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# Optimizing Intra-Organizational Knowledge Transfer: A Conceptual Framework Based on Success Factors and Conditions.

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**Abstract**

In today's competitive and dynamic global landscape, an organization's ability to innovate, adapt, and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage hinges on the effective transfer and sharing of knowledge within its own structures. Knowledge transfer, particularly within an organization, plays a pivotal role in fostering innovation, enhancing decision-making and ensuring continuity of expertise. Yet, without a structured and systematic approach to managing these intellectual assets, organizations may struggle to keep up with rapid changes, facing challenges such as high turnover, skill gaps, and the loss of critical knowledge when key employees leave.

This research specifically focuses on identifying the key success factors influencing intra-organizational knowledge transfer in the Tunisian context, providing both conceptual insights and practical recommendations. By conducting a quantitative study across 60 companies in various industries, this paper not only explores the characteristics of the knowledge being transferred but also examines the roles of different stakeholders involved, including their relationships and capabilities. These insights aim to build a framework that organizations can utilize to optimize their knowledge management processes, ultimately supporting long-term growth and operational resilience.

**Keywords:** Knowledge Transfer, Intra-organizational Knowledge Transfer, Success Factors, Tunisian Context, Knowledge Management.

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## Introduction

In the contemporary business environment, organizations increasingly depend on effective knowledge transfer and sharing mechanisms to drive innovation and enhance adaptive capabilities. This dynamic process has proven essential for maintaining competitive advantage and achieving sustainable growth (Kogut & Zander, 1992; Henderson & Cockburn, 1994; Moraux-Saurel & Volle, 2015, Lee & al., 2023). Yet, despite widespread recognition of its strategic importance, the effective management of intra-organizational knowledge transfer continues to present significant challenges for numerous organizations (Berthon, 2003; Raisi & al. 2024). While research on inter-organizational knowledge transfer flourished in the 1990s, (Perrin, 2006) studies focusing on intra-organizational transfer remain scarce (Berthon, 2003; Prévot, 2005, Raisi & al. 2024). This gap in research is particularly concerning given the critical role of intra-organizational knowledge transfer in fostering innovation, improving efficiency, and ensuring the sustainability of expertise within organizations (Argote & Ingram, 2000).

The significance of knowledge as a strategic asset has been firmly established within frameworks like resource-based theory, organizational learning, and knowledge competency management. These frameworks emphasize the vital role of knowledge in driving organizational performance and securing a competitive advantage (Grant, 1996). However, the complexities inherent in capturing, transferring, and utilizing knowledge within an organization are not to be underestimated (Berthon, 2003). Organizations face ongoing challenges in adapting their knowledge stock to the ever-evolving demands of the market (Polanyi, 1966; Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

In this sense, knowledge transfer is a deliberate process of sharing, receiving, and recreating complex organizational knowledge. It is essential for organizational success (Argote & Ingram, 2000). This process involves the active participation of both the knowledge sender and receiver, aiming for positive outcomes such as improved efficiency, innovation, and overall organizational performance (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Tangaraja & al., 2016). This process involves the dissemination of knowledge held by one unit or individual to others within the same organization, facilitating collaboration, learning, and innovation (Szulanski, 1996; Kahia, 2013).

A crucial aspect of knowledge transfer is its internal manifestation: intra-organizational knowledge transfer. This refers specifically to the sharing of valuable knowledge and best practices within an organization, between units, groups, or individuals (Szulanski, 1996; Ipe, 2003). Intra-organizational knowledge transfer is seen as the bedrock of a company's existence

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(Prévot, 2005), creating a shared knowledge base that underpins the firm's functioning (Nonaka, 1995).

Researches on intra-organizational knowledge transfer remain relatively unexplored (Castro & Moreira, 2023), especially in the Tunisian context. Given the Tunisian economy's emphasis on innovation and competitiveness, it is crucial to understand the factors that drive successful knowledge transfer within organizations and to develop effective strategies to optimize this process. This need is further underscored by the Tunisian government's strong emphasis on digital transformation as a key driver of economic growth. By focusing on the Tunisian context, this research aims to shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities related to intra-organizational knowledge transfer in this specific environment.

This research draws on three key theoretical perspectives to understand the process of intra-organizational knowledge transfer: the resource-based view of the firm, the knowledge-based view of the firm, and the social capital theory. The resource-based view of the firm emphasizes knowledge as a valuable resource that can be used to create competitive advantages and drive growth. This perspective underscores the importance of firms leveraging their knowledge assets for sustainable success (Barney 1991; Zahra, 2021). The knowledge-based view extends this concept by positioning knowledge as a strategic resource in its own right, emphasizing its role in outperforming competitors. This view highlights the need for firms to create and manage distinctive knowledge to effectively utilize other organizational resources (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Grant, 1996; Szulanski, 1996). Finally, the social capital theory recognizes the significance of social relationships between individuals as a valuable asset for organizations. This perspective emphasizes the role of social networks in facilitating knowledge transfer and enhancing organizational performance (Kogut & Zander, 1995, Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

This article explores the optimization of intra-organizational knowledge transfer by developing a conceptual framework based on the key success factors and conditions that influence its effectiveness. Given the strategic importance of knowledge sharing within organizations, understanding the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder this process is essential for improving organizational performance and innovation. The study aims to identify the determinants of successful knowledge transfer by examining three key dimensions: the characteristics of the knowledge being transferred, the role of key actors in the process, and the influence of relationship quality on transfer efficiency. Through this approach, we seek to provide a structured and rigorous analysis that contributes to both academic research and managerial practices in the Tunisian business context.

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To achieve this, the study is structured around three main axes. First, we establish a robust theoretical foundation by exploring factors influencing intra-organizational knowledge transfer, examining elements related to the knowledge itself (causal ambiguity, cognitive distance), partner characteristics (absorptive capacity, information encoding capacity, sender capability), and the nature of their relationship (relationship quality). The primary objective is to validate the proposed conceptual model through empirical analysis. The second axis is dedicated to the methodological framework, detailing the quantitative approach adopted, including the survey of 60 Tunisian companies and the validation of the proposed conceptual model through empirical analysis.

Finally, we present the findings and discuss their theoretical and managerial implications, offering practical recommendations for organizations seeking to optimize their internal knowledge transfer mechanisms. Through this structured approach, the study aims to contribute to both academic discourse and managerial practice by identifying key success factors and proposing actionable strategies for enhancing knowledge management within organizations.

## 1. Literature Background

Knowledge has emerged as a key source of innovation and competitive advantage, especially when it diffuses across organizations, industries and countries seamlessly (Conner & Prahalad, 1996; Abdollahi & al., 2023). As a result, knowledge transfer has become an integral part of the strategic management process in organisations (Chen & Lee, 2017) especially those who want to use their intellectual capital as a competitive ability to keep consistency of market position. The recognition of the strategic value of knowledge has subsequently motivated researchers to understand what constitutes its theoretical underpinnings and how it catalyzes organizational learning and innovation (Huggins & Johnston, 2010; Perkins & al., 2021).

### 1.1.Understanding knowledge transfer

Knowledge transfer encompasses the process of moving knowledge from one entity whether an individual, team, or organizational unit to another, with the goal of enabling the recipient to internalize, apply, and effectively use this knowledge (Argote & Ingram, 2000). This dynamic process involves several stages, including identification, communication, assimilation, and application, as noted by Szulanski (1996). Each of these stages plays a crucial role in ensuring that knowledge is not only transmitted but also understood and utilized effectively within the organizational context. The success of knowledge transfer, however, is heavily influenced by various contextual factors, including organizational culture, the strength of the sender-receiver

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relationship, and the inherent nature of the knowledge itself (Cummings & Teng, 2003; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005, Hassan & al. 2017).

The intrinsic nature of knowledge, whether it is tacit or explicit, significantly impacts the ease and effectiveness of its transfer. Tacit knowledge, which is experience-based and often difficult to articulate, presents unique challenges in knowledge transfer compared to explicit knowledge, which can be codified and easily communicated (Polanyi, 1966; Zander & Kogut, 1995; Alavi & Leidner, 2001). The complexity of tacit knowledge transfer lies in its deeply personal and context-dependent nature, requiring close interactions, shared experiences, and often, significant time for effective transfer. This distinction has led researchers to explore methods that facilitate the transfer of tacit knowledge, including mentoring, shadowing, and other relationship-based approaches. In contrast, explicit knowledge, such as documented processes or standardized procedures, can often be transferred efficiently through formal documentation or digital communication platforms.

### 1.2.Knowledge Transfer Success

The success of knowledge transfer is far more than a simple handover of information; it entails a comprehensive process whereby the recipient not only acquires new knowledge but also finds it valuable and applies it effectively within their specific work context. Szulanski (1996) stresses that successful knowledge transfer, should result in outcomes that enhance organizational productivity, efficiency, and adaptability. This holistic approach to knowledge transfer places a significant emphasis on the recipient's satisfaction and capacity to leverage the acquired knowledge, thereby reducing their dependency on the sender and potentially leading to the creation of new, context-specific knowledge. Achieving successful knowledge transfer is a complex endeavor, requiring an alignment of factors related to the characteristics of the knowledge itself, the capabilities of both the sender and receiver, and the quality of their relationship. Knowledge transfer success is heavily reliant on these interconnected factors, as each plays a unique role in facilitating the effective transfer of knowledge within the organization.

For instance, characteristics of the knowledge being transferred, such as its complexity and degree of causal ambiguity, can either aid or hinder the transfer process (Reed & DeFillippi, 1990; Zander & Kogut, 1995, Van Wijk & al., 2008). Complex knowledge often requires a higher degree of interpretation, contextual understanding, and practical application, all of which demand both the sender's ability to encode the information clearly and the receiver's capacity to decode and apply it effectively. This highlights the importance of having a structured

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framework for knowledge transfer that allows both parties to communicate effectively, bridge potential gaps, and co-create an understanding that is actionable within the organizational environment.

The capabilities of the sender are equally critical to knowledge transfer success (Szulanski, 1996, Argote & Ingram, 2000). A knowledgeable and capable sender should possess not only a thorough understanding of the knowledge they are sharing but also the skills to contextualize, adapt, and effectively communicate it to the receiver. Parent et al. (2007) emphasize the sender's role in engaging with the receiver, offering ongoing support, and adjusting their communication style to align with the receiver's absorptive capacity. These factors contribute to a collaborative knowledge transfer process that fosters learning and enhances the value derived from the transferred knowledge.

The receiver's absorptive capacity is also essential for transfer success (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990, Zahra & George, 2002). Without the ability to comprehend, internalize, and apply new knowledge, the transfer process may result in incomplete or ineffective outcomes. To this end, organizations must prioritize developing absorptive capacity within their teams, creating an environment that encourages learning and equips employees with the resources necessary to make the most of newly acquired knowledge.

The relationship between the sender and receiver is, also, a significant determinant of knowledge transfer success (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995, Szulanski, 1996, Dyer & Singh, 1998). Effective knowledge transfer often requires trust, open communication, and a mutual commitment to the process. These relational factors build a foundation for collaborative learning, where both parties feel motivated and invested in achieving positive outcomes. Reagans and McEvily (2003) highlight the role of relationship quality in knowledge transfer, demonstrating that strong partnerships foster a supportive learning environment, facilitating knowledge flow and encouraging individuals to share insights, seek feedback, and develop shared understanding.

## 2. A Framework for Understanding Intra-Organizational Knowledge Transfer

Analyzing the intricate dynamics of intra-organizational knowledge transfer necessitates a systematic framework to elucidate the critical factors and processes underpinning successful implementation. The transfer of knowledge within organizational boundaries transcends simple linear transmission, manifesting instead as a complex network of interdependent variables and dynamic interactions. This conceptual framework, grounded in seminal theoretical perspectives - including the resource-based view (Barney, 1991), knowledge-based view (Grant, 1996), and

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social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) delineates success factors into three fundamental dimensions: partner characteristics, knowledge characteristics, and relational quality. Through rigorous examination of these dimensions, organizations can systematically identify and optimize the key drivers facilitating effective knowledge transfer within their operational context.

### 2.1.Partner Characteristics

The characteristics of the individuals or units involved in the knowledge transfer process are central to determining its success. The partner characteristics section includes three primary factors: absorptive capacity, information encoding capacity, and sender capability. Each of these factors plays a unique role in ensuring that knowledge is transmitted effectively and understood by the receiver.

#### 2.1.1. Absorptive Capacity:

Absorptive capacity refers to the ability to recognize the value of new information, assimilate it, and apply it effectively (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). It is widely regarded as a key organizational competency (Noblet & Simon, 2010). Within the framework of dynamic capabilities theory, absorptive capacity is viewed as a core organizational capability. Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) emphasize that the absorptive capacity of the receiving unit is the most critical determinant of successful internal knowledge transfer. Initially studied in intra-organizational contexts (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Goh, 2002; Nicholls-Nixon & Woo, 2003), absorptive capacity has since been recognized as a pivotal factor in knowledge management. Recent research by Zhang et al. (2023) underscores its importance in facilitating knowledge transfer within organizations, confirming a positive relationship between absorptive capacity and knowledge transfer. These findings highlight the necessity of cultivating absorptive capacity to effectively harness knowledge for organizational innovation and growth.

Based on these insights, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1**: Absorptive capacity positively influences the success of intra-organizational knowledge transfer.

#### 2.1.2. Information Encoding Capacity:

Swaab et al. (2002) define communication capacity as the process of structuring, evaluating, interpreting, and transforming information.

Communication between individuals requires both decoding and encoding information. Effective communication strengthens individual engagement in knowledge transfer activities (Berman & Heilweg, 1989). Previous studies on knowledge transfer highlight the significance

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of both sender (encoding capacity) and receiver (decoding capacity) communication capabilities (Xu & Ma, 2008).

Information encoding capacity is the ability of a source to clearly articulate their ideas and employ easily understandable language (Monge & al., 1982). Xu and Ma (2008) argue that strong source communication capacity facilitates knowledge dissemination. Since relationship quality between partners influences knowledge transfer success (Reagans & McEvily, 2003), the sender's communication capacity affects this relationship (Monge & al., 1982), enhancing its quality (Soh & al., 2000).

Based on these insights, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H2**: Information encoding capacity positively influences the success of intra-organizational knowledge transfer.

### 2.1.3. Sender Capability:

Sender capability refers to the sender's ability to contextualize, adapt, format, translate, and disseminate knowledge through social and technological networks. This capability enhances partner engagement in the transfer process (Parent & al., 2007).

A "capable" sender, as identified by Ko & al. (2005) and Mu & al. (2010), is an individual who dedicates sufficient time and effort to effectively execute the transfer, possesses the necessary expertise, and provides a broad range of knowledge and skills to help the receiver utilize and benefit from them.

Simonin (1997) and Prévot (2005) demonstrate that sender capability is contingent on their level of mastery over past transfer experiences and the knowledge itself. The importance of this factor in transfer success is justified by the difficulty of teaching knowledge without mastering it. Mu & al. (2010) show that the capacity to share or disseminate knowledge positively impacts transfer success, particularly within intra-organizational knowledge transfer contexts.

We propose the following hypothesis:

**H3**: Sender capability positively influences the success of intra-organizational knowledge transfer.

## 2.2.Characteristics of the Transferred Knowledge:

Knowledge itself has inherent characteristics that influence the ease and effectiveness of its transfer. Two key knowledge characteristics impacting intra-organizational knowledge transfer are causal ambiguity and cognitive distance. These characteristics can either enhance or hinder the transfer process, depending on how well they are managed.

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### 2.2.1. Causal Ambiguity:

Causal ambiguity, as defined by Barney (1991), refers to the difficulty in identifying the specific reasons behind a particular outcome. Forgues and Lootvoet (2006) argue that an organization can only sustain its competitive advantage if its resources are rare and inimitable, or if resource combinations are challenging to copy.

Research suggests that tacit knowledge and skills contribute to causal ambiguity (Reed & Defillippi, 1990; Szulanski, 1996; Prévot, 2005). Fauzi (2023) argues that causal ambiguity is a significant barrier to knowledge transfer. He demonstrates that organizations struggle to effectively transfer knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge, due to the inherent ambiguity surrounding the underlying causes and mechanisms of knowledge creation and application. This ambiguity arises from the complexity of knowledge itself, the difficulty in articulating tacit knowledge, and the context-dependent nature of knowledge.

Without prior knowledge of the skills being transferred and an understanding of how to apply them for desired outcomes, effective reuse can be challenging without the sender's guidance.

Based on this theoretical foundation, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H4**: Causal ambiguity negatively influences the success of intra-organizational knowledge transfer within organizations.

### 2.2.2. Cognitive Distance:

Cognitive distance is defined as the gap between the knowledge bases of the sender and receiver. This gap can be a catalyst for learning through interaction (Quélin, 1997; Ambos & al., 2013).

The potential impact of this concept on knowledge transfer has been explored by several researchers (Hamel, 1991; Takeuchi, 1995; Lane & Lubatkin, 1998; Inkpen & Dinur, 1998; Nonaka, Sakar & al., 2001; Cummings & Teng, 2003, Lopes & al. 2021). Kahia (2013) specifically investigated its influence on feedback effects for the sender, namely relationship management and learning effects. The findings suggest that overlooking the negative effects of transfer can reveal the impact of cognitive distance on overall transfer-related outcomes for the sender.

We formulate the following hypothesis:

**H5**: Cognitive distance positively impacts the success of intra-organizational knowledge transfer.

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### 2.3.Relationship Quality

The quality of the relationship between the sender and receiver is a significant determinant of knowledge transfer success. Strong relationships built on trust, respect, and open communication foster an environment conducive to knowledge sharing. The relational quality framework includes elements such as trust, motivation, and communication quality, each contributing to a supportive knowledge transfer environment.

Relationship quality between partners acts as a facilitator of knowledge transfer, improving relationship management and promoting learning. It is implicitly founded on communication, respect, trust, motivation, and mutual commitment (Kahia, 2013). Goh (2002) highlights the pivotal role of relationship quality in fostering effective knowledge transfer. He argues that strong relationships characterized by trust, respect, and open communication create an environment conducive to knowledge sharing. These relational attributes enhance the willingness of both sender and receiver to engage actively in the transfer process, thereby improving its overall success.

Examining the impact of relationship quality on knowledge transfer reveals behavioral determinants (trust and motivation) and structural/managerial determinants (communication). (Aribou, 2009).

The emphasis on behavioral factors in relationship quality is explained by the importance of behavior in organizational learning processes, highlighted by Heyvaert and Ingham (1992), where collective behavior is an element of competence or incompetence (Durand, 2006).

Reagans and McEvily (2003) assert that relationship quality between partners plays a crucial role specifically in the success of inter-organizational knowledge transfer.

The positive relationship between knowledge transfer and relationship quality is well-documented in the literature. Ren and al. (2024) have shown that strong relationships within a team foster trust and open communication, creating an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing knowledge, seeking feedback, and learning from each other.

Based on these findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H6:** Relationship quality positively influences the success of intra-organizational knowledge transfer.

Based on the theoretical foundations and literature review presented above, the conceptual model guiding this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

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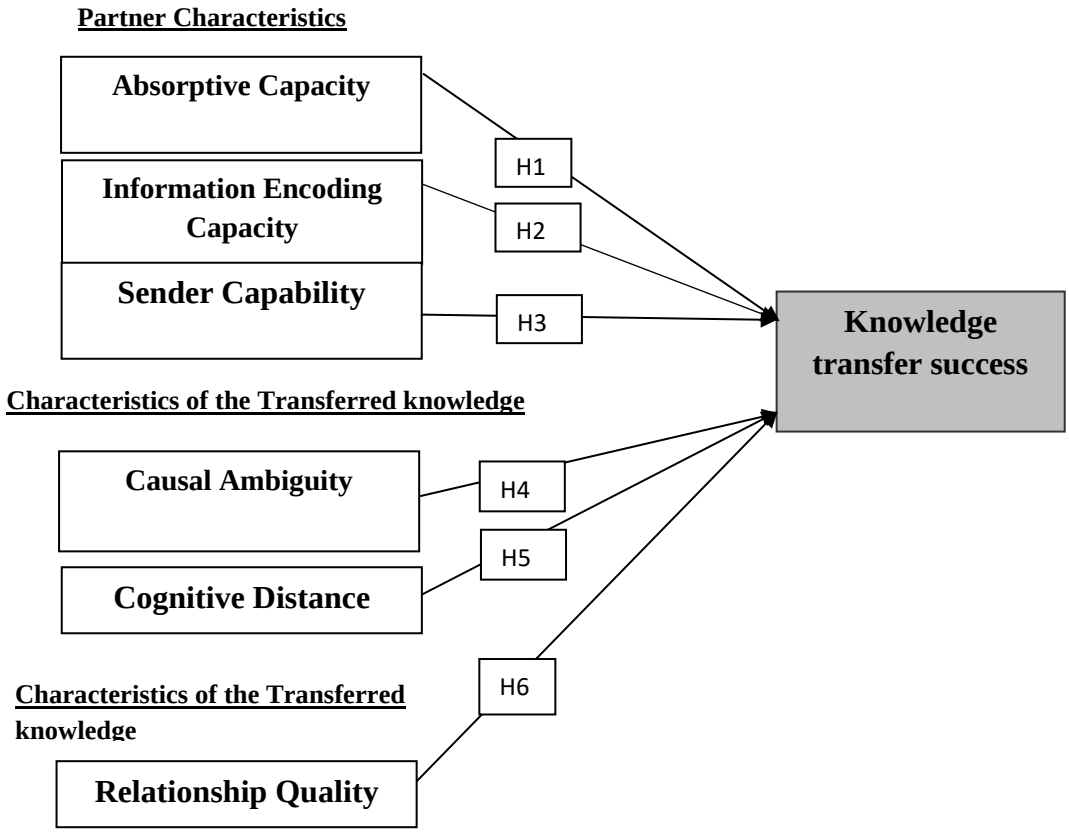
**Figure 1: Conceptual model**




**Source: Developed by the authors**

### 3. Methodological Choice and Approach to the Survey:

The selection of a rigorous methodological approach is paramount to understanding the complexities of intra-organizational knowledge transfer within the Tunisian context. Our epistemological stance, rooted in a positivist perspective, seeks to identify and measure the key factors influencing this process. Consequently, a quantitative approach is favored, enabling the collection of empirical data from a representative sample of Tunisian companies. The adoption of a hypothetico-deductive reasoning mode allowed us to formulate hypotheses based on existing literature and then rigorously test them using statistical analyses. Specifically, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was chosen. PLS-SEM is particularly well-suited for our research context, as it allows us to assess the relationships between the characteristics of the knowledge being transferred, the roles of key actors, and the quality of their relationships, ultimately impacting the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. This approach ensures the validity and reliability of the results, while providing concrete and actionable recommendations for Tunisian organizations seeking to optimize their knowledge management practices.

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## 4. Investigation Method and Data Collection Method:

Given the study's aim to identify and assess critical factors in knowledge transfer, a quantitative approach was deemed the most appropriate. This approach enables systematic measurement and statistical analysis of variables, providing insights into the strength and significance of the relationships between each factor and knowledge transfer success. A structured questionnaire was selected as the primary data collection tool, offering a standardized format to capture responses from a diverse sample of Tunisian companies.

The survey instrument underwent a rigorous pre-testing process to ensure clarity, coherence, and relevance. Expert professionals in knowledge management and organizational behavior reviewed the questionnaire to identify potential gaps and ambiguities, allowing for iterative refinement before the final survey was distributed. This pre-testing stage was essential for ensuring that the questions accurately captured the constructs under investigation, facilitating reliable and valid data collection (Evrard & al. 2003).

To maximize response rates and reach a representative sample, the final questionnaire was administered through both direct contacts and email distribution. Each email included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, the confidential nature of the responses, and a link to the survey. This dual distribution method enabled efficient data collection across a range of industries and organizational sizes, capturing insights from 60 companies within Tunisia. The sample predominantly consisted of medium and large enterprises, reflecting a cross-section of sectors and allowing for generalizable findings applicable to diverse organizational settings.

## 5. Proposed Variables Measurement

The operationalization of the variables within the conceptual model was grounded in scales developed in previous knowledge transfer research. These scales were subsequently adapted to align with the study's context and objectives, ensuring that each variable was measured with precision and relevance. A seven-point Likert scale was used to capture responses, providing a nuanced view of respondents' perceptions and allowing for variability in degrees of agreement or disagreement.

The following table summarizes the measures associated with each variable in the conceptual model, including items designed to assess causal ambiguity, cognitive distance, absorptive capacity, information encoding capacity, sender capability, and relationship quality. Each item was meticulously crafted to reflect the specific dimensions of knowledge transfer, drawing from established studies to ensure consistency and comparability with existing literature.

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**Table 1: Model constructs with measurement items**

| Variables and items | Authors |
|---|---|
| **Causal ambiguity**<br>1- There is a precise list of prerequisite skills needed for the post (function)<br>2- You have an idea of how to combine these skills to produce the expected outputs<br>3- The relationships between causes and effects, inputs and outputs, and actions and results related to the position or function are clear<br>4- There are work manuals and procedures that precisely describe the skills required for the job.<br>5- When a problem occurs, the precise reasons for the failure could easily be articulated. | Szulanski (1996), Wilcox-King (2001) Xu & Ma (2008) |
| **Cognitive distance**<br>1-The receiver has the necessary knowledge base to understand and use the skills transferred<br>2-The sender has the knowledge base to easily understand how the receiver has planned to use the transferred know-how<br>3-Differences in knowledge bases made discussions difficult | Cummings & Teng (2003) |
| **Absorptive capacity**<br>1-I have a vision of what the sender is trying to achieve.<br>2-I have the technical competence to absorb the knowledge imparted.<br>3-I have a clear understanding of the goals, tasks and responsibilities assigned to me.<br>4-I have information about the function that will be entrusted to me.<br>5-I have the necessary knowledge to understand the content of the job. | Xu et Ma (2008) |
| **Information Encoding Capacity**<br>1-The sender uses easy language<br>2-The sender gets straight to the point<br>3-The sender gets on well with others<br>4-The sender expresses his/her ideas clearly<br>5-The sender's written communication is easy to understand<br>6-The sender's oral communication is easy to understand<br>7-The sender has the habit of saying the right words at the right time | Monge & al. (1982) |

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| | |
|---|---|
| **Sender capacity**<br>1- Outside your relationship, the sender masters the knowledge and skills transferred.<br>2- Outside your relationship, the sender has general management know-how.<br>3- Outside your relationship, the sender has experience in carrying out the transfer. | Prévot (2005) |
| **Relationship Quality**<br>1- The relationship between receiver and sender is characterised by mutual trust<br>2- The relationship between receiver and sender is characterised by mutual respect<br>3- The relationship between receiver and sender is characterised by mutual communication<br>4- The relationship between receiver and sender is characterised by mutual commitment<br>5- The relationship between receiver and sender is characterised by mutual motivation | Lawson & al. (2008) ; Kale & al. (2000) ; Dyer & Singh (1998) |
| **Knowledge transfer success**<br>1- The receiver has learned new knowledge<br>2- The receiver can use new knowledge/skills in other work contexts<br>**3-** The receiver has reduced his dependency on the sender | Simonin (1997) |

**Source: Developed by the authors**

By establishing a robust measurement framework, this study provides a reliable foundation for empirical analysis, enabling a precise evaluation of the proposed hypotheses. The structured approach to measurement also supports replicability, allowing future researchers to apply the model in varied organizational contexts and further validate the findings.

## 6. Data Processing and Analysis

The data processing and analysis phase is critical to validating the conceptual framework and assessing the empirical relationships between variables. This study utilizes factor analysis to explore and confirm the structural integrity of the identified constructs. Firstly, we used exploratory analysis (conducting principal component analyses) to determine the latent structure of the variables identified in this research. Secondly, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses (using the partial least squares structural equation modeling method via the XLSTAT software)."

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### 6.1.Principal Components Analysis (PCA)

Exploratory analysis was conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Evrard & al., 2003). PCA aims to discover underlying factors that synthesize the information contained in a larger number of measured variables.

Initially, we conducted exploratory analysis using PCA with SPSS 23 to identify the factorial structure of the constructs.

### 6.2.Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory analysis was based on the results of exploratory analysis. We utilized PLS path modeling with the XLSTAT-PLSPM module of the XLSTAT software (version 2017). PLS is suitable for this research due to its adequacy for small sample sizes ($100 \geq n \geq 30$) (Fernandes, 2012) and its capability to model complex structural models, potentially involving hundreds of variables (Lacroux, 2010). PLS allows modeling complex relationships between observed variables and latent variables, estimating complex causal relationships between latent variables. PLS is predictively oriented to test causal hypotheses, prioritizing the search for predictive optimality of relationships over causal relationships.

### 6.3.Measure Purification

Construct reliability was verified by evaluating Cronbach's alpha coefficients and Dillon-Goldstein Rho coefficients.

The analysis results support the retention of all variables within the conceptual model, with the exception of "cognitive distance." This variable exhibited a Cronbach's alpha value below the acceptable threshold of 0.7, indicating insufficient internal consistency. Consequently, hypothesis 5, which was related to this variable, was eliminated.

Convergent validity ensures that two measures of the same concept are highly correlated. We adopted the approach of Fornell and Larcker (1981), which requires the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to exceed 0.5. Convergent validity was assessed by evaluating the AVE. The results demonstrate AVE values exceeding 0.5 for all constructs.

Based on the findings from XLSTAT, we consider the constructs unidimensional and confirm convergent validity and construct reliability.

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**Table 2: Results of Reliability and Convergent Validity Tests**

| Latent variables | Cronbach's alpha ( > 0.7) | Goldstein's Rho ( > 0.8) | AVE (> 0.5) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Causal ambiguity | 0.809 | 0.866 | 0.564 |
| absorptive capacity | 0.803 | 0.834 | 0.508 |
| Information Encoding Capacity | 0.907 | 0.931 | 0.730 |
| Sender Capability | 0.860 | 0.908 | 0.767 |
| Relationship Quality | 0.873 | 0.903 | 0.610 |
| successful knowledge transfer | 0.841 | 0.904 | 0.759 |

**Source: Developed by the authors**

### 6.4.Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity confirms that each latent variable is associated with a distinct concept, separate from the concepts associated with other latent variables in the model. It is verified by comparing the AVE of each construct with the squared correlations between constructs. The $R^2$ associated with each pair of latent variables should be smaller than the average communality. The following table indicates that AVE values exceed squared correlations. These results demonstrate that a larger portion of variance is shared between each latent variable and its block than between two different latent variables.

### 6.5.PLS-PM Model Validation

The Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index represents the geometric mean of the average communality and the average $R^2$. The absolute GOF value is 0.475, very close to its bootstrap estimate (0.496). The absolute GOF index allows comparison of multiple models (Stan & Saporta, 2006). The relative GOF value is obtained by dividing the absolute GOF by its maximum value in the dataset under study. The external model component of GOF is based on the performance of the measurement model (associated with communalities), while the internal model component is based on the performance of the structural model (associated with the $R^2$ of endogenous latent variables). The following table shows that, with the exception of the absolute

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GOF value, which is not appropriate for this research, the values of the remaining three variants of the GOF index are high, reflecting good model fit (internal and external).

**Table 3: Model Fit Quality**

| | GOF |
|---|---|
| Absolute | 0.475 |
| Relative | 0.654 |
| External Model | 0.979 |
| Internal Model | 0.668 |

**Source: Developed by the authors**

The significance test of the regression links between the explanatory variables and the explained variable was conducted by evaluating the critical ratio (CR) test. Based on the results in Table 4, the CR values consistently exceed 1.96, concluding that all regression links are significant. This implies that all explanatory variables in the model significantly impact the dependent variable "knowledge transfer success", which is well-explained ($R^2 = 0.353$).

**Table 4: Significance of Regression Links**

| **Latent variable** | **Value** | **Critical ratio (CR) ( > 1.96)** |
|---|---|---|
| Causal ambiguity | 0.169 | 7.198 |
| Absorptive Capacity | 0.122 | 3.235 |
| Information Encoding Capability | 0.145 | 4.902 |
| Sender's Capacity | 0.116 | 2.447 |
| Quality of Relationship | 0.154 | 3.009 |

**Source: Developed by the authors**

## 7. Discussion and Interpretation

Based on the hypothesis test results, we conclude that all variables in the model significantly impact the success of knowledge transfer in an intra-organizational context, specifically within organizations. Causal ambiguity has the strongest impact on internal transfer success, contributing 27.962% to $R^2$. This variable is followed by relationship quality, contributing

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23.362% to $R^2$, followed by information encoding capacity (contribution to $R^2$ = 20.72%). Absorptive capacity contributes 14.7% to $R^2$, and lastly, sender capability contributes 13.256% to $R^2$.

We discuss the disparate effects of these factors in stimulating or inhibiting the success of knowledge transfer within the organization, focusing on each variable in the research model.

### 7.1. Impact of Causal Ambiguity on the Success of Intra-organizational Knowledge Transfer

The analysis highlights that causal ambiguity in the transferred knowledge significantly impacts the success of intra-organizational knowledge transfer. This finding aligns with Uygur (2013), who demonstrated that the characteristics of the knowledge itself, particularly its ambiguity, are critical determinants of transfer success. Similarly, Szulanski (1996) argues that the inherent causal ambiguity in knowledge can create significant barriers to effective transfer, underscoring the need for structured approaches to mitigate this challenge.

Kroll et al. (2016) provide actionable strategies to address causal ambiguity, emphasizing the role of centralized knowledge repositories and standardized communication practices. These tools act as consistent and reliable sources of information, helping to reduce the complexity and uncertainty associated with ambiguous knowledge. Additionally, practices such as clearly documenting best practices and implementing shared terminologies ensure a mutual understanding between the sender and receiver, thus facilitating smoother transfer processes.

The difficulty of transferring tacit knowledge, often characterized by its non-codified and context-dependent nature, further compounds the issue of causal ambiguity. Raisi et al. (2024) note that tacit knowledge frequently requires post-transfer support from the sender for the receiver to assimilate and apply it effectively. The reliance on imitation or informal learning in such cases underscores the limitations imposed by causal ambiguity, which can act as a significant barrier to both the immediate success of the transfer and the broader intra-organizational dissemination of knowledge. This, in turn, hinders the organization's ability to capitalize on its knowledge assets to build internal competencies.

Addressing these challenges necessitates the articulation and codification of knowledge, as highlighted by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). Their work demonstrates that converting tacit knowledge into explicit forms through articulation and dialogue is essential for successful transfer. Codification processes, such as documenting key insights and facilitating concept exchanges, help reduce ambiguity while enabling more efficient dissemination of critical knowledge within the organization. However, despite its importance, the effective intra-

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organizational diffusion of codified knowledge remains a significant challenge, further emphasizing the need for structured strategies to overcome causal ambiguity.

### 7.2. Impact of Absorptive Capacity on the Success of Intra-organizational Knowledge Transfer

The consolidated findings validate the hypothesis related to the "absorptive capacity" variable, confirming that the success of intra-organizational knowledge transfer is significantly influenced by the receiver's absorptive capacity. The presence of a significant link between transfer success and this variable corroborates the work of Xu and Ma (2008) and Zhang et al. (2023), who demonstrated that transfer success heavily depends on the receiver's characteristics related to their capacity for acquiring, assimilating, transforming, and integrating transferred knowledge.

### 7.3. Impact of Information Encoding Capacity on the Success of Intra-organizational Knowledge Transfer

The results confirm that the information encoding capacity of the sender significantly impacts the success of knowledge transfer within organizations. This variable's importance is supported by Xu and Ma (2008), who emphasize the role of intensive communication between partners in determining knowledge transfer outcomes. Effective communication ensures that the transferred knowledge is not only conveyed but also understood, laying the groundwork for its successful application. Additionally, this highlights the sender's responsibility to structure and present information in a way that is easy to decode and apply.

The catalytic role of communication in the knowledge transfer process can be better understood through the theoretical lens of the "contextual nature of meanings" (Chanal, 2000). This perspective advocates for the careful selection of language to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation, particularly in complex organizational environments. Establishing a shared language and context helps to align understanding between the sender and receiver, which is critical to achieving organizational performance.

Building on these foundations, Kroll et al. (2016) underline the importance of centralized knowledge repositories and communities of practice as tools to enhance the sender's encoding capacity. These structured platforms provide a consistent framework for articulating complex ideas and standardizing communication, thus minimizing the risk of misinterpretation. Such tools are particularly valuable in distributed teams or organizations with diverse cultural and operational contexts, where clear and consistent communication becomes even more critical.

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By providing reliable mechanisms for knowledge sharing, these practices amplify the sender's ability to convey information effectively and ensure it is comprehensible to receivers.

Given these empirical findings, the dual aspects of communication, decoding and encoding capacities, must be considered together. While decoding involves the receiver's ability to interpret and apply knowledge, the sender's encoding capacity is pivotal in ensuring clarity and accessibility. Specifically, senders must articulate their ideas using clear, concise, and easily understandable language to maximize the chances of successful intra-organizational knowledge dissemination. This interplay between encoding and decoding underscores the critical role of communication in bridging the gap between knowledge holders and recipients.

### 7.4.Impact of Sender Capability on the Success of Intra-organizational Knowledge Transfer

Our empirical findings confirm the contribution of the "sender capability" variable to the success of knowledge transfer within the organization. This result aligns with the research of Davenport and Prusak (1998), who demonstrated that sender capability has a significantly positive effect on transfer success. This is also consistent with Prévot (2005), who showed the significant impact of sender capability on the effects of knowledge transfer, including direct positive effects for the receiver and positive feedback effects for the sender. Kahia (2013) demonstrated that these effects significantly influence the consequences of transfer, namely organizational performance, ultimately affecting the success of knowledge transfer.

Ko et al. (2005) found that this variable exerts a significant indirect effect on transfer success. In this sense, the sender's role in transfer success is manifested in their acquired knowledge dissemination capability, linked to possessing specific attributes such as mastery of the transferred knowledge and expertise.

### 7.5.Impact of Relationship Quality on the Success of Intra-organizational Knowledge Transfer

Based on our results, a high-quality relationship between knowledge transfer stakeholders significantly affects the success of the transfer process within the organization. A quality relationship is characterized by mutual trust (cognitive and affective), respect, communication, commitment, and motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic). This finding aligns with Lawson et al. (2008), who concluded that the quality of the relationship between partners significantly influences direct positive effects for the receiver. Similarly, Kahia (2013) highlighted the contribution of a strong relationship between partners in enhancing the sender's learning

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capacity and the quality of acquired knowledge, enabling access to new knowledge and its development.

These results confirm the studies related to network approaches and social capital by optimizing the social aspect of interaction between organizational units, fostering closer relationships within the organization.

In an inter-organizational perspective, Szulanski (1996) and Ko et al. (2005) demonstrated in their work the significant effect of this variable on the success of knowledge transfer.

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## Conclusion

This study set out to explore the intricate dynamics of intra-organizational knowledge transfer and develop a robust framework that could facilitate its effectiveness, particularly within the context of Tunisian organizations. By examining critical factors such as absorptive capacity, relationship quality, and sender capability, the research aimed to pinpoint the drivers of successful knowledge transfer, providing insights that would be relevant not only for academic understanding but also for practical application in business settings.

The confrontation of the theoretical model with empirical reality enabled us to test the conceptual model through a questionnaire-based survey using a quantitative methodology with a sample of 60 companies engaged in internal knowledge transfer processes.

The empirical results strongly support the hypothesis that the success of intra-organizational knowledge transfer is significantly influenced by a multifaceted set of factors. Our analysis reveals a prominent role for causal ambiguity, where the complexity and tacit nature of knowledge act as a significant barrier to successful transfer. This finding underscores the importance of organizational efforts to codify and articulate tacit knowledge, promoting greater clarity and understanding for recipients.

Furthermore, the study confirms the vital role of absorptive capacity on the receiver's side, emphasizing the importance of developing and nurturing learning capabilities within organizations. To enhance knowledge transfer success, organizations should invest in equipping their employees with the necessary skills and resources to acquire, assimilate, transform, and exploit new knowledge effectively.

The sender's role in the transfer process is equally crucial, as evidenced by the significant impact of information encoding capacity and sender capability. Clear and concise communication, coupled with the sender's expertise and willingness to guide and support the recipient, are essential elements for facilitating successful knowledge transfer.

Finally, the study highlights the significant role of relationship quality in fostering a collaborative and supportive environment for knowledge exchange. Strong interpersonal relationships characterized by trust, respect, open communication, commitment, and motivation are instrumental in promoting knowledge transfer within organizations.

In practical terms, this study’s recommendations encourage organizations to take a proactive approach to knowledge management. Companies are advised to invest in training programs that enhance employees’ absorptive capacity, thus equipping them with the skills needed to understand, internalize, and apply new knowledge effectively. Additionally, establishing

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systems for feedback and communication quality checks can help minimize misunderstandings and ensure a smooth flow of knowledge across departments. The findings also suggest that creating structured mentorship programs, facilitating team-building exercises, and fostering collaborative relationships among employees are essential for creating a culture where knowledge sharing thrives.

While this study contributes significantly to understanding intra-organizational knowledge transfer, it also points to avenues for further research. Future studies could explore the role of cultural factors in knowledge transfer success, as cultural norms and values may impact the way knowledge is shared and received. Additionally, further research could investigate how technology, such as knowledge management systems and artificial intelligence, can be leveraged to support and automate aspects of the knowledge transfer process.

**Data availability statement:** The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [Noura Ksentini], upon reasonable request.

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