



# Exploring the Relationship Between Organizational Politic and Knowledge Sharing in Brazilian Modular Consortium


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## ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore the relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational politics (POPS) and their predisposition to involve in knowledge sharing (KS) behaviors at individuals and workgroups level in the Brazilian automotive Modular Consortium. The sample included 144 shop floor employees of Modular Consortium (six connected companies in assembly lines). The POPS-KS relationship was analyzed using different referents, seeking to understand how individuals and groups respond to the presence of organizational politics, and POPS and KS were tested in a Brazilian context, shedding new light on potential cultural influences impacting this relationship. The results evidenced that positive interpersonal communication can contribute to KS, and in turn, KS can counteract the negative impacts of POPS. There was a positive relationship between POPS-KS, indicating that POPS may have functional effects in facilitating KS of individuals and workgroups. Key findings and implications for future research were discussed.

## KEYWORDS

Knowledge Sharing of Group, Knowledge Sharing of Individuals, Modular Consortium, Perceptions of Organizational Politics, Shop Floor Workers

## INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to explore the relationships between Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Knowledge Sharing of Individual and Groups in Brazilian automotive plants.

Knowledge Sharing (KS) is a critical activity within organizations (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002; Den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004), and it refers to the acts of sharing information, ideas, suggestions, and relevant organizational experiences between individuals and groups in the context of work (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002; Todorova & Mills, 2018). KS depends on discretionary employee behaviors that occur in an interpersonal context across individual and group boundaries (Mitchell & Boyle, 2010; Okyere-Kwakye, Nor, Soehod, & Zaitul, 2019).

KS is a strategic resource for organizations (Grant, 1996), affects how individuals and groups engage with one another in the same organization (Lin, Ye, & Bi, 2014), and influences operational

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and financial performance, speed, innovation, and, ultimately, competitive advantage (Carvalho & Gomes, 2017; Crhová & Matošková, 2019; Teixeira, Oliveira, & Curado, 2019). Studies have discussed organizational KS enablers, such as time availability, communication, trust and transparency (Cleveland & Ellis, 2015; Probodha & Vasanthapriyan, 2019), motivation (Amayah, 2013), employee attitudes, and culture (Teixeira *et al.*, 2019; Torres *et al.*, 2015). Nevertheless, informal influence activities of workers also potentially affect knowledge sharing, and the literature suggests that Perceptions of Organizational Politics (POPS) potentially impact how individuals and groups share knowledge at work (Evans, Ahmed, & Qureshi, 2013; Mahmood *et al.*, 2015; De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017).

POPS reflects an employee's perception of the organizational climate, which is expected to influence the subsequent behavior and attitudes of that employee and others (Gupta, 2011). POPS are characterized as the strategic use of power to achieve intended ends, including ends which may run contrary to the organization's interests (Ferris *et al.*, 2002).

Prior research has demonstrated the ubiquity and negative effects of POPS at work (Clercq, Dimov, & Belausteguigoitia, 2016; Hochwarter, Ferris, Laird, Treadway, & Coleman Gallagher, 2010), including negative relationships with work-related engagement and job satisfaction (Breux *et al.*, 2009; Gupta, 2011). POPS also negatively impact relational trust (Al-alawi *et al.*, 2007; Evans, Ahmed, & Qureshi, 2013; Mahmood *et al.*, 2015), which represents a key antecedent to KS behavior (Evans, 2012; Wulandari, Ferdinand, & Dwiatmadja, 2018; Cleveland & Ellis, 2015; Probodha & Vasanthapriyan, 2019).

Nevertheless, the evidence regarding the effects of POPS on knowledge sharing is conflicting. Some studies suggest that POPS negatively impact KS (Al-alawi *et al.*, 2007; Evans, Ahmed, & Qureshi, 2013; Mahmood *et al.*, 2015), while others (e.g., Eldor, 2016) suggest that POPS can facilitate and encourage KS. Finally, additional research suggests that KS is a logical outcome of POPS as employees seek information from work to buffer the stressful components of POPS or gain knowledge that enables them to more effectively "play games" at work (Clercq *et al.*, 2016; De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017).

This matter is also complicated by cultural and industry-specific nuances that potentially affect how individuals react to politics and engage in knowledge sharing. For example, the relationship between POS-KS was researched in public and private organizations in the Kingdom of Bahrain (Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2007), Indian industries (Gupta, 2011), the healthcare industry of Australia (Evans *et al.*, 2013), high-tech organizations of Israel (Eldor, 2017), a smelting company of Mexico (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017), and in the Australian and Mexican pharmaceutical industries (Mahmood *et al.*, 2015; De Clercq, Dimov, & Belausteguigoitia, 2016). However, there were no studies of the POPS-KS relationship in the applied automotive industry.

Furthermore, Brazilian culture offers a unique context for inquiry because Brazilians are characterized by collectivism in which individuals value loyalty and in-group associations, with an equilibrium between achievement, material rewards for success and cooperation, modesty and caring for the weak. Brazilians also feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity and, although they prefer to maintain traditions, encourage change as a way to prepare for the future (Teixeira *et al.*, 2019). Brazil also has a deep-rooted culture of the "jeitinho", reflecting a creative ingenuity that the realization of short-term solutions to problems. This approach also sometimes includes ways of circumventing bureaucratic rules or handling potential difficulties with superiors in a strongly hierarchical context, which will have a clear impact on the emergence of POPS (Torres *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, such cultural influences may lead to equality and a positive and diffuse reciprocity, which may favor KS, contributing to increase the competitiveness of a sector dependent on tacit worker knowledge (Biazzo & Panizzolo, 2000).

Brazilian vehicle production occupies the 8th position in the world (OICA, 2019). The automotive sector aims to create increasingly innovative products and processes, performing continuous improvements that respond to the demands of customers, reducing costs, and increasing the level of product quality (Valio *et al.*, 2014; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2016; Wolf, Späth, & Haeffliger, 2011). All of these

elements necessitate Knowledge Sharing, which in order to be effective, requires the collaboration and synergy of individuals and groups working together to achieve common goals (Den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004).

However, pressures on employees to achieve productivity goals, update work processes, be versatile and work teams, may produce negative POPS (Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009; Hochwarter et al., 2020), especially in the context of the Brazilian automotive industry, which, due to the political and economic crisis, experienced 33% layoffs in recent years (IBGE, 2019; Zamberlan, Sonaglio, Ghiliardi, & Pereira, 2012). Thus, although KS is a needed activity, employees may refuse to share knowledge for fear of losing their status, privilege or superiority, because they are not rewarded, or because they do not want to sacrifice time and resources to carry out knowledge transfer (Fernet, Gagné, & Austin, 2010). Finally, some employees may choose not to engage in KS as a punitive measure against employers or other managers who are disliked (cf., Munyon & Frieder, 2015).

To shed light on these questions, we incorporated a study of Brazilian automotive industry workers to explore how POPS affect knowledge sharing. Rather than examine only this direct relationship, we also evaluate how POPS affect knowledge sharing of individuals as employees rate themselves, and also knowledge sharing of the groups in which they function. This combined multi-referent design enables us to shed light on the potential KS consequences that occur as a function of POPS. Consistent with prior literature (Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, & Bettenhausen, 2008), we also consider the possibility that POPS may promote, rather than restrict, otherwise positive organizational actions, including knowledge sharing. Finally, our Brazilian contexts sheds new light on potential cultural influences impacting these relationships.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Political Influence Theory

The Perceptions of Organizational Politics literature generally supports the premise that POPS are a ubiquitous and typically negative influence (Munyon, Jacobs, Carries, & López, 2016). Such behaviors represent illegitimate, egocentric activities that are strategically planned to benefit, protect or enhance self-interest, even though this may affect an organization and others (Rosen, Ferris, Brown, Chen, & Yan, 2014). Thus, POPS can result in stress, turnover intentions, and low performance (Chang *et al.*, 2009; Munyon *et al.*, 2016).

However, additional theory suggests that POPS may have functional work effects (Eldor, 2016; Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, & Bettenhausen, 2008), suggesting that contextual factors may affect its ultimate utility (Tziner, Kaufmann, Vasiliu, & Tordera, 2011). At a minimum, the recent conflicting findings in the literature suggest that further inquiry of POPS – outcome relationships is warranted, and this is especially so in the context of different cultures and underrepresented industries.

POPS are viewed as positive or negative depending on employee idiosyncratic perceptions (Ferris & Judge, 1991). For example, in the context of KS, Clercq and Belausteguigoitia (2017) suggest that the negative effects of POPS may be less pronounced when employees can rely on KS routines with peers because this sharing provides insights into solutions for mitigating the negative consequences of politics-based decision making.

For those who are engaged and more actively involved in their jobs, politics can be regarded as a challenge and even an opportunity for obtaining more resources to improve their performance (Eldor, 2017). However, for other employees, POPS make such actions threatening (Breux *et al.*, 2009), theoretically reducing the transmission of knowledge because employees realize it may work against them.

Fundamentally, POPS can negatively affect KS because employees become unsure of how their contributions are going to be interpreted and rewarded by the organization and its managers (Munyon *et al.*, 2016). Thus, POPS have the potential to cultivate negative reactions since individuals question the organization's ability to promote and protect their psychological safety and well-being at work

(Hochwarter, Kacmar, Perrewé, & Johnson, 2003). However, again, additional theory suggests that such effects are highly influenced by contextual factors (Fedor *et al.*, 2008; Zamberlan, Sonaglio, Ghiliardi, & Pereira, 2012; Hochwarter *et al.*, 2020), potentially including ethnic culture (Tziner, Kaufmann, Vasiliu, & Tordera, 2011).

Political influence theory sheds light on these processes by proposing that informal influence activities exert a significant effect on the design and implementation of human resource management programs and the assigned meaning of employees to those programs (Ferris & Judge, 1991), including the management of shared meaning (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Ferris *et al.*, 2002). These elements are intrinsically related to knowledge management and to the disposition of managers to promote KS themselves or within groups.

### **Knowledge As A Resource and Asset**

Knowledge is an indispensable resource, and activities that encourage the generation of new knowledge correspond to an evolution or an update of this knowledge capital (Saulais & Ermine, 2012). Intangible assets, such as knowledge, have often replaced tangible assets as the main engine of economic growth (Massingham, 2014).

Knowledge is built on the relationships between individuals, and is dependent on their capabilities and their personal characteristics, context and forms selected (Taylor, 2007). Indeed, the human being is identified as a key element in the processes of creating, converting, and sharing knowledge, and particularly so since knowledge transmission depends essentially the predisposition of humans to share what they know. Given the importance of knowledge for organizations, there is a consensus that knowledge management is a strategically important competency for organizations (Grant, 1996; Gunasekaran & Ngai, 2007; Magnier-Watanabe, Benton and Senoo, 2011; Lin & Dalkir, 2012).

KS has important organizational ramifications, and impacts the quality and content of work performed on the shop floor through at least three mechanisms. First, it facilitates continuous improvement activities (e.g., kaizen) or problem solving between workers as individuals workers discuss causes and solutions (e.g., learning), test the alternatives, and benchmark successful alternatives (Biazzo & Panizzolo, 2000). Second, KS enables problems and solutions to be studied by other workers within groups via social learning mechanisms, positively affecting learning and the institutionalization of best practices within work groups. Finally, in the case of production consortia or strategic alliances, an organization's knowledge can be applied to help other companies with whom they are producing. Thus, KS enables innovation.

### **Knowledge Sharing Is A Discretionary Behavior**

Although there are a great many benefits associated with KS, employees can choose to either engage in KS or choose not to, similar to organizational citizenship behavior (cf., Munyon, Hochwarter, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2010 for examples of discretionary worker behavior). At the same time, Knowledge Sharing of Individuals (KSI) results from a decision-making process regarding whether to share knowledge or not by considering its costs and benefits. The above can perhaps be explained because knowledge is conceived as a form of power (Lin *et al.*, 2014), so that some individuals have a negative attitude towards the KS due to personal insecurity, fear of being seen as ignorant, or losing the superiority, and ownership of knowledge after sharing their own knowledge with other people. These factors hinder the advancement of work and new career opportunities (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002).

According to Lin *et al.* (2014), Knowledge Sharing of Groups (KSG) can occur at greater frequency than KS at the individual level, since team members interact more, seeking more opportunities to gain knowledge and information unique to other members. However, KSG also depends on the willingness of the working group to participate in this exchange of knowledge, and the presence or absence of other factors, such as group cohesion and team task conflict, and, potentially, POPS. Indeed, although KS is a discretionary behavior, and not mandated as a formal requirement of work, some work contexts benefit more from exchange activity than others; for example, organizations could array their work contexts so as to encourage on a continuum extending from low to high activity of KS.

## Why Would People Engage In Knowledge Sharing?

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) highlighted the importance of provoking beliefs, commitments, situations and appropriate interactions in organizations, noting that the information is converted into knowledge and can move within organizations, thereby positively influencing employee judgments, behaviors and attitudes. However, political influence theory predicts that some individuals also use these activities to help shape shared meaning, gain needed intelligence about the political activities of their peers and colleagues, or learn about the actions of others. Conversely, political influence theory also predicts that other individuals may share knowledge less in political environments as people seek to “avoid playing games.” (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989). Nevertheless, as POPS levels increase, we expect that individuals will be more motivated to engage in knowledge sharing so that they can gain needed intelligence about the workforce around them. Similarly, we anticipate that groups will engage in heightened knowledge sharing as POPS increase to gain needed intelligence about the informal influence activities of others. Thus, we propose:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and knowledge sharing of individuals.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and knowledge sharing of groups.

## Differences in Referents

Although we predict that POPS will be positively associated with KSI and KSG in our Brazilian context, there is reason to suspect that the relative effects will vary between these two referents. Specifically, we predict greater variability in KS as a function of POPS for groups because not all members will perceive politics the same way and be motivated to engage in political behavior (see Hochwarter et al., 2003; Ferris et al., 2002; Chang et al., 2009). Similarly, the variability in member differences within work groups may affect how they perceive and react to organizational politics (Bell, 2007). Thus, we expect the POPS - KS relationship to be stronger for individuals than for groups:

- H3: The positive relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and knowledge sharing will be stronger for groups than for individuals.

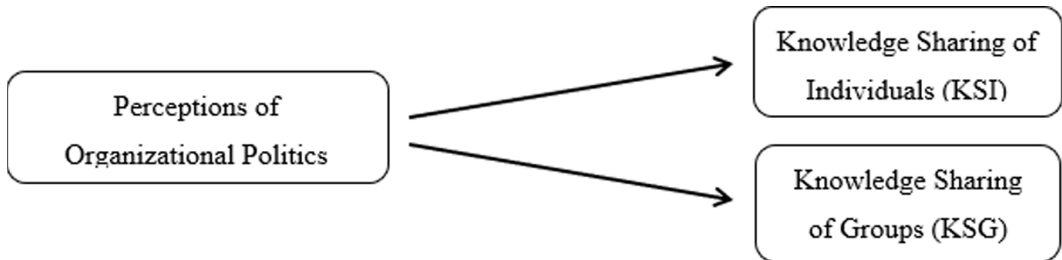
Given the hypotheses planted, the diagram of the research model (Figure 1) presents our hypothesized relationships.

## Relationship Between Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Knowledge Sharing

Research's linking POPS and KS indicates the need to examine the influence of contextual factors that may bound this relationship for different referents (Hall & Goody, 2007; Lin & Dalkir, 2012; Cai, Goh, de Souza, & Li, 2013; Olsson & Heizmann, 2015; Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016). For example, evidence suggests that the effects of POPS are moderated by transformational leadership, resilience, and KS with organizational peers. These resources all increase employees' abilities to meet their regular job requirements even in the presence of strongly politicized environments, leaving them with sufficient energy and motivation to engage in activities that are not formally required (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017; Mahmood *et al.*, 2015).

Managers can also act as protagonists containing or mitigating the negative impacts of politics by building trust, creating effective lines of communication, and taking into account aspects of the organizational structure (e.g., participatory decision-making, ease of flow of information, teams and communities of practice) (Al-alawi et al., 2007; Gupta, 2011). Finally, researchers have warned of the importance of facilitating quality in interpersonal relations (harmony, trust, good communication)

Figure 1. The relationship between the perceptions of organizational politics and the knowledge sharing of individual and workgroups



as an element that softens POPS and favors KS (Al-alawi et al., 2007; Evans et al., 2013; Cai et al., 2013; Mahmood et al., 2015; De Clercq, Dimov, & Belausteguigoitia, 2016).

Although some research has explored the mechanisms linking POPS and KS, there are significant opportunities remaining. For example, we still know very little about the factors that antecedent KS, and how the work environment and organizational climate of a workplace affect the emergence and strength of this relationship (Breux et al., 2009; Wu, 2016). Similarly, we know slight about how antecedents, like POPS, may differentially affect the knowledge sharing of individuals and the groups with which they engage at work, once individuals react differently to knowledge sharing than workgroups (Lin et al., 2014).

In particular, we may expect stronger relationships between POPS - KSG than POPS - KSI as individuals restrict their direct communication with others to avoid dysfunctional politics. Alternatively, POPS may positively affect KSG if employees use such communication mechanisms opportunistically to shape shared meaning. Finally, it is important to explore how the relationship between POPS and KS is affected by different national cultures and contexts (Asrar-ul-haq & Anwar, 2016; De Clercq *et al.*, 2016; Gupta, 2011).

Individuals engage in POPS to shape shared meaning. As such, the presence of POPS may motivate greater KS by individuals and groups as they seek to shape shared meaning and gain valuable information about others. However, it could also reduce POPS because KS is risky to the communication sender and receiver in highly political environments. Specifically, their communications could be used against them by others.

## METHOD

### Research Design and Procedure

To explore the POPS – KSI and KSG relationships, we incorporated a qualitative and quantitative study. Data were collected using questionnaire, which evaluates the employee perceptions about their organizational environment. The research instrument uses Likert-type scaling (5 points) and included demographic data (age, tenure, job position). Demographic differences were sampled to estimate the external generalizability of our findings, and also rule out potentially spurious relationships. For example, longer tenured employees possess more knowledge about the firm, *ceteris paribus*, than less tenured employees, and may share knowledge more as a function of their tenure.

The study was conducted at the Modular Consortium (Pires, 1998), which employs six different production systems. The Modular Consortium consists of six companies that work in assembly lines and are located in the same site, representing a unique case of outsourcing among an automaker and the small number of direct suppliers. The suppliers assume that the pre-assembly of the module is under its responsibility, and its subsequent mounting is directly on the production line for the assembly plant. Suppliers also invest in equipment and tools in the management module, while the assembler

provides the plant and the final assembly line to execute the coordination of the same, assembly, and the final test of vehicles (Pires, 1998).

The sampling method for selecting respondents was non-probabilistic sampling for convenience. One hundred forty-four blue collar workers (144) were interviewed, all with the same job status, male, with mean industry tenure of 9.63 years ( $SD = 5.25$  years), mean organizational tenure of 7.11 years ( $SD = 4.60$  years), and 44.7% of employees worked only for their current employer. The characteristics of the Brazilian plants studied are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the Brazilian plants**

Sector	Participants per company	Product
Automotive	A1 = 27 A2 = 24 A3 = 28 A4 = 44 A5 = 10 A6 = 17	Cab framework Painting Cabin finish Wheels, tires and chassis Axles and Suspension Motor
Total	144	(Trucks and Buses Volkswagen and MAN Trucks)

### Measures

We relied on scales previously validated in the literature. The questionnaire, originally in English, was translated and back-translated into and from Portuguese by the authors. A Pre-Test study was implemented ( $n = 44$  collaborators) to evaluate worker understanding of the instrument's questions and perform previous statistical analyzes. After making adjustments to the questionnaire, data collection for this research began with the larger sample.

The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree and evaluated the perceptions of:

- Perception of Organizational Politics: Based on a six-item scale developed by Hochwarter et al. (2003) to measure POPS. The measure is based on the characterization of the working environment and interpersonal relations within the company. Example items include: "There is a lot of self-serving behavior going on here"; "Individuals are stabbing each other in the back to look good in front of others".
- Knowledge Sharing: was assessed through seven response items validated by (Den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004) featuring the KS within the company, and position itself in the sharing process. For a more detailed understanding of KS in the organizations, the knowledge sharing of individuals (four-item scale) and the knowledge sharing of group (three-item scale) were analyzed. Example items contain: "I spend time in personal conversation with others to help them with their work—related problems"; "My co-workers volunteer their knowledge and experiences even without being asked." The full scales are available upon request to the first author.

### Validity and Reliability of The Adapted Scales

The results showed a high level of internal reliability among the questionnaire questions for the analyzed constructs based in the results of Cronbach's alpha analysis: POPS ( $\alpha=0.95$ ), KSI ( $\alpha=.85$ ), and KSG ( $\alpha=.90$ ). The results suggest that, although the reduced number of questions in the questionnaire, they were analyzed rigorously and show a high correlation between the answers given by the respondents.

## Analytical Approach

The results were tested using SPSS version 21.0 using multiple regression analyses. All predictors were standardized and centered. The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is a statistical technique that was performed to explore more precisely the underlying dimensions, constructs or latent variables of the analyzed variables. Organizational and industry tenure were entered to control for their potentially spurious effect. Intercorrelations were also calculated for constructs.

## RESULTS

The descriptive analyses of the variables are presented in Table 2. The data represent the response frequency of the sample based on the Likert-type scale for each item proposed.

The findings suggested that personal interests predominated above the collective and organizational interests in this sample (POPS1). There was a lack of consensus the sample regarding: "People do what's best for them, not what's best for the organization." The response for this item was diverse, but most agreed on this or indicated neutrality in the subject (POPS2). Next, there is a widespread perception in the sample of the company's workers that others spend significant time cajoling their superiors, as more than half of the sample agreed at this point (POPS3). However, for POPS5, the most frequent response was neutral. Finally, participants agreed that, within the organization, people speak ill of others to help themselves (POPS6).

The items data about of Knowledge Sharing of Individual ( $KSI_{1-4}$ ) and Groups ( $KSG_{1-3}$ ) had high concordance frequency, suggesting that employee reports were valid assessments of this activity. In self-assessments, participants indicated that they talk to people who help them with their work problems (KSI1), or to keep them updated with important information about the organization (KSI2), share their experiences with others so that they may improve their own work (KSI4). The use of e-mail was not seen as a form of collaboration for this sharing (KSI3), which makes sense because the sample is inserted in the factory shop floor, local where there are no computers and the use of new technologies is more restricted. Evaluating the sharing of knowledge of co-workers (refers to the KS of group), most participants agreed to emphasize that there is knowledge sharing in the work environment (KSG1, KSG2, and KSG3), and this sharing is developed through verbal communication, both in the workplace and in external spaces (ex: in the corridors, at lunch).

The next step consists of a factorial analysis with the aim of obtaining common factors and the correlation structure between the variable factors. The degree of intercorrelation of the variables is strong given by the significance associated with the Bartlett sphericity test, which is  $p < 0.01$ , so that the null hypothesis of not correlation between variables can be rejected. The value obtained for the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, which measures the suitability of the data to perform a factorial analysis comparing the values of the correlation coefficients observed with the partial correlation coefficients and which could be calculated using the SPSS program, was  $KMO = .70$  and falls into the satisfactory range (according to international consensus) therefore, the data matrix it is appropriate to perform factorization on it.

The maximum likelihood method has been selected and the eigenvalue criterion  $> 1$ . The results are shown below (Table 3). The analysis detects the two latent factors (POPS and KSI) that had been indicated by the literature and that explain 90.98% of the common variance.

Table 4 presents the correlational analyses among the variables related to POPS, KSI, and KSG in the working environment. The results show statistically significant correlations ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that there is a positive relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and knowledge sharing of individuals and knowledge sharing of groups, thus supporting hypotheses 1 and 2. Finally, the results suggest that this relationship between POPS and KS is stronger for groups than for individuals, supporting hypothesis 3.



**Table 2. Descriptive data evaluating the responses of participants for each variable**

	5 (%)	4 (%)	3 (%)	2 (%)	1 (%)
There is a lot of self-serving behavior going on here (POPS1)	33.10	35.20	16.90	7.00	7.70
People do what's best for them, not what's best for the organization (POPS2)	19.00	26.10	26.10	19.00	9.80
People spend too much time cajoling to those who can help them (POPS3)	25.40	25.40	24.60	14.80	9.80
People work behind the scenes to make things for themselves (POPS4)	14.80	31.00	32.4	12.00	9.80
Many employees are trying to maneuver their way into the in group (POPS5)	11.30	21.10	32.40	25.40	9.80
People speak ill of the other to be well valued (POPS6)	17.60	33.10	25.40	16.20	7.70
I talk to the others seeking help them with their work problems (KSI1)	13.40	33.80	23.20	16.90	12.60
I use personal conversation to keep others updated with information I have about the organization (KSI2)	14.80	40.80	19.00	15.50	9.80
I use email to communicate and help colleagues with problems work (KSI3)	5.60	20.40	29.60	22.50	21.80
I share my experiences so others can improve their own work (KSI4)	37.30	42.30	10.60	2.80	7.00
My co-workers share their knowledge and experiences while working (KSG1)	11.30	51.40	21.80	9.20	6.30
Most people in my organization are willing to share what they know (KSG2)	13.40	50.70	23.20	12.60	0
My co-workers volunteer sharing their knowledge and experiences even without being asked (KSG3)	13.40	48.60	22.50	9.20	6.30

Note: POPS: Perception Organizational Politics; KSI: Knowledge Sharing of Individual; KSG: Knowledge Sharing of Group. (5) Strongly Agree; (4) Agree; (3) Neutral; (2) Disagree; (1) Fully Disagree. %: Percent of the sample that indicates the issue

**Table 3. Total variance explained**

Factors	Initial eigenvalues			Sums of the squared saturations of the extraction		
	Total	% of variance	% accumulated	Total	% of variance	% accumulated
1	2.17	72.47	72.47	1.83	60.94	60.94
2	.56	18.52	90.98			
3	.27	9.02	100.00			

Note: Factor 1: Perception Organizational Politics; Factor 2: KSI: Knowledge Sharing of Individual; Factor 3: Knowledge Sharing of Group

The findings suggest that the perceptions of individualism and / or selfishness (POPS1), the vision that people in the organization cajole to those who can help them (POPS3) and the view that co-workers speak badly of others to feel valued (POPS6) can encourage employees to talk and try to

**Table 4. Analysis of correlations among variables Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Knowledge Sharing**

		POPS1	POPS2	POPS3	POPS4	POPS5	POP6	KSI1	KSI2	KSI3	KSI4	KSG1	KSG2	KSG3
<b>P O P S 1</b>	r	1	.78*	.78*	.82*	.71*	.76*	.36*	.61*	.35*	.57*	.46*	.46*	.39*
<b>P O P S 2</b>	r	.78*	1	.67*	.74*	.69*	.72*	.32*	.47*	.30*	.43*	.33*	.32*	.27*
<b>P O P S 3</b>	r	.78*	.67*	1	.79*	.71*	.77*	.37*	.48*	.21*	.50*	.38*	.41*	.33*
<b>P O P S 4</b>	r	.82*	.74*	.79*	1	.78*	.78*	.35*	.55*	.35*	.49*	.40*	.37*	.32*
<b>P O P S 5</b>	r	.71*	.69*	.71*	.78*	1	.77*	.35*	.54*	.31*	.42*	.32*	.34*	.29*
<b>P O P S 6</b>	r	.76*	.72*	.77*	.78*	.77*	1	.36*	.53*	.31*	.54*	.51*	.47*	.41*
<b>K S I 1</b>	r	.36*	.32*	.37*	.36*	.36*	.36*	1	.69*	.49*	.65*	.62*	.53*	.57*
<b>K S I 2</b>	r	.61*	.46*	.48*	.56*	.55*	.53*	.68*	1	.57*	.69*	.58*	.53*	.52*
<b>K S I 3</b>	r	.34*	.29*	.21*	.36*	.31*	.30*	.49*	.57*	1	.47*	.36*	.34*	.37*
<b>K S I 4</b>	r	.56*	.43*	.50*	.49*	.43*	.54*	.65*	.69*	.47*	1	.72*	.69*	.74*
<b>K S G 1</b>	r	.47*	.32*	.38*	.39*	.35*	.50*	.62*	.58*	.36*	.72*	1	.70*	.75*
<b>K S G 2</b>	r	.46*	.31*	.41*	.39*	.34*	.47*	.53*	.53*	.34*	.69*	.70*	1	.80*
<b>K S G 3</b>	r	.41*	.27*	.35*	.33*	.31*	.42*	.57*	.52*	.37*	.74*	.75*	.80*	1

Note: POPS: Perception Organizational Politics; KSI: Knowledge Sharing of Individual. KSG: Knowledge Sharing of Groups, r: correlation coefficient of Pearson, p: significance. \*. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 significance level.

help others in their job functions (KSI4). Based on the significant correlation, it can be inferred that, although there is a perception that co-workers speak negatively of others seeking acceptance and appreciation (POPS6), this will contribute to the sharing of their knowledge and experience while working (KSG1), potentially as individual workers and groups opportunistically engage in knowledge sharing. Item-level data also suggests that KSI and KSG have positive relationship between each other.

Tables 5 and 6 report descriptive statistics, variable intercorrelations, and moderated regression results for the study. The analysis of the correlations brought revelations attending to the perceptions of the employees of the organizational politics and knowledge sharing. The results showed homogeneity in the sample in relation to: time of experience in the industry and time as collaborator in the company.

There were significant correlations between industry tenure and organizational tenure ( $r = .69$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The industry tenure moderately influenced KSI ( $r = .27$ ;  $p < .001$ ), but had no impact on POPS or KSG. Similarly, organizational tenure showed no relationship to POPS or any of the two modes of knowledge sharing analyzed (KSI and KSG). The POPS showed a significant impact on the KSI ( $r = .56$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and KSG ( $r = .47$ ;  $p < .001$ ). There was a positive interinfluence process between KSI and KSG ( $r = .72$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

In the multiple linear regression analyses (Table 6), industry tenure ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ), perceptions of organizational politics (POPS) ( $\beta = .52$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and KSG ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ ) all predicting knowledge sharing of individuals ( $R^2 = .64$ ,  $p < .01$ ). When modeling KSG as a dependent variable, the only significant predictor was POPS ( $\beta = .69$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The results indicate that in the automotive industry, knowledge sharing of individuals and knowledge sharing of groups are both influenced by perceptions of organizational politics.

## DISCUSSION

This research provides new insights into the relationships between Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Knowledge Sharing of Individuals and Groups in an industrial automotive context of Brazil. Consistent with the political influence theoretical perspective (Ferris & Judge, 1991), our findings suggest that many workers exhibit an unfavorable view of their employer's organizational climate, based on the base rates of perceptions of organizational politics (POPS) (Gupta, 2011).

The results suggest that many workers interpret the actions of others as “self-interested”, which is consistent with the common characterization of POPS as a systematic hindrance stressor in organizations (Chang et al., 2009). Based on our knowledge of changes in the automotive industry in

**Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations among study variables**

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Industry tenure (years)	9.63	5.25	-	.69**	-.04	.27**	.10
2. Company tenure (years)	7.11	4.60	.69**	-	-.14	.11	.06
3. POPS	-	-	-.04	-.14	-	.56**	.47**
4. KSI	-	-	.27**	.11	.56**	-	.72**
5. KSG	-	-	.09	.06	.47**	.72**	-

Note: Perceptions of Organizational Politics: POPS; Knowledge Sharing of Individual: KSI; Knowledge Sharing of Group: KSG. Table contains correlation coefficients: \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01

**Table 6. Results of Regression Analyses**

STEP AND VARIABLE	$\beta$	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
STEP 1 (with dependent variable KSI)				.64**
Industry tenure (years)	.27 **	3.79	<.001	
Organizational tenure (years)	-.06	-.84	.40	
Knowledge Sharing of Group (KSG)	.52**	8.70	<.001	
Perceptions of Organizational Politics	.34**	5.59	<.001	
STEP 2 (with dependent variable KSG)				.53**
Industry tenure (years)	-1.53	-1.82	.07	
Organizational tenure (years)	.11	1.30	.20	
Knowledge Sharing of Individual (KSI)	.10	1.28	.20	
Perceptions of Organizational Politics	.69**	8.70	<.001	

Note: Table contains regression coefficients in their respective steps. \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01.

Brazil, we conjecture that negative POPS were aggravated by the political and economic crisis that generated layoffs, reduced working hours, and created new job insecurity for workers (Zamberlan et al., 2012).

Conversely, regarding KSI, participants in this research indicated that they actively participate in knowledge sharing, and also observe it in groups. Again, consistent with prior research (e.g., Al-alawi, Al-marzooqi and Mohammed, 2007; Evans, Ahmed and Qureshi, 2013; Mahmood, Qureshi and Evans, 2015; Clercq, Dimov and Belausteguigoitia, 2016), we suspect that this finding was related to a need by individuals and groups to gather knowledge needed to successfully navigate the organization's political climate.

Several contributions derive from our investigation. First, we highlighted the somewhat counterintuitive effects of POPS on KSI and KSG. Although POPS are traditionally viewed as a negative influence on employee outcomes (Clercq, Dimov, & Belausteguigoitia, 2016; Hochwarter, Ferris, Laird, Treadway, & Coleman Gallagher, 2010; Breaux *et al.*, 2009; Gupta, 2011), our results suggest a positive relationship between POPS and KSI and KSG. Thus, consistent with the political influence perspective, individual workers may share knowledge in an attempt to gain important knowledge from others, and also to shape the shared meaning of the groups and work environment in which they engage.

Second, we tested the effects of POPS in a Brazilian context that is quite different from the U.S. and European models traditionally tested. Our results show that POPS are present in Brazilian

industrial environments, and exert an important influence on workplace outcomes (cf. Rodriguez *et al.*, 2018). The Brazilian culture may have impacted these results, according to Hofstede's model that predicts Brazilian culture is more collectivist, loyalty, indulgent, has a preference for cooperation, and the caring for the weak (Teixeira *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, the Brazilian value of "jeitinho" may also lead workers to evade bureaucratic rules and favor reciprocity between co-workers, aimed at achieving short-term solutions to problems (Torres *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, such cultural influences may lead to equality and a positive and diffuse reciprocity, which may have favored the KS observed by individuals and groups.

Third, we found that POPS exert an influence on both individual and group knowledge sharing activities. Although prior research has linked POPS with individual knowledge sharing, our investigation provides an interesting contribution into the effects of these cognitions on the knowledge sharing activities of groups at work. These findings also have important practical implications, as well.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results suggest that knowledge sharing may be less about work-related processes and outcomes than a worker's need to understand and affect the shared reality of their workplace (Todorova & Mills, 2018). Here, as perceptions of organizational politics increase, workers may be more motivated by self-interest and competition to engage in knowledge sharing in dyads and workgroups to understand what is happening and affect desired outcomes.

Prior research suggests that corporate management should facilitate environments suitable to KS (e.g., Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and use knowledge sharing to help mitigate the negative impact of organizational politics (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017). Human Resources managers, specifically, can benefit from these findings for design interventions in diverse organization. Similarly, management can structure help-seeking processes that encourage knowledge sharing among employees (cf., Cleavenger & Munyon, 2015). The facilitation of this process by management may offset self-interested forms of knowledge sharing, and encourage more functional knowledge sharing based on work-related, rather than social, needs.

However, our results suggest a degree of caution. In highly political environments, workers may not engage in knowledge sharing that benefits the organization, but rather themselves. Finally, the Brazilian culture may have impacted these results, given that the Brazilian "jeitinho" to evade protocol and organizational policy in favor of reciprocity with co-workers, the collective, and maintain bonds of loyalty (Torres *et al.*, 2015; Teixeira *et al.*, 2019).

Although the findings of this investigation offer new insights into the POPS – KSI and POPS – KSG relationships, there are limitations that should be considered when evaluating these results. First, our data did not measure the specific forms of knowledge being shared by individuals and groups, but rather global assessments regarding the extent to which knowledge is shared. Thus, prior research is needed to explore specific forms of knowledge under varying conditions of POPS. Second, our data were collected using robust methods, but also are cross-sectional. Thus, these findings may differ from within-subjects longitudinal tests, which are needed and represent an important next step. Third, we tested all effects at the individual level of analysis, and future research is needed to understand how POPS, KSI, and KSG estimates agree between employees.

Future research could evaluate these relationships at the group or team level, or even by supervisor or job role, shedding important new light on the effects of organizational politics. Finally, as a future research opportunity, we encourage scholars to evaluate how political skill (Munyon, Summers, Thompson, & Ferris, 2015), or social influence ability, impacts both assessments of POPS and KSI and KSG. We anticipate that politically skilled workers will use their social influence ability to engage in high levels of knowledge sharing in an attempt to gain leverage and influence shared meaning at work.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research provides new theoretical and practical insights into the effects of politics perceptions and knowledge sharing of individual and groups. The results of this empirical research suggest that POPS positively affect KSI and KSG, shedding new light on the ways in which workers seek to understand and influence their workplaces. The findings showed that in the studied companies, industry tenure and organizational tenure influence KS.

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