge sharing among salespeople and its impact on commercial outcomes. Thus, using a quantitative approach, this study examined individual and social capital-related factors that influence the sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge, as well as the consequent impact on sales performance. To the best of our knowledge, this is one of the few studies that, using a quantitative model, addresses this topic in an integrated manner.

5.3.1. Theoretical implications

Regarding the factors that influence knowledge sharing, individual factors showed no relevance to the sharing of tacit knowledge, except for Organizational Commitment, which was statistically significant but with a negative effect, thus not supporting the proposed hypothesis. A possible explanation for this result is that salespeople with low organizational commitment may not perceive risks in sharing their tacit knowledge — which is unique and personal — as internal competitiveness loses relevance. In this scenario, the salesperson may relinquish maintaining internal competitive advantages and share their expertise more freely.

The variables individual attitude, knowledge self-efficacy, and enjoyment in helping others did not have their hypotheses supported, suggesting that individual factors are not relevant for tacit knowledge transfer among salespeople — a finding that contradicts much of the previous literature. Commercial competitiveness may explain this divergence, given that most prior studies focused on general audiences or departments outside the commercial area. Even with a positive attitude, self-confidence, and willingness to help others, salespeople may choose to retain tacit knowledge, viewing it as a competitive advantage that is difficult for others to replicate.

Regarding competitiveness, Spence and Helmreich (1983) define it as the pleasure derived from interpersonal competition and the desire to win and outperform others. This trait is significant in sales, which is considered one of the most competitive professions in the corporate world (Schrock et al., 2016). Specifically, sales organizations traditionally stimulate rivalry among salespeople through individual incentives and practices such as sales contests (Kalra & Shi, 2001), incentive programs (Boichuk et al., 2019), and performance-based awards and bonuses (Steenburgh & Ahearne, 2012). Promotional activities aimed at stimulating sales teams, whether internal or external, may include sales incentive programs, monetary and non-monetary awards (such as cars, televisions, smartphones), travel, experiences, trophies, and plaques of recognition (Yanaze, 2021, p. 437). In coopetitive environments, where forces of collaboration and competition coexist, the propensity to collaborate tends to be lower compared to purely collaborative environments (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001). Therefore, even when individual factors are present, a strong competitive culture may lead salespeople to refrain from sharing their tacit knowledge. However, when organizational commitment decreases, knowledge sharing may occur as internal competitiveness becomes less relevant to the individual.

Regarding the sharing of explicit knowledge, individual factors were found to be more relevant. The hypotheses related to knowledge self-efficacy and enjoyment in helping others were supported, indicating that salespeople with greater self-confidence and pleasure in helping others tend to share explicit knowledge, possibly because it is considered standardized and not seen as a competitive advantage. Organizational commitment did not have its hypothesis supported, suggesting that organizational commitment does not significantly interfere with the exchange of this type of knowledge.

One particularly notable finding concerns the variable individual attitude, which showed statistical significance but a negative effect, thus contradicting the initial hypothesis. This result reflects the attitude-behavior paradox. Several studies in psychology have highlighted this gap, demonstrating that attitudes do not always translate into behaviors (Schwartz, 1978). Skitka (2014) defines attitude as a strong belief about what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, reflecting fundamental moral convictions. Thus, even recognizing that knowledge sharing is the "right" behavior, salespeople may be influenced by contextual factors — such as competitiveness — and decide not to act in accordance with their attitudes.

Regarding social capital, it proved highly relevant for the sharing of both types of knowledge. The hypothesis related to cognitive social capital (cognitive SC) was not supported for tacit knowledge sharing, suggesting that the similarity of goals and visions among salespeople is not sufficient to stimulate the transfer of deeply embedded knowledge. In contrast, for explicit knowledge, cognitive SC showed a positive influence, consistent with the fact that this type of knowledge is more institutionalized and less individually protected.

The dimensions structural social capital and relational social capital proved influential in the transfer of both types of knowledge, with a stronger effect on tacit knowledge sharing. This reinforces previous studies that emphasize the importance of social relationships and interaction-fostering structures as fundamental for creating bonds and facilitating knowledge transfer, particularly tacit knowledge. This finding is unsurprising, given that social capital is widely recognized as a critical factor for knowledge sharing and creation processes (Ganguly et al., 2019). Social capital enables the correct interpretation of others' knowledge, promotes an environment of mutual respect and trust (Akhavan & Mahdi Hosseini, 2016; Van den Hooff & Huysman, 2009), and is considered a powerful organizational resource by fostering interactions necessary for collective actions (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). Strong social ties, therefore, may mitigate the competitive spirit and create a more favorable environment for knowledge sharing.

Regarding the impact on sales performance, only tacit knowledge sharing had its hypothesis supported, reinforcing that tacit knowledge represents a true competitive differentiator. Thus, it is suggested that companies aiming to enhance their commercial performance should prioritize the strengthening of social capital as a strategy to foster tacit knowledge sharing among their sales teams.

5.3.2. Practical implications

The study has several practical implications. First, the findings suggest that organizations seeking to improve tacit knowledge sharing among salespeople should shift their focus away from individual traits and instead strengthen structural and relational social capital. In highly competitive sales environments, individual attitudes or willingness to help are often overpowered by internal rivalry and the personal value attached to tacit knowledge. Since salespeople may perceive their tacit knowledge as a unique competitive advantage, it is critical

to create conditions that foster trust, frequent informal interactions, and strong interpersonal relationships. Managers can promote these dynamics by designing collaborative routines, encouraging mentorship, facilitating cross-functional interactions, and recognizing team-based achievements rather than purely individual performance. These actions help reduce internal competitiveness and cultivate a knowledge-sharing culture rooted in mutual respect and shared goals.

In contrast, explicit knowledge sharing appears to be more influenced by individual factors such as self-efficacy and enjoyment in helping others, since this type of knowledge is seen as less proprietary. Organizations should invest in building employees' confidence to contribute and in creating mechanisms that make helping behavior rewarding and visible. However, the unexpected negative impact of individual attitude on explicit knowledge sharing highlights the need to address contextual barriers, such as perceived competition or cultural contradictions. To support knowledge sharing at all levels, companies should integrate values of cooperation into incentive systems and provide social platforms that facilitate open communication. Ultimately, by enhancing social capital and aligning organizational practices with collaborative values, firms can improve the knowledge transfer — with tangible benefits for team cohesion and commercial performance.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study demonstrated that knowledge sharing among salespeople has a differentiated impact on commercial performance, with tacit knowledge emerging as the main factor associated with improved sales outcomes. Individual factors showed low influence on tacit knowledge transfer, reinforcing the idea that the inherent competitiveness of the sales environment may inhibit this process. In contrast, social capital proved to be a key element, particularly through its structural and relational dimensions, by fostering bonds of trust and facilitating the exchange of experiences. These findings highlight the need for companies to develop strategic actions aimed at strengthening social capital among salespeople, such as mentorship programs, experience-sharing forums, and incentives for collaborative work. Such initiatives can reduce internal competitive barriers and promote the dissemination of critical knowledge essential for commercial success. Furthermore, this study provides a solid foundation for future research on the dynamics of knowledge sharing in sales environments, contributing to the development of more collaborative and high-performing sales teams.

6.1 Limitations and Future Research

One of the main limitations of this study lies in the fact that the quantitative survey was mostly answered by salespeople from the B2B segment (72%) and the Medical and Hospital Devices sector (58%), which may not fully represent the general opinion of sales professionals. Therefore, different motivations could have emerged from a more diverse set of respondents. Additionally, the study collected responses from only one country, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Thus, future research could explore cross-country comparisons, for which the authors encourage the inclusion of cultural factors. Finally, it is important to highlight that knowledge sharing among salespeople may be influenced by other psychological and organizational cultural factors, such as commercial competitiveness and the attitude-behavior gap — topics we discussed as potential explanations for the results, but which were not formally included in this study. Nevertheless, the focus remained on the impact of tacit and explicit knowledge transfer among salespeople on commercial performance, for which we believe this research provides relevant findings and contributions.

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APPENDIX A

This is to certify that
Project No.: **DDMKT2025-2-218356**
Project Title: **IMPACTO DO COMPARTILHAMENTO DE CONHECIMENTO ENTRE OS VENDEDORES NA PERFORMANCE DE VENDAS**
Principal Researcher: **Renilson Silva de Lima**

according to the regulations of the Ethics Committee of NOVA IMS and MagIC Research Center this project was considered to meet the requirements of the NOVA IMS Internal Review Board, being considered **APPROVED** on 2/21/2025.

It is the Principal Researcher's responsibility to ensure that all researchers and stakeholders associated with this project are aware of the conditions of approval and which documents have been approved.

The Principal Researcher is required to notify the Ethics Committee, via amendment or progress report, of
- Any significant change to the project and the reason for that change;
- Any unforeseen events or unexpected developments that merit notification;
- The inability of the Principal Researcher to continue in that role or any other change in research personnel involved in the project.

Lisbon, 2/21/2025

NOVA IMS Ethics Committee
ethicscommittee@novaims.unl.pt

NOVA Information Management School
Instituto Superior de Estatística e Gestão de Informação

Universidade Nova de Lisboa