Culturally diverse teams and inter-organizational knowledge sharing behavior: The role of perceived morality and relationship orientation

Mai Nguyen [a,b,*], Piyush Sharma [c], Russel Kingshott [c], Ashish Malik [d]

[a] *Department of Marketing, Griffith University, 170 Kessels Road, QLD 4111, Australia*
[b] *Centre of Science and Technology Research and Development, Thuongmai University, Viet nam*
[c] *School of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business and Law, Curtin University, Bentley, WA 6102, Australia*
[d] *Queen's University Belfast, 185 Stranmillis Road, Belfast, UK*

A B S T R A C T

This paper draws on social exchange and social capital theories to explore knowledge-sharing behavior with culturally diverse teams from business-to-business (B2B) partners. We use two experimental studies to examine the direct effects of cultural diversity between B2B partners and its indirect effects through perceived morality on their knowledge-sharing behavior, along with the moderating effect of B2B relationship orientation on the link between cultural diversity and their KSB. Using a behavioral measure of knowledge-sharing behavior, this paper extends the B2B relationships literature by highlighting the value that intercultural relationships bring to these relationships. In addition, the results provide managers with a range of strategies in managing culturally diverse teams, such as leveraging their B2B relationship orientation directed towards culturally diverse teams from partner firms to improve knowledge sharing with them.

1. Introduction

Knowledge-sharing behavior (KSB) refers to the exchange of information and knowledge between business-to-business (B2B) partner firms (Loebbecke, Van Fenema, & Powell, 2016). In B2B settings, knowledge sharing is a crucial factor facilitating B2B transactions, particularly in those relationships based on social exchange (Kingshott, 2006; Murphy & Sashi, 2018; Rungsithong & Meyer, 2020). However, not all B2B employees are willing to share core information and knowledge outside of their firms, primarily due to the associated risks of B2B knowledge sharing, which include the potential loss of intellectual property, as well as the shared information being misused or shared with unauthorized parties (Jia, Cai, & Xu, 2014; Nguyen, Malik, & Budhwar, 2022). Past studies in this area primarily focus on intra-organizational knowledge sharing in B2B firms, wherein employees in the same firm share knowledge (e.g., Malik, Froese, & Sharma, 2020; Malik, Sinha, & Blumenfeld, 2012). However, KSB between B2B firms needs more attention (Nguyen, 2021). This gap is critical to understand as recent discussions on team diversity and inclusion, which must include aspects of communication, have dominated the literature (Khan & Kalra, 2022). Yet, little research has focused on the cultural diversity of teams within

B2B settings, mainly how they engage with one another. Thus, in response to this special issue (SI) call for papers (Kingshott & Sharma, 2022), this paper explores the impact of culturally diverse teams in sharing information with their B2B partner firms.

While research has examined how organizational culture and decision-making are affected by team diversity, there needs to be more focus on how culturally diverse teams can impact how B2B partner employees view the partner firm and their willingness to engage in KSB. This issue is particularly significant for B2B partners in cross-national relationships. This is mainly because they frequently need to make crucial decisions based on their intercultural interactions with members of their international B2B partner firms (Kingshott, Chung, Putranta, Sharma, & Sima, 2021). Thus, B2B firms operating in diverse cultural contexts need to understand the impact of the cultural diversity of their workforce in nurturing their B2B relationships. However, B2B literature has not examined how cultural diversity can shape the relationships between B2B partners despite its importance. Additionally, to our knowledge, the effects of B2B relationship orientation on the link between culturally diverse teams and information sharing directed towards the partner firm have yet to be examined in the extant B2B literature. B2B relationship orientation refers to the boundary-spanning

* Corresponding author at: Department of Marketing, Griffith University, 170 Kessels Road, QLD 4111, Australia.
E-mail addresses: m.nguyen2@griffith.edu.au, maidhtm@tmu.edu.vn (M. Nguyen), piyush.sharma@curtin.edu.au (P. Sharma), r.kingshott@curtin.edu.au (R. Kingshott), a.malik@qub.ac.uk (A. Malik).

employee's beliefs about the nature of relationship-building activities by their B2B partners – which can have a distinct relational or transactional orientation (Kingshott et al., 2021). Typically, relational and transactional orientations have been examined as two different approaches but have not been viewed as the poles of the same construct, namely, B2B relationship orientation. We explore this in more detail in this paper.

This paper has three specific research objectives: 1) to investigate the impact of team cultural diversity of B2B partners on KSB, 2) to examine the mediating role of perceived morality on the relationship between a team's cultural diversity and its KSB, and 3) to explore the moderating effect of B2B relationship orientation on the link between the cultural diversity of a team and its KSB. Specifically, we draw upon the Social Exchange Theory (SET: Thibaut & Kelly, 1959) and the Social Capital Theory (SCT: Coleman, 1988) to formulate our conceptual model. To investigate the research questions, we conducted two online experiments that focused on a B2B sales situation in which a salesperson was confronted with a buying team of a B2B partner company.

This paper contributes to scholarly discourse, in a number of ways. First, we draw on these theories to help explore B2B relationships and knowledge-sharing dynamics in the context of intercultural interactions. This theoretical framework allows us to explore the views of culturally diverse employees' perceptions and behaviors, and how that impacts the B2B partnership. Second, we bridge a significant gap by examining the process by which B2B partner employees construct impressions of perceived morality within the B2B relationship. This practical dimension also addresses an essential gap in the B2B knowledge-sharing literature, paving the way for a deeper understanding of how these impressions influence knowledge sharing behavior in B2B relationships.

Third, our research extends the existing B2B literature by illuminating how employees within B2B partnerships perceive and engage with the constructs of social exchange and social capital in the presence of cultural diversity. This contribution is crucial given the growing significance of diverse teams in business environments. Accordingly, we highlight the critical importance of understanding how culturally diverse teams influence information-sharing behaviors, which becomes particularly pertinent in light of recent ethical concerns exemplified by cases like Facebook's unauthorized use of facial recognition software (Khan & Kalra, 2022). This underscores the potential influence of 'culturally diverse employees' in shaping perceptions about an organization, its practices, and the manner these employees interact with their B2B partner counterparts.

Fourth, our study sheds light on the role that the morality dimension plays within B2B relationships. A notable practical contribution is investigating how culturally diverse teams impact partner firms' perceived morality and subsequent influence on knowledge sharing. This is in response to the increasing scrutiny of B2B firms' moral obligations and ethical behavior, an aspect emphasized by stakeholders and partners alike (Khan & Pond, 2020). This is important when unethical business practices such as Facebook's use of unauthorized facial recognition software illuminate the potential role and impact of 'culturally diverse employees' in helping shape opinions about an organization (Khan & Kalra, 2022). We bring attention to moral convictions, demonstrating their malleability and susceptibility to firm-specific factors, and propose a direct link between perceived morality and knowledge-sharing activities within B2B partnerships.

Finally, our study delves into the role that B2B relationship orientation plays in terms of its association with culturally diverse teams and their knowledge-sharing behaviors. By exploring how diverse teams might influence psychological contracts and behavior within B2B relationships (Kingshott et al., 2021), we offer practical insights into enhancing relationship dynamics in B2B partnerships. This aspect underscores the multifaceted nature of B2B relationships and their psychological underpinnings, providing actionable insights for cultivating effective partnerships in culturally diverse settings.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Culturally diverse teams

The variations in performance between diverse teams and their homogeneous counterparts have been the subject of much research (e.g., Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Joshi & Roh, 2009). We extend this to encompass culturally diverse teams within the context of B2B relationships. Culturally diverse teams are depicted herein to comprise several persons from various cultural backgrounds. One or more of those team members may or may not be from the same culture as a member of the partner firm with whom the team is interacting. We posit that cultural diversity within a team is an essential relational aspect that B2B partnerships need to consider, specifically because culturally diverse teams are critical to building relationships in multicultural operational environments. Regarding team results and performance, cultural diversity within and across firms presents both risks and opportunities. However, researchers studying the relationship between diversity (but not culture) and performance have typically concluded that the connection could be more straightforward.

In some instances, diverse teams do better than homogeneous teams by contributing a wider variety of knowledge and experience to the group, whereas in other situations, homogeneous teams perform better by avoiding disputes and communication issues (Joshi & Roh, 2009). When handled well, team diversity can produce substantial operational synergy. Still, when handled poorly, it can be a hindrance because it can lead to intra-group conflict, misunderstandings, and a lack of trust (Joshi & Roh, 2009). Since intercultural interactions potentially lead to variations in relational expectations between parties (e.g., Sharma, Tam, & Kim, 2009), one might anticipate some aspects of this variance inherent within B2B relationships involving culturally diverse teams. However, by recognizing and embracing such diversity, B2B decision-makers can leverage the positive aspects of the B2B relationship to the advantage of both individuals and partner firms.

Typically, surface-level diversity refers to demographic disparities like age, sex, or color. In contrast, deep-level diversity refers to differences in human qualities, such as peculiar attitudes, values, and preferences (Khan & Kalra, 2022). The degree to which team members' functional backgrounds differ is a third type of diversity known as functional diversity (Khan & Kalra, 2022). The fundamental presumption is that varied available backgrounds lead to information and expertise that overlap are separate, giving team members a more significant knowledge base to draw from when making decisions and acting (Khan & Kalra, 2022). Finally, the degree to which team members of B2B partners communicate information, ideas, knowledge, and experiences, introduces novel ways of thinking to help employees in B2B contexts generate fresh ideas and enhance relationships (Loebbecke et al., 2016).

Social capital theory (SCT: Coleman, 1988) can help explain why employees share knowledge with B2B partners, given that social capital in relationships can be used as a potential resource to benefit people and/or the company. Social capital, also known as group membership, is the accumulation of all existing or potential resources connected to having a long-lasting network of more or less formalized links of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The dyadic interaction between B2B providers and their partner firms is what we describe as this "group membership" in these situations. Furthermore, we assert that the relationship capital in the dyad will strengthen all of the relationships these businesses have with B2B partners because of the intrinsic value of establishing enduring social and personal ties and the potential role that this could play as a business partner's social capital (Kingshott et al., 2021; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018).

2.2. Team diversity

Team diversity comprises surface-level or deep-level differences (Van Knippenberg & Mell, 2016) between teams. The surface-level

variety refers to variations in perceptible, pervasive, and unchangeable traits, often expressed in physical characteristics like age, gender, race and ethnicity (Khan & Kalra, 2022). On the other hand, deep-level diversity refers to differences in attitudes, expertise, views, and personalities that are typically difficult to notice without much interaction (Khan & Kalra, 2022). Prior studies have concentrated on how various forms of diversity affect a team's performance and how others perceive the team (Shin, Kim, Lee, & Bian, 2012). For instance, teams with deep-level variety are better at problem-solving, creativity, and invention (Hoever, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, & Barkema, 2010). They are also more coordinated and adept at finishing repetitive tasks (Leroy, Buengeler, Veestraeten, Shemla, & Hoever, 2022), and thus, a source of value within B2B relationships.

By contrast, results on surface-level diversity are contradictory. Some scholars show surface-level diversity can lead to negative attitudes towards people who are different from oneself, which can negatively impact team performance (Judge & Ferris, 1993); while others find that performance is unaffected by surface-level diversity and that, depending on the context, it may even have positive effects (Webber & Donahue, 2001). There are two reasons why surface-level diversity is essential to examining how other B2B partners view a team (Khan & Kalra, 2022). First, B2B partners may easily perceive disparities in age, gender, and race because they are the most frequently examined and identifiable demographics in businesses. Second, it is widely accepted that surface-level variations serve as the first proxies for deep-level differences. For instance, it has been demonstrated that group members who share superficial characteristics (such as gestures and skin color) are more likely to feel that they share psychological characteristics at a deeper level. Typically, it was anticipated that a group of imaginary green characters would be more similar and have shared traits than fictional characters of different colors (Ip, Chiu, & Wan, 2006). Similarly, Lakens and Stel (2011) discovered that two women were viewed as more cohesive and capable of behaving as one when they waved their hands simultaneously rather than separately at the camera. These studies indicate that people quickly infer deeper-level similarities or differences directly from superficial similarities and disparities.

2.3. B2B relationship orientation

To better understand relationship marketing in a B2B context, the link between firms can be viewed through the lens of social exchange theory (e.g., SET: Homans, 1958; Thibaut & Kelly, 1959). Examining relationships from the vantage of SET is essential to better appreciate the individuals' role in building and nurturing robust relationships between firms. By analyzing B2B relationship orientation between firms and their partner firms, our research adds to this body of existing literature. SET is based on moral obligations, natural reciprocity, and interdependence through socialization between parties, our research interprets these connections as critical elements inherent within the B2B relationship (Kingshott, 2006).

Typically, a psychological contract is an essential component of social exchange theory, as it helps to explain how people develop and maintain social relationships (Kingshott et al., 2021). Such contracts represent the implicit agreement between individuals regarding what they perceive they will give to and receive from the other party within the relationship, which is also essential for social exchange (Kingshott et al., 2021). Decision-makers in B2B relationships will, therefore, act to optimize favorably and limit unfavorable relational outcomes from the standpoint of social exchange (Cortez & Johnston, 2020). Under the lens of SCT, the parties have something good to look forward to from being in the relationship because of the psychological contract's inherent features of future exchange. As previously discussed, recent research suggests psychological contracts are essential intrinsic components of B2B interactions that affect the relationship (Kingshott, Gaur, Sharma, Yap, & Kucherenko, 2020). They are, therefore, strongly associated with social exchange-based relationships since psychological contracts are

ingrained in close relationships that entail high levels of participation and interaction between the parties (Kingshott et al., 2021). Furthermore, psychological contracts facilitate the formation of attitudes and behaviors and connections between parties to create cross-party reciprocal obligations (Johnston, 2020).

Relational orientation is depicted herein as a good state of affairs in which the individual's, group's, and community's needs and ambitions are met (Kingshott et al., 2021; Prilleltensky, 2005). Under the lens of SET, the obligations will take the form of transactional and relational elements of the contract, collectively depicted as individual beliefs shaped by the organization regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and that organization (Kingshott, Sharma, Sima, & Wong, 2020). Decision-makers within B2B firms may 'draught' these contracts directed towards their B2B partners, and these anticipated forms of future commitments will not only enhance the relationship's overall perceived tacit value but provide an indication of the level of relational orientation a firm has towards their partner firm. By examining B2B relationship orientation, our study will propose directions for B2B providers to effectively establish their B2B relationships with their partner firms.

3. Hypotheses development

3.1. Culturally diverse teams and KSB

Deep-level diversity significantly impacts contexts where the implications of surface-level diversity is reduced. For example, the literature emphasizes that B2B companies often have many members, providing a chance to get past superficial differences in demographics (Khan & Pond, 2020). However, due to having culturally diverse team members in firms, their B2B partners may have different attitudes and behavior regarding KSB. For example, team diversity has been explored in KSB, where employees tend to be open to sharing their knowledge with their high team diversity (Van Knippenberg & Mell, 2016). However, whilst we are unaware of any empirical studies supporting the relationship between culturally diverse teams of a firm's B2B partner and their KSB, we anticipate this link to be positive.

When partner firms comprising diverse teams collaborate, the team's knowledge, expertise, abilities, and cognitions are more varied and richer (Pinjani & Palvia, 2013). In addition, such diversity may broaden the knowledge outside teams, which is suitable for B2B collaboration (Markovic, Bagherzadeh, Vanhaverbeke, & Bogers, 2021; Talke, Salomo, & Kock, 2011). Hence, we expect culturally diverse teams to bring further insights and approaches to building close and more robust relationships with the partner firm. Specifically, cultural diversity within the team will likely make employees of B2B partners find it easier to relate because they can anticipate that someone different may have alternative ideas on how to deal with issues. In broad terms, since team diversity may also attract employees from B2B partners due to diverse ideas and different knowledge, which may increase KSB (Lievens & Blažević, 2021), we anticipate this condition to similarly hold for B2B relationships that comprise culturally diverse teams.

Members of such diverse teams have various viewpoints or conceptualizations of the team atmosphere, work, and tasks, and this will also translate into positive communication between the B2B partner firms. This is because they will have a larger pool of diversified knowledge for KSB (Talke et al., 2011). Under the lens of SCT, sharing information with B2B partners increases relationships, and this helps facilitate the transaction (Cortez & Johnston, 2017). However, previous studies reveal that members of diverse teams can only get non-overlapping information from one another when they share knowledge outside (Shin et al., 2012). As this lack of original information may hurt B2B relationships, we posit that the cultural diversity of teams within B2B partner firms will increase KSB, as follows:

H1. High (vs. low) culturally diverse teams in B2B partnerships will

increase (decrease) KSBs.

3.2. Perceived morality as a mediator

The balance between a firm's self-interest and the broader good is at the heart of market morality (Khan & Pond, 2020), so we anticipate this to be an inherent feature in B2B relationships. Therefore, actions that benefit society as a whole should be viewed as more moral than those that just benefit a few small groups (Khan & Pond, 2020). From the perspective of SCT and in our research context, this greater good pertains to the overall relationship between B2B partners rather than benefitting any individual firm. Insofar as a more culturally diverse team's decision reflects the consensus of the team members who hold or represent a variety of different points of view and interests, the decisions from a more culturally diverse team should be regarded as morally superior because they will benefit a larger population and be viewed as serving the greater good (Khan & Kalra, 2022). Because diverse teams are thought to engage in more perspective-taking than homogeneous teams and are seen as having higher moral standards (Khan & Kalra, 2022), we expect this condition to hold similarly in B2B situations involving culturally diverse teams. As moral perceptions affect the conduct of individuals in settings that involve B2B partners, we anticipate the greater the cultural diversity of the groups within B2B partner relationships, the more morally inclined they will be and less likely to act immorally.

As a result, diverse teams could generally be seen as less accountable and blameworthy for undesirable effects (Al-Khatib, Vollmers, & Liu, 2007). This connection between perception and behavior is similar to the link between attitude and conduct (Bu & Roy, 2015). Predictions of immoral action may also depend on elements other than morality, such as concerns for accountability or fear of repercussions, in the same manner that attitudes predict behavior. Still, they may not entirely explain it (Bu & Roy, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to investigate whether expectations of moral behavior can result from moral judgments. In the B2B context, KSB with B2B partners may have risks, including the potential loss of intellectual property and the shared information being misused or shared with unauthorized parties (Jia et al., 2014). We also argue that a team's moral standing should influence how employees of B2B partners engage in KSB. Such an assumption might be made unintentionally by B2B partners, who might assume that B2B partners promote diversity and must share the same characteristics as the diverse team, or it might be made consciously (Khan & Kalra, 2022). Therefore, we propose that perceived morality will mediate the link between a B2B partners' cultural diversity of their team on KSB, as follows:

H2. Perceived morality will partially mediate the impact of a B2B partner firm's team cultural diversity on their knowledge-sharing behaviors, such that high (vs. low) perceived morality will increase (decrease) KSBs.

3.3. Relationship orientation as a moderator

Through the lens of SET, relationship orientation is a value that manifests as expectation and reciprocity within relationships. We concur with the literature and depict relationship capital in B2B settings as the degree of mutual trust, respect, and friendship that comes out of the intimate interaction at the individual level between partners (Kingshott et al., 2021). People from the relational orientation approach typically assign a higher value to ties with business connections than the tangible outcomes of these associations (Kingshott et al., 2021). Furthermore, under the lens of SET, expectation and obligation help connect and bond with people (Itani, Badrinarayanan, & Rangarajan, 2022). We suggest that the inherent psychological contract obligations in the relationship may serve as a moderator for the variety of perceived relationship roles. We anticipate that the two types of psychological contracts, relational

and transactional, will manifest the inherent relational orientation in high-context B2B relationships where people value personal connections in their professional relationships (Kingshott et al., 2021).

Typically, we propose that such psychological agreements inherent to these interactions between B2B providers and their partners will favorably affect the general wellbeing within those connections and moderate the impact of culturally diverse teams of the B2B partners on their KSB. We anticipate that B2B employees with relational orientations tend to feel more obligated to keep relationships closer than those with transactional orientations. Thus, they are more likely to engage in KSBs to help build and sustain the relationship with their B2B partners. In the typical B2B context, human connections are the glue that holds the economic and social structures together and the drivers of survival and wellbeing (Kingshott, Sharma, et al., 2020). We, therefore, anticipate that since the relational and transactional forms of contract represent a different relational orientation of the B2B partner firm, the employee's relational orientation will either enhance or dampen the impact that the cultural diversity of the partner firms employees have on their information sharing behaviors. Therefore, we posit as follows:

H3. The higher (lower) the B2B relationship orientation the stronger (weaker) the effect of the cultural diversity of B2B partner firm teams on their KSBs.

Fig. 1 shows our conceptual model with all the hypothesized relationships.

4. Methodology

This paper investigates the causal effects of culturally diverse teams in B2B partnerships to KSBs, the mediating effect of perceived morality, and the moderating effect of B2B relationship orientation. This research used several experiments as such an approach is one of the most powerful methods for testing causal hypotheses (Cook, Campbell, & Shadish, 2002). To test all our hypotheses, we conducted two studies in a B2B sales situation, as explained in this section.

4.1. Study 1

Study 1 examines Hypotheses 1 and 2. Notably, we tested a behavioral dependent variable associated with KSB by asking participants to complete an additional task in which they needed to share their thoughts and further knowledge about the B2B technology industry. Study 1 employed a one-factor, two-level (B2B partner team cultural diversity: high vs. low) between-subjects design. To avoid non-response bias, we made sure that the survey expectation was set in the introduction/ invitation: survey goals, the approximate time to complete (not >5 min), as well as ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. We recruited 151 participants located in the United States from Prolific (36% female, M$_{age}$ = 37.80, SD = 12.15), using a simple random sampling procedure. We included a screening question on participants' prior B2B industry expertise in the survey to meet the eligibility condition for this study. Table 1 shows the sample profiles for both the studies.

Participants were required to read a scenario about a high or low, culturally diverse B2B buying team (Appendix I). In the scenario, participants were asked to imagine they worked as a member of the B2B salesforce team for a high technology company, in which their main task was managing customer relationships with a partner firm. More specifically, their firm had gained a new B2B buying partner, and their buying team included four members. In the low culturally diverse team condition, the four buying team members consisted of four members with the same perceived ethnicity (as a proxy for the degree of cultural diversity). In contrast, in the highly culturally diverse team condition, the four buying team members had a different ethnic look to represent a culturally diverse team. Therefore, we adopted the approach by Khan and Kalra (2022), who tested successful differences between high and low team diversity while controlling attractiveness, friendliness, or
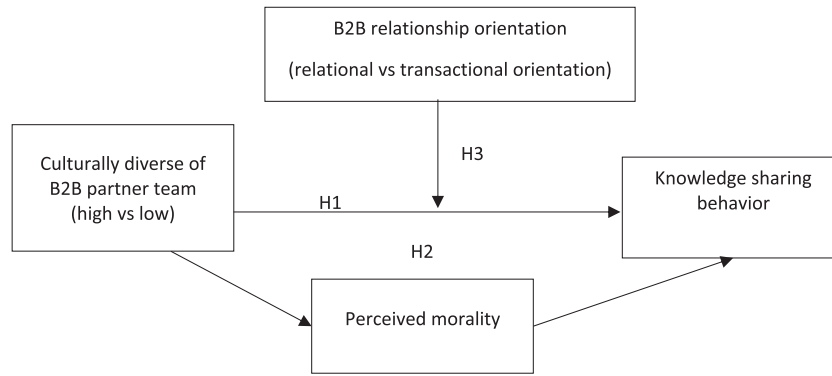
Fig. 1. Conceptual Model.

Table 1
Sample characteristics.

Study 1 (*N* = 151)		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	96	63%
	Female	54	36%
	Others	1	1%
Age	18–30	47	31%
	31–40	48	32%
	41–50	33	22%
	51–60	17	11%
	61 and above	6	4%
Study 2 (*N* = 320)		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	198	62%
	Female	119	37%
	Others	3	1%
Age	18–30	74	23%
	31–40	101	32%
	41–50	79	25%
	51–60	43	13%
	61 and above	23	9.5%

likability. Their approach was adapted to our B2B setting through the use of photos that represented four members of the B2B buying team to help us operationalize cultural diversity in this team.

Next, participants were asked if they would do an additional task (about three minutes) without further payment. In the introduction of the additional tasks, participants were informed that the B2B buying team wanted to know the knowledge and thoughts of the participants regarding the technology market and industry. The participants were aware that their knowledge sharing with the buying team would be posted on the company forum of the B2B partner. Concerning the behavior dependent variable (KSB), participants indicated if they would be willing to do the additional task (yes = 1, no = 0). To measure perceived morality, participants indicated their agreement on four statements ($\alpha = 0.96$; AVE = 0.85, EFA with 84.58% of variance & factor loadings from 0.87 to 0.96), adopted from Samper, Yang, and Daniels (2018), with a 7-point semantic differential scale (e.g., unethical/ethical, immoral/moral, dishonest/honest, untrustworthy/trustworthy).

Manipulation checks. To check the manipulation of cultural diversisty, participants were asked to indicate their agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) whether the B2B buying team is (1) "is diverse regarding ethnic/ cultural trait", and (2) "is similar in terms of race/ culture". Independent sample *t*-tests show that participants in the high culturally diverse team condition perceived a higher culturally diverse team ($M_{low} = 2.13$, SD = 1.37, $M_{high} = 6.05$, SD = 0.94, t(151) = 6.97, *p* = 0.009), showing successful manipulation.

Common method bias. All measurement items were made simple and straightforward to avoid common method bias. The participants were informed that their responses would be kept confidential. Following the suggestions of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff (2003), all items

were entered into an exploratory factor analysis for ex-post statistical remedies. Each factor accounted for at most 50% when constraining the number of factors, ruling out common method bias.

Knowledge sharing. A chi-square test reported that participants in the high culturally diverse team condition were more willing to do the additional task compared to those in the low culturally diverse team condition ($N_{high} = 30/74[40.5\%]$; $N_{low} = 12/77[15.4\%]$; $\chi^2(1) = 12.0$, *p* < 0.001). These results supported Hypothesis 1.

Perceived morality. To test H2, we conducted a mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS Model 4 with 5000 bootstraps resamples. This model examined the indirect effect of the culturally diverse team (1 = high, low = −1) on KSB via knowledge-perceived morality. Results indicated that the indirect effect was significant (B = 0.18, SE = 0.10, 95% CI: 0.2 to 0.43). These findings support H2. Table 2 shows the mediation results. (See Table 3.)

4.2. Study 2

Study 2 aimed to replicate Study 1 and to test the moderating role of B2B relationship orientation (H3) with the differences in the impact of transactional and relational orientation on KSB by culturally diverse team. Study 2 employed a 2 (culturally diverse team of B2B partners: high vs. low) × 2 (B2B relationship orientation: relational vs. transactional) between-subjects design. The survey expectation was set as Study 1, to avoid non-response bias. We recruited 320 participants in the United States from Prolific (37% female, $M_{age} = 41.35$, SD = 12.80) using a simple random sampling procedure. In line with Study 1, participants were made fully aware that we were looking to recruit people with prior B2B industry expertise. Like Study 1, participants were required to read a scenario in which we manipulated the team's cultural diversity of the B2B buying team and their B2B relationship orientation. The scenario for the culturally diverse team representing the B2B buying team was kept the same. Appendix I shows all the scenarios.

In addition, information on the nature of the B2B relationship orientation was added. In the transactional orientation condition, participants were informed that their company expected them to focus on the transaction only and did not expect them to support the B2B buying team more than necessary. In the relational orientation mode, participants were expected by their company to build a long-term relationship with the B2B buying partner. The behavior dependent variable was the same as in Study 1, in which participants were asked to do the additional task (1 = yes, 0 = no). The questions on perceived morality were kept the same as in Study 1 ($\alpha = 0.97$; AVE = 0.89, EFA with 88.67% of variance & factor loadings ranging from 0.92 to 0.96). KSB was measure using the same variable as in Study 1. Common method bias was minimized and estimated using the same steps as in Study 1 and the results indicate that common bias was not a problem in this study.

Manipulation checks. The same team's cultural diversity manipulation check was used. For the B2B relationship orientation manipula-

Table 2

Mediation analysis.

	Perceived morality (M)				KSB (Y)			
Study 1	Coeff	SE	t	p	Coeff	SE	z	p
Constant	4.59	0.10	44.26	< 0.001	−2.63	0.80	−3.26	0.001
Culturally diverse team (X)	0.055	0.10	5.30	< 0.001	0.49	0.21	2.32	0.020
Perceived morality (M)	–	–	–	–	0.33	0.16	2.06	0.039
Study 2	Coeff	SE	t	p	Coeff	SE	z	p
Constant	4.52	0.07	68.09	< 0.001	−1.73	0.49	−3.55	0.000
Culturally diverse team (X)	0.86	0.06	13.01	< 0.001	0.20	0.15	0.16	0.016
Perceived morality (M)	–	–	–	–	0.23	0.10	2.31	0.210

Table 3

Hypotheses results.

H#	Hypothesis	Results
H1	High (vs. low) culturally diverse teams in B2B partnerships will increase (decrease) KSBs.	Supported
H2	Perceived morality will partially mediate the impact of a B2B partner firm's team cultural diversity on their knowledge-sharing behaviors, such that high (vs. low) perceived morality will increase (decrease) KSBs.	Supported
H3	The higher (lower) the B2B relationship orientation, the stronger (weaker) the effect of the cultural diversity of B2B partner firm teams on their KSBs.	Supported

check, participants were asked to indicate (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) that they were aware that their company in the scenario expected to grow their relationship with the B2B buying partner ("My company expects to grow the relationship with Atalink") and expected participants to be flexible and work irregular hours if necessary ("My company expects me to be flexible and work irregular hours with Atalink if necessary", and, "My company expects me only to carry out what is necessary to get the job done and do not need to support too much with Atalink"-reversely coded). Independent sample t-tests reported that participants in the highly culturally diverse team condition perceived a higher cultural team diversity ($M_{low} = 2.19$, SD = 1.49, $M_{high} = 6.26$, SD = 0.99, t(325) = 29.12, $p < 0.001$) and participants in the relational orientation reported that they were expected to grow the relationship with their B2B partner than those in the transactional condition ($M_{transactional} = 3.04$, SD = 2.16, $M_{high} = 6.09$, SD = 1.20, t(325) = 15.77, p < 0.001), suggesting that our manipulations were successful

(see Fig. 2).

Perceived morality. To test H2, we conducted a mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS Model 4 with 5000 bootstraps resamples. This model examined the indirect effect of the extent of the team's cultural diversity (1 = high, low = −1) on KSB via perceived morality. Results indicated that the indirect effect was significant (B = 0.20, SE = 0.09, 95% CI: 0.03 to 0.40). These findings support H2 (Table 2).

KSB. A logistic regression analysis shows significant main effects of the extent of the team's cultural diversity (B = 0.78, SE = 0.24, Wald = 10.65, $p = 0.001$) and relationship orientation (B = 0.49, SE = 0.24, Wald = 4.04, $p = 0.044$). Most importantly, the analysis revealed a significant interaction effect (B = 0.49, SE = 0.24, Wald = 4.04, p = 0.044). Specifically, participants were shown to be more willing to do the additional task in the transactional orientation condition (48/165 [29%]) than those in the relational orientation condition (66/162 [40.7%], $\chi^2(1) = 4.89$, p = 0.027). These findings support H3.

5. General discussion

This paper aims to fill several gaps in the literature. First, we analyze the potential impact that culturally diverse teams have on the B2B partner firm's KSB (H1) and the moderating role that the B2B relationship orientation (using the different forms of psychological contracts as a proxy) (H3) may have on that link. Typically, we reveal that cultural team diversity is critical in B2B settings. It presents an image that B2B firms wish to portray in public and more directly towards their partner firms, which manifests through the B2B partner firm's employees regarding attitudes and directed behavior. Our research found that culturally diverse teams engage employees in elevated KSB (H1). We also demonstrate that such diversity in teams is perceived to represent a
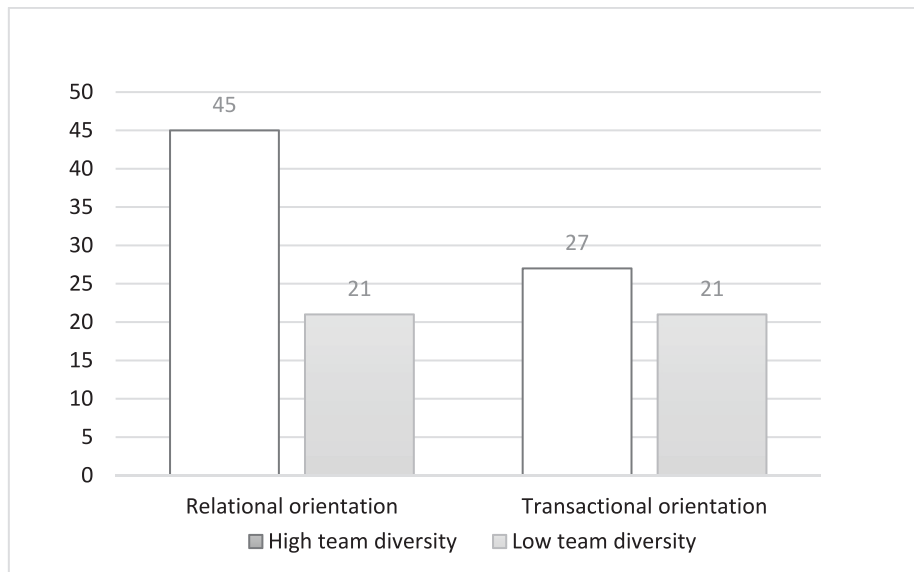
Fig. 2. Knowledge Sharing Behavior (KSB): Cultural Diversity X B2B Relationship Orientation Interaction (Study 2).

wider variety of viewpoints, which motivates employees from B2B partners to want to share knowledge and thus build a relationship. This result extends previous studies (Men, Fong, Luo, Zhong, & Huo, 2019) that found if the internal team is diverse, the more likely those team members are to share knowledge within the organization.

Second, in line with prior studies that demonstrate a firm's increased creativity, decreased absenteeism, and ethical considerations are also primary benefits emerging from a diverse team in the workplace, we find further that culturally diverse teams have a significant role in building morality in the B2B relationship. More specifically, we find that a B2B partner firm's elevated level of cultural diversity in their teams helped to improve the company's moral standing in the eyes of B2B partners and further that such morality mediated the link between culturally diverse teams and the level of KSB. KSB has not been thoroughly explored in the B2B literature, especially in the context of culturally diverse teams; however, we demonstrate that such diversity in the team leads directly to elevated morality than those with more homogeneous teams. Specifically, we show that improved cultural diversity in the team affects favorable behaviors of B2B partner employees, including KSB, directly and through the mediator role perceived morality plays in the link between culturally diverse teams and inter-organizational information sharing. These findings confirm those of Khan and Kalra (2022), who found that diverse teams are believed to possess higher moral standards and act more morally than less diverse teams.

Third, this study adds to the limited body of existing work into the role that a B2B relationship orientation shapes psychological contracts in the mind of B2B employees. Our findings demonstrate that B2B relationship orientation is crucial to help shape B2B employees' psychological contracts in relationship building with B2B partners. However, unlike the earlier work that depicts relational and transactional orientations as two approaches to building B2B relationship partners (Kingshott et al., 2021), we show such relationship orientation as two poles of a continuum scale. We extend this further to reveal how a firm's B2B relationship orientation moderates between culturally diverse teams and KSB - which helps shape the B2B employees' attitude and ability to build relationships with the partner firm. Accordingly, this study is among the first to examine the moderator role of B2B relationship orientation within the formation and maintenance of B2B relationships grounded in the theories of social capital (Coleman, 1988) and social exchange (Homans, 1958). Our research demonstrates that psychological contracts can benefit B2B relationship orientation (Kingshott et al., 2021) and how they support the development of relational capital. We anticipate this will reduce the likelihood of psychological contract breaches and their negative relationship consequences in favor of enhancing an employee's relationship-building capacity in numerous B2B settings.

5.1. Theoretical implications

The theoretical novelty of our study is multifaceted and significantly contributes to the existing body of knowledge within B2B relationships and knowledge-sharing behavior. At the core of our contribution is developing and testing a conceptual model that unravels the intricate interplay between cultural team diversity, perceived morality, B2B relationship orientation, and KSB. To our knowledge, this integrative examination has yet to be previously undertaken in the extant literature, marking a significant advancement.

Our study builds upon SCT (Coleman, 1988) and SET (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959) to provide a unique lens for understanding intercultural B2B relationships. By exploring how cultural diversity within B2B partner teams impacts KSB, we extend SCT and SET to offer a nuanced perspective on B2B team diversity and its effects on knowledge sharing in intercultural contexts. While prior research has examined intra-team diversity and intra-knowledge sharing behavior, the influence of a B2B partner firm's culturally diverse team on knowledge sharing with B2B partners has not been adequately addressed until now, underscoring the

originality of our research. Our research extends SCT by providing more insights into the B2B team diversity literature (Van Knippenberg & Mell, 2016) and adds to the nascent body of B2B intercultural literature. Specifically, our findings show that the level of cultural diversity in the B2B partner's team serves to motivate B2B team employees to engage in KSB, and this, in turn, also leads directly to higher levels of perceived morality directed towards the B2B partner's team – mainly when the team is culturally diverse.

Prior studies (e.g., van der Lee, Ellemers, Scheepers, & Rutjens, 2017) on morality show that environmental and/or personal factors may impact a person's conception of morality. By identifying a group trait (i. e., cultural diversity) in those teams that play a boundary-spanning role with the partner firm, we show such diversity to be a clear indicator of moral behavior and, thus, a key driver of moral judgments created by this team. We investigate the dimension of morality within B2B relationships, shedding light on how the perception of moral behavior is influenced by cultural diversity within the B2B partner's team. We identify cultural diversity as a clear indicator of moral behavior, consequently influencing moral judgments made by B2B partner employees. This critical revelation represents the first empirical demonstration of a connection between cultural diversity and the perceived morality of B2B partner employees,

Furthermore, being the first study to analyze the relationship between a B2B partner's culturally diverse team and KSB, as well as the mediating role of morality, and then evaluating these links empirically using behavioral metrics, makes this study more unique. Specifically, previous studies (e.g., Nguyen & Malik, 2020) mainly focus on a self-report measure to capture KSB; however, whilst such measures typically can only evaluate knowledge-sharing intention, our study evaluates it from the vantage of knowledge-sharing behavior. Our unique approach involves evaluating KSB through behavioral metrics, surpassing the traditional focus on self-report measures and thereby highlighting the central role of knowledge sharing in culturally nuanced B2B relationships. This is an important contribution to the B2B literature as it highlights that knowledge sharing between firms is critical in culturally-laden B2B relationships. Expanding upon SCT, we elucidate the moderating influence of B2B relationship orientation on the relationship between culturally diverse teams and knowledge-sharing behaviors.

Our study pioneers exploring relationship orientation from the perspective of an employee's psychological contract as a moderator in building relationships with B2B partners. This novel perspective adds depth to understanding B2B relationship orientation and its role in shaping employee outcomes, filling a gap in the existing literature. Given that employees typically experience psychological contracts reflected through their B2B relationship orientation directed towards their partners, we build on this body of nascent work in B2B settings to capture the partner firm's perception of the psychological contract as the firm's degree of relational orientation. Whilst B2B relationship orientation has been examined in the B2B literature as a predictor of employee outcomes, our approach to exploring relationship orientation (from the perspective of an employee's psychological contract) as a moderator in the process of building relationships with B2B partners has not been undertaken in the extant literature.

5.2. Practical implications

Our study offers compelling managerial implications that can guide businesses and B2B firm decision-makers in strategically utilizing cultural diversity within their teams to enhance collaboration with crucial partner firms. In light of the growing scrutiny regarding workplace diversity and criticisms faced by major companies like Google, Berkshire Hathaway, and eBay, our research underscores the significance of cultural diversity within an organization. The study demonstrates that the cultural diversity of a company's personnel significantly impacts how B2B partner employees perceive the moral character of the company and subsequently influences their attitudes and behaviors, particularly KSB.

Our findings imply that B2B employees' responses to a lack of cultural diversity in the partner firm may be connected to a perception that individuals on homogeneous teams do not value other points of view, which in turn influences how B2B partners view morality.

Thus, promoting cultural diversity within a team is pivotal in addressing potential negative perceptions and attitudes stemming from a lack of diversity, ultimately fostering more positive B2B relationships. Building a team with high cultural diversity may address this issue and help a firm develop its B2B relationships. According to our research, decision makers should understand that informing these important stakeholders about your firm's cultural diversity is advantageous. Typically, such diversity can prevent unfavorable reactions outside a B2B firm and help foster critical KSB. Our research shows that increased cultural diversity can also give businesses an effective tool to manage B2B firm image and create a more thorough picture of their overall moral character. Thus, we offer another justification for human resource managers to build and promote culturally diverse teams to help firms develop and nurture their ongoing B2B relationships.

In addition to fostering a team comprising cultural diversity, relationship orientation should be paid more attention to as it is found to impact KSB between the partner firms. Our findings are consistent with earlier studies showing that transactional and relational contracts are crucial to B2B relationship building (Kingshott et al., 2021). However, our findings indicate that adopting a transactional orientation is less effective than a relational orientation in taking advantage of relational capital and building the general relationship, which should be known to decision-makers in B2B settings. Decision-makers must pay heightened attention to relationship orientation, understanding that it profoundly influences knowledge sharing within B2B relationships. The focus on transactional orientation can effectively equate to cash flow, which may be beneficial in the short term. In contrast, relational orientation plays a longer-term relational building function, mainly aiding in the 'lubrication' of the B2B relationship (Kingshott et al., 2021). For instance, B2B customer relationship and sales managers aiming to build, cultivate and maintain long-term partnerships should prioritize fostering a relational orientation.

6. Limitations and future research

This paper has some limitations that provide avenues for further investigation. First, regarding theoretical directions, KSB was the focus of this investigation. However, it might be beneficial for researchers to take a much closer look at its dimension aspects, such as knowledge donating and knowledge collecting. Additionally, we specifically examine the role that culturally diverse teams play in building B2B relationships. Still, we also acknowledge that it would be worthwhile to examine different types of diversity within teams to widen the framework. Also, we examined how B2B relationship orientation moderates the impact of culturally diverse teams of B2B partners on KSB, and in doing so, build on SCT (e.g., Coleman, 1988) to help underpin our conceptual model. Our findings show how B2B relationship orientation shapes psychological contracts in B2B employees' minds, affecting B2B relationships and the level of relational capital in the B2B relationship. Future studies could add pertinent relationship traits to our conceptual model to strengthen B2B connections, as the SET theory suggests (Kingshott, 2006; Kingshott, Sharma, et al., 2020).

Future studies might also examine how B2B relationship orientation impacts other relationships in a company's B2B network. Moreover, cultural intelligence was not investigated in this paper. Future research may consider integrating cultural intelligence literature and examining culturally diverse teams led by managers with high/low cultural intelligence. Furthermore, to avoid compound effects, in this paper, we did not investigate the salesforce team's cultural diversity and the country's culture differences (two companies from the same country vs different countries). Future researchers may want to examine an additional moderator of the cultural diversity of the salesforce team to provide

more insights into the two sides of the partnership. Also, providing roles or responsibilities for the four buying team members may offer more insights into the reaction of the sales team in dealing with buying partners.

Second, regarding methodological and practical directions, even though much work has been put into evaluating KSB as a behavioral consequence, the self-reported experiment has inherent drawbacks. Future studies may account for measuring objective results, such as B2B job performance as demonstrated by revenue or profit data. We captured some participant characteristics (age and gender); however, further information on B2B employee experiences would help provide more insights into participant knowledge and their expertise in the field. Future scholars may want to include more questions on participant characteristics and segment them to offer more layers of analysis and implications. Another limitation in developing scenarios is the lack of information about the diversity of the other team in the B2B engagement, which might affect the accuracy of claims regarding cultural diversity's impact. Future research should ensure a comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity by considering and incorporating both sides' diversity within a B2B relationship. Future researchers may wish to integrate information that would be present in the marketplace, including company culture, executives' prior experience, and executives' engagement.

Due to our limited research budget, we used the well-established manipulation scenario of Khan and Kalra (2022), with pictures adapted to our B2B research setting. However, future researchers may want to incorporate more sound/voice manipulations to provide more authentic scenarios. Also, we used a B2B sales situation to test the model and hypotheses; thus, caution should be taken to generalize the paper's results to other B2B situations. Future research may want to test the model in different B2B situations, specifically those that involve engagements between firms that are non-sales related. Finally, caution should be used when projecting the results to other contexts, including Asia, since the data were collected from people in the United States. Future studies may extend this study into a wider range of country settings, even across national boundaries, where the composition of cultural teams is likely to play an even more important role in B2b relationships.

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

Appendix I. Scenarios

Low culturally diverse team condition

Imagine that you are a member of the B2B salesforce team in the NoveOne, a high technology company. Your main task is managing customer relationships. A new B2B buyer partner of your company is Atalink. Atalink wants to buy some products from your company with a large volume. The Atalink buying team includes four members: Robert Jones, Matthew Hounsel, James Olsen, and Andrew Williams, from similar cultural backgrounds. You will need to work with the Atalink buying team to facilitate the purchase process.

High culturally diverse team condition

Imagine that you are a member of the B2B salesforce team in the NoveOne, a high technology company. Your main task is managing customer relationships. A new B2B buyer partner of your company is Atalink. Atalink wants to buy some products from your company with a large volume. The Atalink buying team includes four members: Robert Jones, Neal Patel, James Olsen, and Matt Liu, from culturally diverse backgrounds. You will need to work with the Atalink buying team to facilitate the purchase process.

Low culturally diverse team x Relational orientation

Imagine that you are a member of the B2B salesforce team in the NoveOne, a high technology company. A new B2B buyer partner of your company is Atalink. Atalink wants to buy some products from your company with a large volume. Your main task is managing customer relationships. With Atalink, your company wants to build a long-term relationship; thus, your company expects you to be flexible and work irregular hours with this partner and carry out more support than necessary to enhance this customer relationship. The Atalink buying team includes four members: Robert Jones, Matthew Hounsel, James Olsen, and Andrew Williams, from similar cultural backgrounds. You will need to work with the Atalink buying team to facilitate the purchase process.

Low culturally diverse team x Transactional orientation

Imagine that you are a member of the B2B salesforce team in the NoveOne, a high technology company. A new B2B buyer partner of your company is Atalink. Atalink wants to buy some products from your company with a large volume. Your main task is managing customer relationships. With Atalink, your company just want to get the transaction done rather than building a long-term relationship; thus, your company expects you to work only the minimum hours on this customer and no more and carry out what is necessary to get the job done. The Atalink buying team includes four members: Robert Jones, Matthew Hounsel, James Olsen, and Andrew Williams, from similar cultural backgrounds. You will need to work with the Atalink buying team to facilitate the purchase process.

High culturally diverse team x Relational orientation

Imagine that you are a member of the B2B salesforce team in the NoveOne, a high technology company. A new B2B buyer partner of your company is Atalink. Atalink wants to buy some products from your company with a large volume. Your main task is managing customer relationships. With Atalink, your company wants to build a long-term relationship; thus, your company expects you to be flexible and work irregular hours with this partner if necessary and carry out more support than necessary to enhance this customer relationship. The Atalink buying team includes four members: Robert Jones, Neal Patel, James Olsen, and Matt Liu, from various cultural backgrounds. You will need to work with the Atalink buying team to facilitate the purchase process.

High culturally diverse team x Transactional orientation

Imagine that you are a member of the B2B salesforce team in the NoveOne, a high technology company. A new B2B buyer partner of your company is Atalink. Atalink wants to buy some products from your company with a large volume. Your main task is managing customer relationships. With Atalink, your company just wants to get the transaction done rather than building a long-term relationship; thus, your company expects you to work only the minimum hours on this customer and no more and carry out what is necessary to get the job done. The Atalink buying team includes four members: Robert Jones, Neal Patel, James Olsen, and Matt Liu, from various cultural backgrounds. You will need to work with the Atalink buying team to facilitate the purchase process.

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