



# Knowledge transfer and protection in international joint ventures: An integrative review

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## ABSTRACT

Cross-border transfer and the protection of knowledge are important for multinational enterprises (MNEs) to develop their network partners' capabilities while simultaneously safeguarding competitive advantages. However, they can be challenging for MNEs due to cultural and institutional differences between home and host markets. This poses a dilemma for MNEs, which is how to strike a balance between their knowledge transfer (KT) and knowledge protection (KP) strategies. It is notable that, so far, research has primarily investigated these two areas independently, lacking an integrative view. Therefore, in this article, we reviewed 98 academic articles exploring knowledge transfer/protection in MNEs operating under international joint venture (IJV) arrangements and assessed publications from the last two decades (2000–2022). Drawing from institutional theory and the bargaining power perspective, we developed a conceptual framework highlighting the external and internal factors influencing KT and KP. Subsequently, we contextualized these factors within the specific domain of IJVs, drawing on insights gleaned from the studies in our sample. The interplay of these factors, along with their contextual nuances, provides a holistic and in-depth understanding of how knowledge is managed within the complex dynamics of IJVs. In addition, our review contributes to our understanding of knowledge management in MNEs by identifying novel gaps in the literature and suggesting a number of avenues for future research.

## 1. Introduction

Knowledge is considered a vital resource for firms to develop their competitive advantage (Al-Tabbaa & Zahoor, 2024; Grant, 1996; Grant & Phene, 2022). Cross-border transfer and the protection of knowledge have become important strategic issues for managers of multinational enterprises (MNEs) due to cultural and institutional differences between home and host markets. The importance of knowledge has grown much larger for MNEs, which encounter fierce competition due to their business activities primarily taking place on the global battlefield (Park, 2011). In this environment, international joint ventures (IJVs) have often been regarded as a strategic approach taken by MNEs to leverage their existing knowledge while accessing new knowledge owned by other entities, such as local partners (Inkpen, Minbaeva, & Tsang, 2019;

Pak, Ra, & Lee, 2015). However, IJVs are a unique form of international strategic alliance (i.e., a subset) (Nippa & Reuer, 2019). They are equity-based entities that are newly established and jointly managed by two or more firms, wherein at least one of the entities (i.e., the parent firm or the venture) is located in another country (Nippa & Reuer, 2019; Park, 2011). The effective transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge to IJVs constitutes a primary focal point for MNEs' knowledge management, representing an increasingly predominant subject within the field of international business (IB) research<sup>2</sup> (cf. Dhanaraj, Lyles, Steensma, & Tihanyi, 2004; Nippa & Reuer, 2019).

Scholars have emphasized that alongside international partners, the engagement of local partners in IJVs—an occurrence in most IJV cases—introduces the peril of knowledge misappropriation (Huang & Chiu, 2020; Sun, Deng, & Wright, 2021). To specify, local partners often

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<sup>2</sup> Our paper investigates knowledge transfer and protection in IJVs, placing a distinct emphasis on the perspective of MNEs. Therefore, our *unit of analysis* is the knowledge management process within the context of IJVs, with a focus on the MNE perspective.

attempt to gain access to MNEs' proprietary knowledge through IJVs because they perceive MNEs as a source of advanced technologies and managerial know-how (Meyer & Sinani, 2009; Khan, Lew, & Sinkovics, 2015). This can erode MNEs' competitive advantage over time, as their core knowledge may be exposed to local partners in IJVs, and result in the creation of new competitors (Contractor, 2019; Jiang, Li, Gao, Bao, & Jiang, 2013), which implies that knowledge leakage leads to MNE headquarters' loss of valuable intellectual property. Therefore, MNEs must take precautions when collaborating with local partners by implementing specific measures and strategies to protect their knowledge (Ahmad, Bosua, & Scheepers, 2014). Therefore, along with knowledge transfer, knowledge leakage in IJVs and MNEs' knowledge protection have become popular research themes in the IB literature (Inkpen et al., 2019).

However, the simultaneous management of these two aspects (knowledge transfer and knowledge protection) can create a dilemma for MNEs—that is, conditions that promote knowledge sharing may increase the likelihood of knowledge exposure, and vice versa (Monteiro, Mol, & Birkinshaw, 2017; Qiu & Haugland, 2019). This suggests that paying attention to a single area, whether it is knowledge transfer (KT) or knowledge protection (KP), may not suffice for MNEs to achieve successful knowledge management (KM) in IJVs (Contractor, 2019). Instead, MNEs are required to carefully manage the trade-off between transfer and protection (of their knowledge) and strike a delicate balance between the two—aiming to avoid inadvertently creating new competitors while still reaping the benefits of IJVs (Arora, Athreye, & Huang, 2016). While a few conceptual studies have sought to address both aspects (KT and KP) (e.g., Contractor, 2019), we still have limited understanding of the factors that affect MNEs' capacity to effectively balance their KT and KP strategies in IJVs that might be located in countries with both weak and strong intellectual property protection regimes (cf. Mavroudi, Kafouros, Jia, & Hong, 2023). In effect, the significance of this issue is underscored as a pivotal inquiry, whereby Contractor (2019), for example, posed the question: “How can a company effectively navigate the delicate equilibrium between intentional disclosure and the imperative of maintaining secrecy?” (p. 262).

Against this background, we argue that the central issue of MNEs' cross-border KM in IJVs lies in handling the tension between KT and KP (Contractor, 2019; Inkpen et al., 2019; Laursen & Salter, 2014). In other words, observing either KT or KP may omit adequate discussion on MNEs' cross-border knowledge movement and KM strategies in IJVs. However, contrary to this argument, extant studies have failed to simultaneously cast light on the two facets of KM (i.e., KT and KP) in a conjoint manner (Mazloomi Khamesh & Jolly, 2008). In fact, the KT and KP issues seem to be regarded as two separate areas of investigation in the literature (Lee, Chang, Liu, & Yang, 2007; Sofka, Shehu, & de Faria, 2014), indicating a limitation in our understanding of the interplay between KT and KP research (Rouyre & Fernandez, 2019) and highlighting a need for an integrative review that combines both streams.<sup>3</sup>

To address this gap, in this paper, we systematically review 98 articles published in 23 highly ranked journals<sup>4</sup> during the last two decades (2000–2022). Based on this analysis, we offer several theoretical contributions. Importantly, we develop a conceptual framework of MNEs' knowledge transfer-protection in IJVs that consolidates two prominent theories (institutional theory and bargaining power theory) to identify a wide variety of internal and external factors that influence MNEs' knowledge management in IJVs. The rationale for incorporating these two theories lies in their complementary roles. On one hand,

bargaining power, representing the relative ability of IJVs to exert influence over headquarters within MNE networks, serves as a critical *internal* capability (Meyer, Li, & Schotter, 2020), profoundly impacting decision-making and the knowledge management process (Li, Zhou, & Zajac, 2009). On the other hand, institutional forces affect the formation of IJVs (Le Nguyen, Larimo, & Wang, 2019), and therefore, it (i.e., the conceptual framework) helps us analyze the *external* environment of IJVs, determining their knowledge management and operations in local markets (Steensma & Lyles, 2000). Overall, our analysis reveals a set of external factors (including regulatory isomorphism, normative isomorphism, and cultural-cognitive isomorphism) as well as internal factors (including extent of control, focus of control, and control mechanisms, such as output and social control mechanisms) that play pivotal roles in influencing knowledge transfer and protection. Subsequently, we carefully contextualize these factors within the specific domain of IJVs, drawing on insights gleaned from the studies in our review sample. The interplay of these factors, along with their contextual nuances, provides a holistic and in-depth understanding of how knowledge is managed within the complex dynamics of IJVs. In other words, the framework uniquely displays the tailoring of the two theories (i.e., institutional theory and bargaining power theories) to a precise research context (i.e., cross-border KM in IJVs) (Santangelo & Verbeke, 2022). In addition, our examination of the literature on MNEs' knowledge transfer and protection in IJVs, coupled with the development of a conceptual framework, enables us to pinpoint significant gaps in the current research landscape. From this vantage point, we propose several innovative avenues for future research, advocating a cross-fertilization of research methodologies and heightened contextualization within specific industries or cultural contexts. These cover several themes, including the investigation of control mechanisms' (output, process, and social control) mediation in IJVs, exploring local partners as secondary knowledge acquirers, investigating evolving MNE technology protection, and examining tacit knowledge transfer and protection strategies. These directions can inject fresh research perspectives, fostering a deeper and more globally relevant understanding of knowledge management dynamics within IJVs.

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, a conceptual background of the KT and KP concepts is presented. Then, the research methodology is discussed, and the subsequent section is comprised of a qualitative analysis of the major research themes and a presentation of a newly developed conceptual framework. Based on the review's findings, the proposed areas for future research are highlighted. Finally, the paper discusses the theoretical implications and limitations of the study.

## 2. Knowledge transfer vs. knowledge protection in IJVs

IJVs are often referred as vehicles for learning knowledge, and they can be armed with intangible competitiveness by taking this knowledge from MNEs (Park, 2011). For this reason, the knowledge-based view perceives an IJV largely as an instrument of organizational learning (Park & Vertinsky, 2016). That is, IJVs are frequently used by MNEs for the transfer of organizationally embedded knowledge (Dhanaraj et al., 2004). Although knowledge is often referred to as having sticky attributes (Kale, Singh, & Perlmutter, 2000; Szulanski, 1996), IJVs attract attention as effective catalysts for accessing or acquiring new knowledge beyond firm boundaries. Thus, the equity-based co-ownership structure is emphasized as a better mechanism than non-equity-based contractual arrangements for learning organizationally embedded knowledge from MNEs (Kogut, 1988). However, Norman (2002) paid attention to the fact that knowledge also has a public good character and a non-rivalrous aspect, and he contended that to guard “the crown jewels,” MNEs may confine their transparency by using rigorous control structures, which makes it easy to control knowledge leakage in local firms through IJVs. In this vein, if we were to look only at knowledge transfer in IJVs, we would only see a fragment of the phenomenon, and thus, to draw an overall picture, we would need to examine both knowledge transfer and

<sup>3</sup> To our best knowledge, only four empirical papers have explored KT and KP in IJVs simultaneously; these are illustrated in the Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> As explained in the methodology section, highly ranked journals in this study refer to academic outlets that are included in the FT50 list and/or journals that are included in the Academic Journal Guide 2021 with a ranking of 3 or above (levels 3, 4, and 4\*).

knowledge protection simultaneously. We begin the discussion by holding a conversation about the characteristics of IJVs.

In most cases, IJVs are typically formed through a mutual agreement between foreign and domestic firms that removes potential barriers to knowledge flow between partners (Khan et al. 2015). Thus, an IJV is regarded as a key entry mode strategy adopted by MNEs (Shi, Sun, Pinkham, & Peng, 2014). Eliminating these barriers, however, may yield an unintended consequence—that is, partners might overshare or, in certain instances, find it necessary to deliberately safeguard crucial knowledge from their collaborators. As such, MNEs can transfer knowledge to IJVs to maximize their earnings from the operations of foreign subsidiaries, but they usually want to prevent unintentional leakage of core organizational knowledge to protect their firm-specific advantages. This is because the unintended outflow of key know-how and organizational knowledge will possibly turn local partners into global competitors in the long-term (Inkpen et al. 2019). Under pressure from this dilemma, how to control the knowledge flow in IJVs has become a primary concern of MNEs desiring to invest in foreign markets and, in particular, setting up collaborative partnerships in culturally and institutionally different host environments (Lyles & Salk, 1996; Oxley & Wada, 2009).

Taken together, there are two main streams of research on cross-border knowledge management in IJVs. First, due to the innate characteristics of IJVs, empirical examinations dealing with knowledge transfer are in the limelight. Studies have commonly focused on the invigoration of knowledge exchange within IJVs—specifically, MNEs' knowledge transmittance to IJVs (Dhanaraj et al., 2004; Steensma & Lyles, 2000). Second, scholars have also investigated the other side of the same coin (i.e., knowledge protection). They are concerned about the damage of knowledge leakage and have a propensity to look for ways to protect high-value-added knowledge from moving to local firms through IJVs (e.g., Guo, Yang, Li, & Lyu, 2020; Li & Xie, 2016).

### 2.1. Knowledge transfer

Previous studies on knowledge transfer have generally focused on analyzing how MNEs transmit tacit and explicit knowledge to their foreign affiliates. Organizational learning theory suggests that one of the primary motivators of firms establishing IJVs is closely associated with the “intent to learn” (Inkpen, 2000; Lyles & Salk, 1996). Subsequent discussions have focused on the role of absorptive capacity, suggesting that firms seeking IJVs to leverage knowledge residing with partners should develop the ability to (1) understand external knowledge, (2) assimilate it, and (3) apply it to create value (Lane, Salk, & Lyles, 2001; Lyles & Salk, 1996). It is in such a context that learning and exploiting such knowledge has become an essential conduit for a firm's survival and long-term success (Inkpen & Beamish, 1997; Teece, 1998). In line with organizational learning theory, empirical studies exploring knowledge transfer have suggested that effective knowledge exchanges through IJVs can be beneficial for MNEs, as the benefits of learning commonly outweigh the damage caused by knowledge leakage. Therefore, the key goal is to find ways to stimulate knowledge transfer in IJVs by examining the factors that are claimed to be influential (Rotsios, Sklavounos, & Hajidimitriou, 2021).

Knowledge can be divided into two types: explicit and tacit. Compared to explicit information and knowledge, which is easily codified, documented, and transferred, tacit know-how (i.e., deeply embedded in human beings, tasks, and organizations) has attracted huge scholarly attention, given the difficulty associated with its transfer (Dhanaraj et al., 2004). In this respect, several scholars (e.g., Anh, Baughn, Hang, & Neupert, 2006; Dhanaraj et al., 2004; Lyles & Salk, 2007; Park, Vertinsky, & Becerra, 2015) have indicated that the absorption of such knowledge is pivotal for improving competitiveness, compared to explicit knowledge that is attainable through market transactions (Park et al., 2015). The reasons behind such a distinctive benefit of tacit knowledge acquisition can be understood by examining

the innate character of knowledge and IJVs per se. Local firms participating in IJVs can purchase codifiable skills from markets and simply accumulate them in their knowledge warehouses. However, tacit knowledge is commonly embedded in organizations, and it has strong sticky characteristics (Szulanski, 1996; Szulanski, Ringov, & Jensen, 2016). This indicates that the purchase of these types of knowledge from outside sources does not guarantee their smooth implantation within a buyer's cognitive structure, and even the internal development of such knowledge is a frustrating process (Park, 2010). Therefore, the efficient acquisition of sticky information (through IJVs) logically strengthens organizational competitiveness if it is plausible (Park, 2010). In this situation, MNEs often function as a vehicle to transfer sticky tacit knowledge (e.g., through IJVs) in global markets in that IJVs are a means to acquire sophisticated know-how as well as technology by serving as a bridge between the parents for knowledge exchange (Lyles & Salk, 1996).

More specifically, IJVs provide local parents with opportunities for observational learning, or vicarious learning (Park & Harris, 2014). Vicarious learning is a good means of learning in that local parents are the firsthand watchers of IJVs' business activities, including transactions of technological and managerial know-how with MNEs (Hamel, 1991). Hence, they (i.e., local parents) may logically have chances to acquire useful knowledge by participating in IJV operations. The repetitive mutual interactions with foreign parents through IJVs skim off the organizational boundaries between partnering firms, creating “fishing rods” that local parents can exploit to pick up MNEs' key knowledge reservoirs. This, in turn, raises the question of the difficulty of MNEs controlling such a risk of knowledge being unintentionally copied by the local partner for its own purpose. Qiu & Haugland (2019) pointed out that this difficulty is mainly due to certain personnel who initiate interactions and are significantly involved in the knowledge exchange process in IJVs. They are often referred to as boundary spanners (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981)—the representatives of each collaborating firm who oversee the IJV management. They share technical advice and teach organizational goals and knowledge in the communication process for the better operation of IJVs (Khan, Shenkar, & Lew, 2015). Knowledge acquired by the local individuals during the interactions will move to local parents, in that the inter-firm-level knowledge transfer originates from individuals' contacts and connections (Gupta, Tesluk, & Taylor, 2007; Qiu & Haugland, 2019), and the knowledge plausibly spills over into other local firms that are outsiders relative to the collaborative partnerships.

Once the knowledge moves to a local parent, it gradually cascades to other firms in the same locations or industries, indicating that IJVs may generate a knowledge spillover effect in the local market (Inkpen et al., 2019; Müller & Schnitzer, 2006; Ryu, McCann, & Reuer, 2018). That is, local parent firms could turn into indirect distributors of IJVs' knowledge to other local firms or the IJVs themselves could be direct outlets of knowledge because of their local network embeddedness (Zhao, Anand, & Mitchell, 2005).

As a participant in the domestic environment, IJVs might diffuse their skills and resources and, at the same time, extract useful local market information. Market-specific knowledge is a type of information that builds cognitive structures within a particular country and, thus, should be useful for firms to operate their business smoothly in those markets (Beamish & Berdrow, 2003). IJVs are in an advantageous position when acquiring local market information thanks to their local parents. MNEs with no prior experience in the local market make great use of IJVs to access their partners' market information, just as most Western firms (that lack knowledge about local conventions) form alliances with local firms in which they (i.e., Western firms) supply technical know-how, while the local firms provide knowledge about market peculiarities (Schoenmakers & Duysters, 2006). In this vein, IJVs play a bridge role between foreign and local parents, and thus, knowledge exchanges through IJVs are fundamentally bidirectional.

## 2.2. Knowledge protection

As knowledge can flow bidirectionally between the parents in IJVs, MNEs face a dilemma, reaching for the local parents' knowledge (i.e., local market information) while potentially jeopardizing the retention of their core knowledge assets, including technological skills and key expertise. MNEs cannot possibly control every inter-firm and interpersonal knowledge movement in IJVs; thus, the fear of losing their skills continuously haunts them and influences their strategic decisions on knowledge exchange activities in IJVs. To cope with such problems, which always come with the formation of IJVs, MNEs use organizational protection mechanisms that contain various tactics to help firms actively engage in and take control of knowledge flows in IJVs. The mechanisms are roughly classified into three areas of knowledge protection—strategic-level, operational-level, and legal structures (Ahmad et al., 2014; De Faria & Sofka, 2010; Norman, 2001).

MNEs begin by identifying what type of knowledge should be kept safe and decide how to protect this knowledge at the *strategic* level (Ahmad et al., 2014). This is a critical process in which MNEs evaluate the costs and benefits of defending their key assets (i.e., knowledge) to find and develop the best fitting strategies for them. A top management team and senior managers develop the policies and guidelines that the parent firms and employees should follow while they are involved in IJV relationships. The rules created and stressed by top management enforce all members of IJVs to behave cautiously to safeguard key information, which eventually leads to the development of an organizational culture. In contrast, the methods found at the *operational* level are rather narrow in scope; they are directly related to the management of information flows (e.g., limiting the number of employees granted access to knowledge, setting up boundaries of facility/information disclosure, and modifying or hiding knowledge) (Huang & Chiu, 2020). Lastly, MNEs often attempt to use *legalistic* methods to prevent local parents from acquiring the core knowledge that they (i.e., MNEs) do not want to leak out. Legal structures are known to be effective in managing sensitive information (i.e., trade secrets and high-end technology) (Norman, 2001). Legal documentation of proprietary assets (i.e., patents) helps MNEs protect their knowledge through intellectual property rights (IPRs). However, these methods are often too rigid and may increase the exposure risk due to publicity and difficulties with enforcement in weak IPR environments. MNEs, therefore, further employ contractual mechanisms, such as nondisclosure agreements, which are more flexible in scope and could be tailored to cover particular knowledge assets (Ahmad et al., 2014) and employment limitations to partner employees (Norman, 2001).

However, another school of researchers (e.g., Inkpen et al., 2019) has raised the somewhat different view that although knowledge leakage may lead to negative effects for MNEs whose knowledge is unwillingly exposed, this is not only a rare event but also sometimes beneficial for MNEs. Knowledge leakage from MNEs to their partner firms commonly occurs in cases where managerial interactions are inevitable between them. In addition, knowledge leakage has a reciprocal nature, which means that knowledge leakage from MNEs paradoxically facilitates knowledge inflows from their partner firms. Contractor (2019) went one step further from the argument that knowledge leakage is innocuous and suggested optimum points where the net benefit of knowledge leakage is maximized. These are (1) if MNEs rely on a portfolio of strong and defensible patents, a limited level of disclosure is perhaps suggested to collaborate with partner firms; (2) MNEs may selectively, and on a limited basis, share knowledge if they are armed with knowledge that is complex and cannot be easily replicated by an imitator firm; (3) selective disclosure can cause a technological “bandwagon” and reputation effect in a few open innovation environments or in highly networked sectors; (4) if MNEs have high absorptive capacity, they can seize the benefits of selective disclosure from the reverse-flow of information from partner firms; and (5) if MNEs' partner firms take charge of producing only a subcomponent of a complete machine, the benefits of

knowledge leakage can exceed the costs of knowledge protection.

Yet, Contractor (2019) also emphasized that knowledge leakage should be minimized in cases where the mix of proprietary knowledge in MNEs is skewed toward patents, MNEs' knowledge mix is weighted toward trade secrets, and MNEs' absorptive capacity is insufficient. In these situations, MNEs may try to establish rules that govern social interactions between cooperating parties (Liebeskind, 1997; Müller, 2010). In this circumstance, MNEs' own relational capital can complement their organization-wide knowledge protection mechanisms. Scholars have introduced relational capital as an efficient method of preventing knowledge leakage occurring at the individual level in IJVs (Kale et al., 2000; Lee et al., 2007; Norman, 2002). On the one hand, it creates a more relaxed atmosphere for individuals from each party to open up and communicate more freely, resulting in increased interactions and information exchanges. On the other hand, it gives individuals pressure not to cheat on their partners, and they are compelled to follow a moral code that is built upon strong interpersonal ties in IJVs. The moral code often implies that there will be a backlash of opportunistic behaviors (i.e., misappropriation of partners' core information assets) if breached. Trust, for instance, invigorates learning and information exchanges in IJVs and simultaneously lessens the potential of a partner's opportunistic behaviors (Guo et al., 2020; Kale et al., 2000). Therefore, each firm's employees inhibit themselves from any actions that will make them lose their partners' trust to prolong good interpersonal and interfirm relationships with their partners and simultaneously prevent partners' retaliatory response. Furthermore, the presence of relational capital and knowledge protection mechanisms has a synergistic effect on each other. This is because having a solid organization-wide protection mechanism gives employees confidence and increases their willingness to communicate (Lee et al., 2007).

## 3. Methodology

The aim of this study is to advance our understanding of the KM paradigm in IJVs by critically integrating the KT and KP research streams. By doing so, we propose a conceptual framework that consolidates theories (i.e., institutional theory and bargaining power theory) to explain the internal and external factors that influence MNEs' KM in IJVs. This study identifies prevailing theories on KM in IJVs,<sup>5</sup> detects areas that require new knowledge, and offers a framework for future research avenues. As our methodology, we employed the systematic literature review method as a robust approach to thoroughly scrutinize and integrate existing published literature (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). This methodology is imperative for conducting rigorous review studies and ensuring more reliable and valid insights compared to

<sup>5</sup> According to our understanding from the literature review, the resource-based view gives us a hint that the maintenance and upkeep of strategic and sustainable competitive advantage is dependent upon the possession of inimitable, untransferable, and non-substitutable organizational resources, and knowledge is such an asset. MNEs may use these assets to strengthen their advantage in local markets. In the similar vein, the knowledge-based view is a theoretical approach for exploring MNEs' competitive advantages based on the accumulation and use of knowledge. Dynamic capability refers to a firm's ability to develop, increase, and adapt to changes to obtain its success, and adequate KM is a prerequisite to enhance an MNE's productive capacity. Unlikely for them, institutional theory sheds light on the effect of the external environment on business strategies and KM. Thus, MNEs can apply the theory by understanding the influence of institutional factors on their KM in local markets. In contrast, bargaining power affects the distribution of a firm's resources, and subsidiary bargaining power and MNE control issues determine the subsidiary's internal environments for KM (i.e., intra-knowledge flows within MNE networks and inter-knowledge movements between IJV partners). Our findings derived from the literature review suggest that we should know more about both the external and the internal environments in which MNEs explore and exploit such institutional pressures and power to pursue their own ends.

subjective narrative reviews (Castañer & Oliveira, 2020).

### 3.1. Sample selection

To ensure the methodological and theoretical rigor of our sample, we focused on articles published in highly ranked academic journals. These journals typically employ more stringent peer-review processes, attracting submissions from esteemed scholars. Consequently, articles published in these journals are more likely to exhibit high quality and make significant contributions to the field. For the purpose of selecting these journals, we initially included FT50 journals in the IB, management studies, and strategic management domains. We then added other journals that are also ranked in the Academic Journal Guide (CABS, 2021). This guide provides an internationally recognized ranking of business and management journals based on a multifaceted evaluation process that encompasses peer review, editorial and expert judgments, and statistical information relating to citations. Accordingly, it is widely used in conducting systematic literature reviews (Zahoor, Al-Tabbaa, Khan, & Wood, 2020). We considered journals to be highly ranked if they were rated at Grades 3, 4, or 4\* per the AJG (Goh, Al-Tabbaa, & Khan, 2023). This selection criterion ensured that the selected papers were published in journals widely recognized for their high standards and rigorous review processes. Therefore, we also included six core IB journals ranked in the AJG 2021, with a ranking of 3 and above. Moreover, to ensure the comprehensiveness of our sample while maintaining relevance, we conducted an additional search on Google Scholar to identify potential journals not captured in our initial screening process (i.e., they are not categorized in the IB, Strategic Management, or General Management fields in the AJG list) that publish on the topic of IJV and KM. This search revealed additional related journals that we included (all rated at Grades 3, 4, or 4\*).

Overall, these journals (n = 23) encompassed the *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ), the *Strategic Management Journal* (SMJ), the *Journal of International Business Studies* (JIBS), the *Journal of Management* (JoM), the *Journal of Management Studies* (JMS), *Organization Science* (OScience), *Organization Studies* (OSTudies), *Management Science* (MS), *Research Policy* (RP), *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* (APJM), the *Global Strategy Journal* (GSJ), the *Journal of World Business* (JWB), the *Journal of International Management* (JIM), *Management International Review* (MIR), *International Business Review* (IBR), *Industrial Marketing Management* (IMM), the *Journal of Business Research* (JBR), the *Journal of International Marketing* (JIMarket), *International Marketing Review* (IMR), the *Journal of Knowledge Management* (JKM),<sup>6</sup> *Long Range Planning* (LRP), *Technovation*, and *R&D Management*.

The study's timeframe was set to publications from 2000 to 2022 to grasp the most recent developments in the literature as well as the key trends for over two decades. The first step of the sample selection process was to screen for relevant research on the EBSCO database by using the keywords "knowledge transfer," "technology transfer," "knowledge acquisition," "technology acquisition," "knowledge exchange," "learning," "international joint venture," and "IJV." A total of 369 results were retrieved, yet the number dropped to 112 after including only the papers published in the 23 peer-reviewed, highly ranked journals that we selected. Then, we performed manual scrutiny to sort out irrelevant articles, since the EBSCO search engine could not identify whether a study truly focused on the right topics. Therefore, articles that did not predominantly discuss interorganizational knowledge flows or learning in IJVs were also discarded from the sample. This screening yielded 79 articles addressing IJV and KT as the final sample (see Appendix B for the full list).

Second, in approaching the KP literature on the EBSCO database, we used "protect\*," "leak\*," "intellectual property," "IP," "patent,"

<sup>6</sup> Although this journal is rated 2\* in the AJG, we chose to include it because it is regarded as a specialized journal in the field of knowledge management.

"piracy," "international joint venture," and "IJV" as keywords (for reference, an asterisk (\*) was used for truncation). As proof that this research area is barren, only 25 results were initially retrieved, of which only six papers were published in our selected highly ranked journals. A summary of the studies is shown in Table 1. Due to the serious lack of rigorous research dealing with KP in IJVs (published in our selected journals), we decided to expand our search scope by adding "international alliance" (IA) as an extra keyword. Although IAs and IJVs are not synonymous, both refer to cross-border collaborations between two or more firms that involve a significant level of inter-organizational knowledge exchange (Shi et al. 2014). While IJVs involve a shared ownership structure and pooling of resources, IAs can encompass a broader spectrum of collaborative arrangements, including strategic alliances, research partnerships, and technology licensing agreements. The common thread among these diverse forms of collaboration is the exchange of knowledge, which inevitably raises KP concerns (Oxley & Sampson, 2004). As such, all these forms of collaboration face similar issues of knowledge protection, as firms need to balance the benefits of externally sharing their strategic knowledge with the risks of knowledge leakage, such as unintentional knowledge leakage, potential misuse by partners, and vulnerability to intellectual property breaches (Contractor, Woodley, & Piepenbrink, 2011). By including the term IA, we were able to capture more relevant studies that examined KP in various relational contexts, complementing our understanding of this domain. When we added the additional keyword, 4112 publications were retrieved, of which 128 articles were published in our selected journals. When scrutinizing the content of these papers to select the relevant papers, only 19 articles were found to deal with KP in IJVs directly and significantly. This was primarily determined by whether the issue of KP was presented in the abstract and discussed in the introduction section of the papers (see Appendix C).

## 4. Bibliometric findings

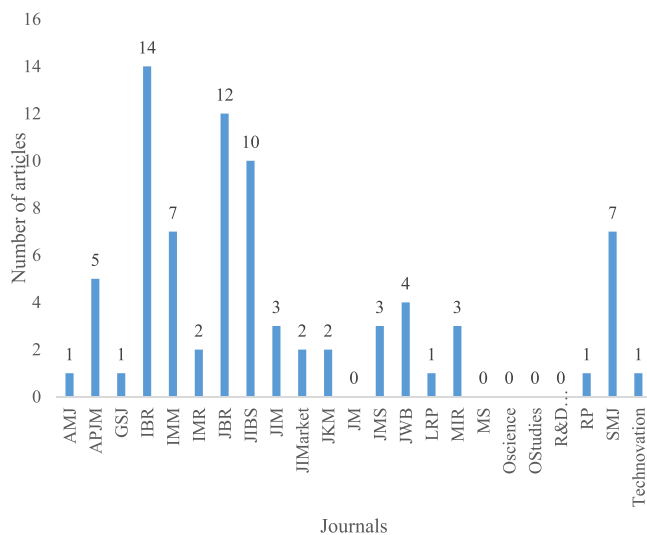
Fig. 1 shows the number of articles published on knowledge-related activities in IJVs. *IBR* had the highest number (14 papers), followed by *JBR* (12 papers) and *JIBS* (10 papers). Fig. 2 displays the year distribution of research published from 2000 to 2022. The years with the highest number were 2005, 2007, and 2009 (seven papers).

Figs. 3 and 4 present the trend of publications on both topics based on the bibliometric results. The gap between the graphs of the two topics was somewhat large; however, this narrowed down in the later decade compared to the earlier decade. The number of knowledge-related studies (i.e., the knowledge transfer literature) generally surpassed the KP studies in most years and was especially abundant in the earlier decade. Meanwhile, KP studies made a late appearance in 2004, and there was no drastic or consistent change in the trend throughout the decades. However, in the later decade, the number of KP-focused topics eventually became equal in 2019 and 2022. This bibliometric finding—that is, the significant gap between the number of studies on the two topics—indicates that knowledge protection in IJVs (as a research domain) has been largely neglected by scholars. On the other hand, knowledge-related topics showed a sharp decrease after 2009 but bounced back from 2012 to 2015. The number decreased again after 2015, reaching its lowest point in 2017. Furthermore, a drastic upward trend was shown between 2019 and 2021; however, there was a huge downturn in numbers in 2022, reaching the lowest point since 2017 (knowledge-related topics fluctuated up and down).

Table 2 presents the research methods and data sources used in each article. Although some articles utilized multiple methods and data for complementary purposes (i.e., triangulation), the table displays each article's overarching method and main data source to clearly explain the central methodology employed. In other words, researchers have the propensity to adopt plural research methods to secure the robustness of the results and findings, but it is important for us to precisely identify their primary research philosophy per se. The most philosophically

**Table 1**  
The list of articles on knowledge protection/leakage in IJVs.

Author (s)	Purpose	Research Context	Research Method	Findings
Hagedoorn, Cloodt, & van Kranenburg (2005)	To examine the degree to which country differences in IP rights protection affect the choice of firms for a mode of international inter-firm R&D partnerships.	International R&D partnerships (focusing on IJVs) in various sectors (during 1975-1999)	Quantitative	With less secure IP protection, firms choose R&D joint ventures rather than contractual partnerships. The level of technological change in industries has an inverse effect on firms' preference for international R&D joint ventures.
Oxley & Wada (2009)	To prove that JVs support greater knowledge transfer than bare license agreements and to study the extent and speed of alliance-related knowledge transfer and knowledge leakage in areas not directly related to alliance activities.	Equity IJVs in Japan (U.S.-Japan agreements)	Quantitative	Knowledge transfer directly related to the alliance activity is enhanced in the JV, and the speed of integration into Japanese firms' subsequent innovations increases while leakage of unrelated technology is significantly reduced in the JV when compared with bare license agreements.
Li & Xie (2016)	To suggest key factors that affect the choice of EJVs as a risk-mitigating mechanism in protecting technological competencies:	R&D investment-related IJVs in China (during 1995-2002)	Quantitative	MNEs can reduce their use of EJVs when the scope of R&D activities is limited to research-oriented ones or when academic institutions are chosen as partners, and a cultural distance between the host and home countries strengthens these effects.
Huang & Chiu (2020)	To highlight the moderating role of knowledge tension on the relationship between management control and MNE's satisfaction with IJV's performance.	Taiwanese-Chinese JVs in China	Quantitative	The effect of split- or MNE-dominant-management control on IJV satisfaction differs depending on whether MNEs or local partners encounter sharing-protection tension or not.
Sun et al. (2021)	To address the tension between value creation and value appropriation in IJVs by examining how host state ownership affects both their innovation inputs and outputs.	IJVs in the Chinese manufacturing sector (during 2008–2013)	Quantitative	R&D investment in IJVs can be politically motivated and symbolically managed to ensure continued resource exchanges with the host state. The political pressure is mitigated when foreign parents directly transfer home-country-based technology to IJVs when the host-market dependence is weak, and when in deregulated regions.
Genin et al. (2022)	To investigate how government coordination in the strategic sectors affects the impact of relational resources on the firm's IP development in emerging economies.	IJVs in the Chinese high-speed train manufacturing sector (during 1993-2014)	Quantitative	Since government coordination in the strategic sector escalates cross-border competitive tension but facilitates domestic collaborative innovation, IJVs face relational liabilities that hinder IP breakthrough, whereas government-affiliated domestic firms can leverage relational assets for innovation.



**Fig. 1.** Distribution of articles across journals (2000–2022).

preferable doctrine of scientific knowledge is subject to lengthy and continuous argument whenever a new account of knowledge management emerges. In this vein, we wished to investigate whether papers were mainly consistent with the empirical paradigm, seeking to uncover how a change in one element produces a change in another—also known as causal relationships. Researchers often call such papers quantitative nomology and attempt to explain and predict new events derived from changes in input. In contrast, articles identified as theoretical analyses may also use a quantitative method concomitantly, but their main

research focus is on offering theoretical insights or building frameworks. In addition, studies that adopted a case-based methodology, only using qualitative data (i.e., interview transcripts and field notes) and analysis techniques (e.g., QSR NUD\*IST software), were classified as qualitative case studies. The rest of the qualitative studies (e.g., commentaries), which were identified as neither theoretical nor case studies, were included in the category “other.”

The prevailing philosophy often adopted by researchers dealing with knowledge transfer/protection in IJVs seemed to be empiricism, and the most popular research method was quantitative. Of 98 articles, 80 (81.6 %) were quantitative and only 18 (18.4 %) were qualitative. Seventy-two papers (73.5 %) commonly relied on primary data based on surveys and empirical experiments. Twenty-six papers (26.5 %) utilized databases offered by official institutions or previous research (i.e., secondary data). Qualitative research was less popular; only six articles were theoretical (6.7 %), seven were case studies (7.9 %), and five were commentaries (5.6 %), meaning that qualitative methods only represented 20.2 % of the total sample.

Then, we scrutinized each topic. Concerning quantitative methodological considerations, we noticed that both topics seemed to have similar, yet different, distributions of research methods and data sources. That is, similar to extant empirics examining knowledge transfer (79.7 %, 63 out of 79 papers), approximately 89.5 % of KP-focused articles (17 out of 19 papers) were rooted in a quantitative approach. Only one theoretical analysis was identified in KP-focused topics (5.3 % of 19 papers), while five articles on knowledge-related topics attempted such a method (6.3 % of 79 papers). In addition, the quantitative research in KP-focused papers relied heavily on secondary data (63.2 %, 12 out of 19 papers), while KT-related topics tended toward primary data (82.2 %, 65 out of 79 papers). To summarize, the literature is heavily dependent on empirical research methods and data sources, and

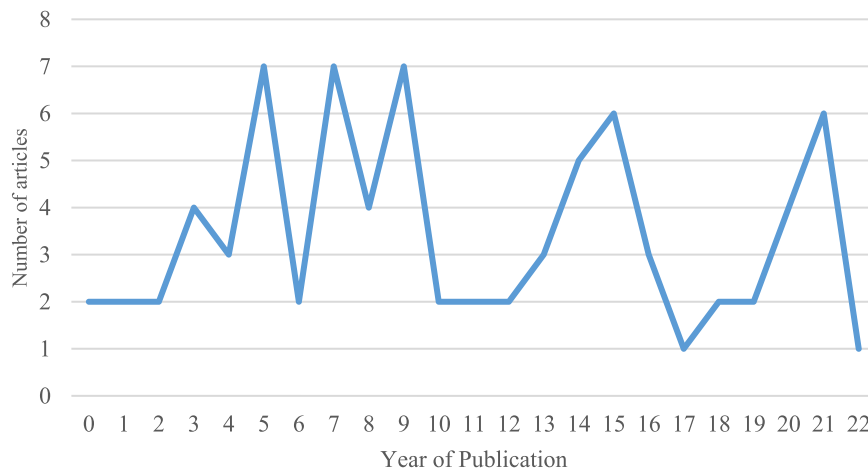


Fig. 2. Number of articles (2000–2022).

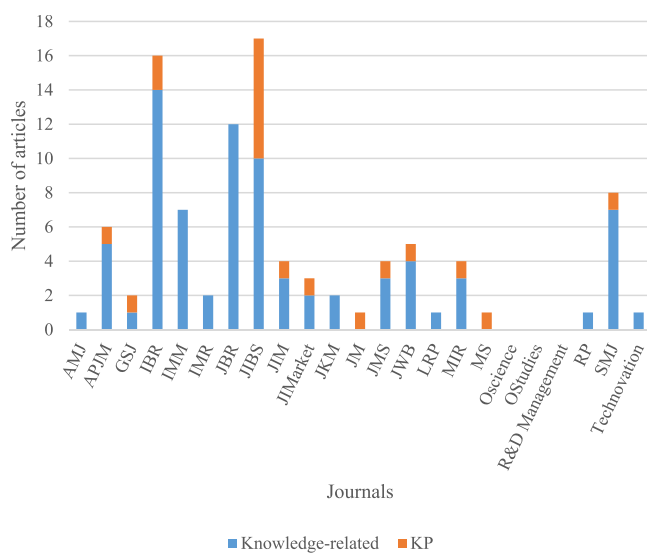


Fig. 3. Distribution of articles across journals (2000–2022).

qualitative research is much less common than quantitative research.

### 5. Analytical findings

The goal of our analysis was to find collective insights to form a comprehensive picture of the extant literature and to gain insights into future research directions. Prior to the development of a full-fledged model, we chose both institutional theory and the bargaining power perspective as relevant overarching theoretical lenses to build an integrative framework for the research topic. As a first step, we carefully considered factors encompassing external environments and

Table 2

Research methods and data sources.

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Quantitative	60 (53 +7)	20 (10 +10)	80 (63 +17)
Theoretical analysis	4 (4 +0)	2 (1 +1)	6 (5 +1)
Qualitative case study	7 (7 +0)	0	7 (7 +0)
Other	1 (1 +0)	4 (3 +1)	5 (4 +1)
Total (Data)	72 (65 +7)	26 (14 +12)	98 (79 +19)

Note: With respect to numerals in the parentheses, the figure in the former means studies dealing with knowledge related topics, whereas the number in the latter denotes research associated with knowledge protection.

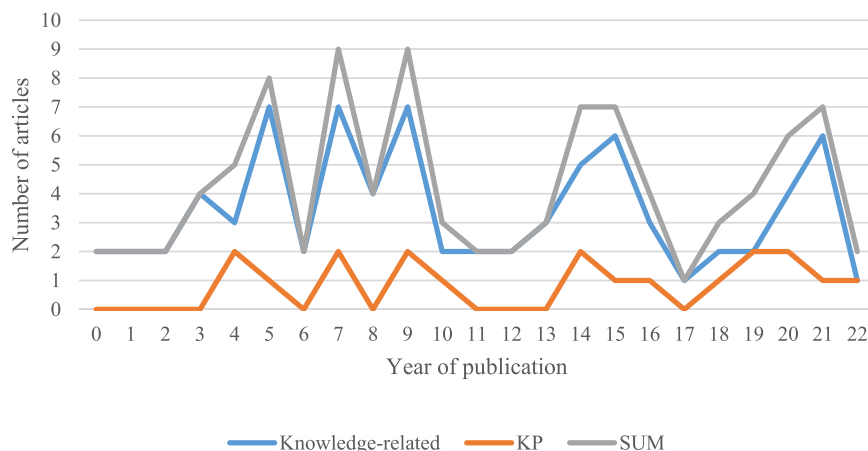


Fig. 4. Number of articles (2000–2022) combined.

determinants associated with the internal environments of MNEs' knowledge management in IJVs. The framework in Fig. 5 presents the external and internal environments of IJVs' knowledge management. That is, Fig. 5, based on institutional theory and the bargaining power perspective, shows both external and internal factors that can potentially affect IJVs' knowledge management.

More specifically, in an IJV setting, knowledge management is significantly influenced by external environments as well as internal relationships with parents, in that such issues highly determine an IJV's strategic and operational decisions and regulate its business activities to meet individual or joint objectives with MNEs or strategic expectations (Luo, 2007). In other words, by observing those environments and relationships, IJVs will decide whether it is essential to acquire knowledge (knowledge transfer from the MNE perspective) to live in local markets, whether they should tightly manage knowledge protection, and whether they accept and tolerate knowledge leakage to some extent (for more benefits).

With respect to external environments, institutional theory is useful for assessing and examining knowledge sharing between knowledge transferors and acquirers in that, for instance, the prevailing institutional norms determine the level of knowledge sharing (Wang, Tseng, & Yen, 2014). Institutional theory sheds light on the regulatory, normative, and cultural frameworks within which firms are operated. Within such frameworks, MNEs attempt to strengthen their competitiveness by adequately managing knowledge management. Institutional theorists (e.g., DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) have identified three types of institutional isomorphism: regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive isomorphism. The theory calls attention to these types of isomorphism in an MNE's institutional environment and their potentially profound influence on shaping its legitimacy and knowledge management in host markets. As MNEs are embedded in multiple institutional logics, institutions shape their strategic choices (Peng, 2003). In addition, in terms of internal relationships, MNE subsidiaries, such as IJVs, have become more closely linked to international networks, and the importance of subsidiaries' knowledge intensity has risen in recent years. In this vein, some of their knowledge management has gained a more creative role between MNE and subsidiary relationships. Mudambi and Navarra (2015: 157) argued that "many (IJV) subsidiaries have acquired considerable strategic independence in all aspects of their operations, and therefore are able to exercise considerable intra-firm bargaining power to influence the distribution of the firm's resources" In this context, we suggest that the power dynamics of MNEs play a crucial role in knowledge management and that the level of control that MNEs strategically regulate for their knowledge transfer and/or protection in IJVs is also influenced by subsidiary bargaining power as well as by the mandate given to them by the parent MNE (Sofka et al., 2014). Under this premise, we employed both institutional theory and bargaining power theory as overarching theoretical lenses. Moreover, based on the

review results below, we provide a structured overview of knowledge management and the external and internal environments in IJVs.

### 5.1. Knowledge management and the external environment in IJVs

IJVs' knowledge transfer/acquisition is often heavily influenced by the institutional environments in which they operate. For instance, by utilizing government mandates or contract law, knowledge possessors (e.g., foreign parents) sometimes establish a formidable institutional tool to manage or control their own knowledge in IJVs. According to Jupille and Caporaso (2022), institutions are humanly devised arrangements of rules and norms that form and pressure human behavior. In other words, institutions set the rules of the game that individuals and organizations accept to follow and maintain their current positions and legitimacy in the institutional environment (Scott, 2008; Li, Li, & Liu, 2013). The rules can be formal or informal. Formal institutions include regulative structures, governments, and legislatures, while informal institutions embrace values and norms embedded in culture and social customs (Chang, Wang, & Bai, 2020). Scott's (2008) categorization of institutions better distinguishes between formal and informal institutions as it defines the three types of isomorphism of institutions: regulative isomorphism, normative isomorphism, and cultural-cognitive isomorphism.

Regulatory isomorphism denotes institutions that guide organizations' behavior through rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities (Scott, 2008). In the case of IJVs, host countries' regulative institutions (i.e., government agencies and legislatures) heavily influence knowledge transfer in IJVs, since they impose legal requirements on MNEs' entry modes and business operations (Chang et al. 2020; Zhan, Chen, Erramilli, & Nguyen, 2009). One prominent example is host governments' foreign direct investment laws, which demand that MNEs form IJVs with local firms in certain ownership arrangements because they expect the direct or indirect transfer of advanced technologies and know-how from the MNEs to the local firms (Nakamura, 2005; Sun et al. 2021). On these occasions, MNEs have no choice but to find suitable partners to avoid being knowledge supply points in partnerships and in local markets. Partnering with local firms often keeps MNEs from efficiently transferring their knowledge because IJVs, as separate entities, have different organizational structures and business goals (which incur costs to transmit knowledge). Furthermore, no matter how good a match may be, a partnership involving two independent parties (i.e., an MNE and a local partner) inevitably induces a risk of the partners adopting opportunistic behaviors that lead to a greater danger of knowledge misappropriation. To circumvent this situation, MNEs may turn their eyes to legal tools (i.e., contracts, patents, and IPRs) that guarantee safe partnerships and help protect their intellectual property by using regulative and judicial systems in local markets (Luo, 2005; Nakamura, 2005). However, such tools are sometimes futile in cases where the legal institutions (e.g., government agencies and judicature) in host economies are weaker and less stable than in MNEs' home countries, which enables local firms to ignore legal rules without fear of penalties (Genin, Tan, & Song, 2022; Li, Miller, Eden, & Hitt, 2012; Zhang, Li, Hitt, & Cui, 2007). In such circumstances, MNEs try to employ normative safety measures (i.e., social norms) by replacing regulatory legal regimes to avoid significant reductions in the storage capacity of the knowledge reservoir.

Normative isomorphism refers to informal prescriptions of conventional and/or desirable behaviors, which are embodied in the form of norms and values that members commonly accept in a given society (Scott, 1995; Yiu & Makino, 2002). Such normative isomorphism often considerably influences corporate actions and activities. For instance, in countries that value harmony and social ties, the aftermath of a firm's norm violation appears detrimental to the firm's survival. Therefore, MNEs have the propensity to adapt to local norms with their local counterparts' assistance to avoid legitimacy issues in the host countries' normative institutions (Bourmault & Siegel, 2022). In addition, norms

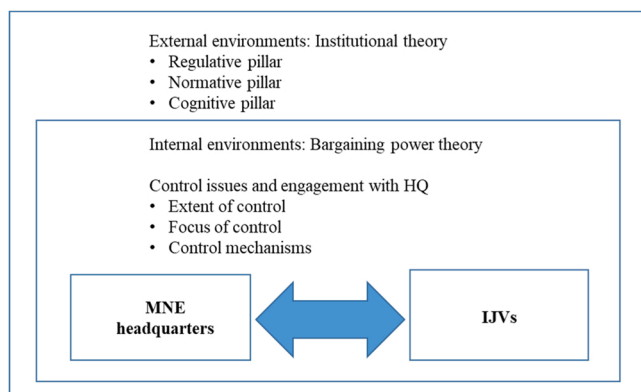


Fig. 5. A framework for knowledge transfer-protection in IJVs.



also include expectations of the roles of members of society, and MNEs are anticipated to play the role of a “missionary” that introduces advanced technological know-how to the local market. Conforming to these two main social pressures (i.e., complying with local norms and meeting role expectations) may enable MNEs to be accepted in their host countries. Specifically, MNEs’ social ties with local firms through the establishment of IJVs eventually increases the possibility of knowledge spilling over into the local market (Müller & Schnitzer, 2006). Moreover, knowledge can easily leak because it has the characteristic of a public good. However, from the perspective of MNEs, the undesirable loss of knowledge accelerates the erosion of MNE competitiveness in foreign markets because it seriously causes harm to their firm-specific advantages. To avert such risks, MNEs may paradoxically use a confrontation strategy by further strengthening their social ties to the point where they build trust with local firms (including local parent firms), which will bind both sides in a reciprocal relationship (Jiang et al., 2013; Kale et al., 2000). This relationship and the social ties can function as a cocoon of caring for their (i.e., MNEs) organizational jewels and can prevent unwanted and unintended knowledge leakage outside firms’ boundaries. These discussions inform us that knowledge transfer and protection through normative isomorphism can be plausible, just like the two sides of a coin.

Finally, a good reputation is extremely important for MNEs operating in foreign markets; thus, they increasingly try to pursue good corporate citizenship and are eager to gain legality in those economies (Nardella, Surdu, & Brammer, 2022). In addition, as a means of enhancing organizational performance, MNEs have recently had the propensity to try to satisfy local belief systems embedded in individuals’ minds and ingrained in their behaviors (Pavlovich, Sinha, & Rodrigues, 2016), which is so-called *cultural-cognitive isomorphism*. Cultural-cognitive isomorphism represents the cultural legitimacy that originates from a shared mindset (e.g., taken-for-granted beliefs and mental schemata) in a specific society. In particular, individuals commonly use cultural legitimacy to categorize and interpret a specific phenomenon (Kostova & Roth, 2002), and such internal interpretive processes are shaped by external cultural frameworks (Scott, 1995). Compared to the two previous categories, cultural-cognitive isomorphism may influence an intrinsic basis for knowledge transfer. In other words, learners must have a similar cognitive ability to understand the nature of teachers’ knowledge (Simonin, 2004; Jensen & Szulanski, 2004; Tsang, 2016). Unfortunately, in many IJV cases, local and foreign employees do not often share the same cultural-cognitive backgrounds (Berdrow & Lane, 2003; Tsang, 2016). Due to this difference, the personnel in IJVs (i.e., local employees and foreign expatriates) suffer from conflicting behaviors and miscommunication problems, which, in turn, lead to the diminished acquisition of knowledge from MNEs (Hau & Evangelista, 2007; Lyles & Salk, 2007; Inkpen, 2008; Park, Giroud, Mirza, & Whitelock, 2008). This explanation indicates that a similar cognitive structure between learners and teachers is a prerequisite for learning to take place (Krammer, 2018; Park, Vertinsky, & Lee, 2012). Meanwhile, from the transferors’ viewpoint, the lack of learning ability of the culturally distant partners may incur difficulty in embezzling MNEs’ know-how (Ho & Wang, 2015; Jensen & Szulanski, 2004). Hence, MNEs might instead utilize the cognitive barriers between foreign and local partners (i.e., the incongruence of cognitive structure) for their knowledge protection in IJVs. To specify, MNEs may use the cognitive distance between MNEs and their local partners as a filter that blocks MNEs’ core knowledge (i.e., tacit know-how that is heavily embedded in MNEs’ cultural backgrounds). Unlike explicit knowledge, which could be easily accessed and understood by local employees through a trivial modification (e.g., translation, codification), the explanation above implies that the interpretation of tacit knowledge would require the knowledge owners’ (i.e., MNEs) persistent guidance (Park et al., 2015), especially if the partner has a limited cognitive base (Hislop, 2013). Taken together, the cognitive filter between foreign and local partners can increase MNEs’ involvement in the knowledge movement within IJVs; therefore,

MNEs are able to monitor local partners better to protect their sophisticated know-how.

## 5.2. Knowledge management and the internal environment in IJVs

This section presents the findings pertaining to the second category (i.e., internal environment) by addressing how the power dynamics of foreign parents (i.e., parent control) play an important role in knowledge management in IJVs. In other words, the framework envisions how MNEs strategically modulate their control for knowledge transfer and/or protection in IJVs (Tidd & Izumimoto, 2002). MNEs’ control in IJVs refers to the process or action by which MNEs influence strategic and operational decision-making and regulate the business activities of subsidiaries by using their power, authority, and mechanisms to achieve their strategic interests (Luo, 2007; Park & Glaister, 2009; Wen & Chuang, 2010). IJV control can be categorized further into three components: extent, focus, and mechanism (Geringer & Herbert, 1989; Le Nguyen et al. 2019).

The extent of control refers to the strength of control exercised by foreign parents over IJVs. Specifically, it indicates MNEs’ power over decision-making within strategic, functional, and operational areas in IJVs (Kawai & Strange, 2014). Their control power could be stronger or weaker, and each control strength may provide MNEs with different benefits in terms of their subsidiary management, including knowledge transfer and protection (Huang & Chiu, 2014; Yao, Yang, Fisher, Ma, & Fang, 2013). For instance, the powerful and centralized decision-making structure indicates MNEs’ ability to direct activities in IJVs closer to their best interests and curb opportunism (Huang & Chiu, 2020; Puck, Hödl, Filatotchev, Wolff, & Bader, 2016; Xu & Lu, 2007). In terms of knowledge management, this ability could be used to facilitate MNEs’ knowledge transfer within IJV, since they are able to provide extensive managerial support to their IJVs to learn and adapt their know-how (Lin, 2005; Park, 2011; Pedada, Padigar, Sinha, & Dass, 2021; van Kranenburg, Hagedoorn, & Lorenz-Orlean, 2014). At the same time, the development of centralized monitoring and reporting processes through strong parental control can ensure that MNEs’ core knowledge is not exposed in IJVs. Therefore, strong foreign parental control could be interpreted as an effective means for MNEs to ensure their successful and safe knowledge transfer within IJVs (del Mar Benavides-Espinosa & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2014; Hagedoorn, Cloudt, & van Kranenburg, 2005; Wang, Jin, Yang, & Zhou, 2020). In contrast, some MNEs may exercise weaker control over their IJVs when they delegate their decision-making power to them to grant a higher level of subsidiary autonomy (i.e., the empowerment of MNEs to IJVs) (Young & Tavares, 2004). In such IJVs, decision-making structures are nonhierarchical and decentralized, as foreign parents play a less pivotal role in their management. Instead, their local subsidiaries have more managerial discretion, especially in deciding how to leverage organizational resources, including proprietary know-how and technologies (Kawai & Strange, 2014). This internal condition may enable efficient two-way communication between foreign parents and subsidiaries and provide IJVs with closer access to MNEs’ know-how, which will in turn foster IJVs’ learning and knowledge acquisition (Kandemir & Hult, 2005). However, weak foreign parental control may carry a higher risk of knowledge leakage in IJVs, since foreign subsidiaries may misuse their autonomy to appropriate MNEs’ core knowledge (Kawai & Strange, 2014; Wang et al., 2020). To prevent this, MNEs that exercise weaker control should devise special means to restrain subsidiaries’ opportunistic behavior (i.e., knowledge misappropriation)—that is, choosing to exercise control over certain activities. This leads to a discussion on the following category of IJV control: the focus of control.

The focus of control refers to the scope of IJVs’ activities that MNEs decide to control (Le Nguyen et al. 2019). In other words, it indicates whether the attention of foreign parental control is dispersed throughout the wide range of IJVs’ activities or is concentrated in a few areas that they consider critical. The former case (i.e., dispersed control

focus) can be found in IJVs, where their foreign parents emphasize grasping comprehensive oversight of IJVs' operations and management to control their subsidiaries. As foreign parents exert influence on a broader range of activities, they are able to link and unite different subunits (including employees) into their strategic objectives; thus, achieving successful and safe knowledge transfer is highly feasible (Farrell, Oczkowski, & Kharabsheh, 2011). From another perspective, MNEs may suffer from increased costs, and their scattered attention across the organization indicates their inability to provide in-depth and timely parental care to their respective areas. Specifically, MNEs' dispersed control focus may lead to decreased efficiency in MNEs' knowledge transfer/protection in IJVs. In contrast, MNEs might choose the latter (i.e., concentrated control focus) by limiting their control targets only to crucial functions or processes in IJVs to focus on essential areas for their knowledge transfer/protection without influencing other activities (Lioukas & Reuer, 2020; Mohedano-Suanes & Safón, 2021). For instance, MNEs may solely concentrate their control on specific functions in IJVs (Kamminga & Van der Meer-Kooistra, 2007; Li & Xie, 2016), such as R&D activities where their technologies and know-how are delivered firsthand to local employees. As intensive parental attention is given to this area, MNEs provide their expertise and instruction to support local employees' learning of their know-how while simultaneously keeping their knowledge movement process under constant surveillance. In another case, MNEs may focus on less direct yet significant domains, such as personnel management, by which foreign parents are able to arrange optimal internal settings that support IJV employees' knowledge acquisition and constrain their opportunistic behaviors by using various measures (e.g., staffing, training, and setting norms) (Mohedano-Suanes & Safón, 2021). This suggests that MNEs' successful knowledge transfer/protection can be achieved using the control mechanisms explained below.

Control mechanisms can be defined as means that MNEs use to control their subsidiaries (Park & Glaister, 2009; Yan & Child, 2004). MNEs employ a wide variety of control mechanisms in IJVs, and these can be classified into three major categories: ownership and direct/indirect control mechanisms (Park & Glaister, 2009). First, foreign parents may count on equity ownership to control their subsidiaries. The possession of the majority equity share implies higher bargaining power, which makes MNEs dominant parents that decide strategic directions and the use of organizational resources in IJVs for the achievement of their objectives—namely, successful knowledge transfer/protection. Furthermore, ownership control provides a legal basis (e.g., right to nominate the board) for direct control mechanisms (e.g., active top management participation) (Duan & Chuanmin, 2007; Park & Glaister, 2009). Direct control encompasses various methods by which MNEs directly influence activities or employees' behaviors in IJVs (Kamminga & Van der Meer-Kooistra, 2007). Direct control is often carried out by MNEs' top management, and by exercising the control mechanisms, they (i.e., MNEs) are able to manage the overall activities and decisions (which are related to knowledge transfer) taken in IJVs firsthand. Moreover, based on top-management control, MNEs can also devise other relevant control mechanisms (e.g., IJV agreements, codes of conduct, work rules) that specify the duty or unacceptable actions to restrict local employees' opportunistic behaviors (i.e., knowledge misappropriation) (Merchant & Van der Stede, 2017). On the other hand, MNEs may rely on indirect control methods that center on developing a suitable organizational context that promotes/restricts behaviors that are beneficial/harmful to their knowledge management (Chen, Park, & Newbury, 2009; Kamminga & Van der Meer-Kooistra, 2007). For instance, MNEs often adopt various human resource-related measures (e.g., staffing and training) to develop a culture that supports and motivates employees' learning in IJVs (Child & Yan, 2003; Jaussaud & Schaaper, 2006). Training, in particular, is an effective way to help local employees understand shared group norms and values, thereby increasing mutual trust and strengthening social ties between individuals in IJVs (Anh et al., 2006; Park & Glaister, 2009). In this case,

MNEs may expect facilitated knowledge flow and a lowered risk of knowledge loss in IJVs because employees' actions are bound by the loyalty and trust built through the socialization process (Ali, Khalid, Shahzad, & Larimo, 2021; Chen, Chen, & Zhou, 2014; Jaussaud & Schaaper, 2006; Khan et al. 2015).

## 6. Avenues for future research

By drawing upon our analysis and findings, we identified several paths for potential research avenues. First, institutional theory describes how external pressures change corporate behaviors, which in turn affect knowledge management. The theory suggests that external corporate environments can considerably trigger structural changes in an organization—for instance, the internal ability of IJVs influencing knowledge management (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As such, IJVs make decisions to comply with formal regulations, social norms, and mimetic societal rules to adequately adjust and control knowledge transfer and protection through the adoption of different strategies and innovations (Andrews, Bellò, Downe, Martin, & Walker, 2021). Based on institutional and bargaining power theories, therefore, we suggest that a significant gap needs to be cemented by examining how regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive isomorphism recursively interacts with control issues in IJVs (i.e., the impact of external institutional pressures on the adoption of the extent of control, the focus of control, and the output, process, and social control mechanisms). While we widely expect that institutional pressures may have a causal relationship with adequate knowledge management, we do not know much about the role of control as a mediator between institutional pressures and knowledge transfer/protection in IJVs.

Second, scholars' confined focus on knowledge transmittance from MNEs to IJVs has led them to forgo the opportunity to scrutinize the additional movement of foreign parents' technologies to their local partners. To elaborate, centered on the relationship between direct senders (i.e., MNEs) and receivers (i.e., IJVs), existing studies have placed tremendous emphasis on empirical examinations of foreign parents' knowledge transmittance to IJVs (Dhanaraj et al., 2004; Lyles & Salk, 1996). Specifically, a majority of papers have pondered how MNEs can achieve efficient knowledge transfer to IJVs and have often empirically examined the antecedents, consequences, and determinants of knowledge transfer. Meanwhile, although the incidental delivery of MNEs' technologies to their local counterparts is considered an inevitable outcome of IJV establishment, comparatively less scholarly attention has been given to the local partners' role as secondary knowledge acquirers. This suggests that local partners' acquisition of MNEs' technologies (via IJVs) would become a promising conduit for future research (Lin, 2005). Potential research questions that could be raised in this stream of research may include 'What is the process by which local partners acquire MNEs' technologies?' or 'What are the characteristics of local partners acquiring more/less MNEs' knowledge through IJVs than others?' as well as 'How are MNEs' control mechanisms related to knowledge transfer/protection are influenced by the host country policies?' Considering these questions, we expect that the illuminations of the research domain (e.g., empirical experiments on various factors, such as internal/external conditions of local partners, and the nature of the relationship between foreign and local partners) will be feasible and could potentially offer novel insights.

Third, as MNEs are typically the owners of key technologies and know-how, there is a growing need to understand how they manage the unintentional loss of knowledge to their subsidiaries, including IJVs, given the different mandates (competence-creating and competence-exploiting) that subsidiaries enjoy. As such, research on MNEs' technology protection in IJVs is expected to receive greater attention in the future, as emerging digital technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, and 3D printing technologies become vital in innovation and knowledge management. To pave the way for new research on this topic, it would also be valuable to address the potential downside of

knowledge protection in IJVs. While most knowledge protection studies have emphasized its necessity and benefits, recent research has highlighted the costs of excessive technology protection, such as increased monitoring costs, reduced employee morale, and hindered knowledge transfer for developing partners' capabilities, which may lead to conflicts within IJVs. Therefore, MNEs must ensure that the costs of knowledge protection do not outweigh their benefits (Inkpen et al., 2019). To achieve a balance between the transfer and protection of technologies in IJVs, scholars have introduced the concept of an "optimal balance" between disclosure and secrecy (Contractor, 2019). However, further research is needed to provide a more detailed conceptual framework that considers various factors or circumstances that may impact the extent of knowledge transfer and protection in IJVs, such as the attributes of the knowledge transferred or the internal and external conditions of the IJVs. Therefore, future knowledge protection studies should aim to provide a more specific and detailed framework that considers these factors and circumstances, including changes in the host country's institutional environment.

Fourth, as mentioned above, the characteristics of knowledge can be an influential factor in MNEs' knowledge transfer in IJVs; hence, they could be reassessed to look for additional research opportunities. There are two main categories of MNEs' knowledge that are transferred to IJVs—advanced technology and managerial know-how (Meyer & Sinani, 2009)—which could be distinguished between explicit and tacit. The processes for each type of knowledge delivered to IJVs differ significantly (Park et al., 2015). In general, the transfer of tacit know-how is claimed to be more complicated than (explicit) technology transfer, since its low codifiability and high embeddedness in MNEs' organizational contexts act as a hurdle for IJVs' knowledge acquisition. Despite these challenges, scholars have acknowledged the importance of IJVs' acquisition of tacit knowledge for MNEs in terms of its positive impact on creating competitive advantage (Lyles & Salk, 1996), which is followed by increased subsidiary performance. However, as the primary focus of most KT studies has been on technological knowledge (or knowledge as a single concept) (Park et al., 2012), there is a lack of understanding of MNEs' tacit knowledge transfer to IJVs as well as the mechanisms adopted to transfer such knowledge. Thus, future studies may switch their research focus (into tacit knowledge) and attempt to discover how MNEs can facilitate their tacit know-how transmittance to IJVs or how they overcome the challenges (i.e., ambiguity) associated with the transfer of tacit knowledge. In addition, the timing of knowledge transfer and its associated mechanisms can be important in developing a local partner's capabilities; thus, examining the timing and the transfer mechanisms adopted by the parent firm could offer important insights (Szulanski et al., 2016).

Fifth, the ambiguous nature of tacit know-how may not only make the transfer process more complicated but also influence MNEs' knowledge protection in IJVs. Contrary to explicit technologies, in which the risk of leakage mainly comes from being highly transmittable (since it is easily codified), the loss of tacit know-how occurs for another reason. That is, due to the high ambiguity, even MNEs (i.e., knowledge owners) are likely to face difficulties in tracking or defining their know-how, thereby losing control over their knowledge. As such, this explanation implies that both types of knowledge are not free from the risk of leakage, but that different approaches are required for the protection of each type of knowledge. Similar to the current KT literature, a problem resides in the fact that the focus of KP research remains on the safeguarding of explicit knowledge (i.e., technologies), while the domain of tacit knowledge protection is largely neglected (Manhart & Thalmann, 2015). For instance, currently, the focus of research on knowledge protection is primarily on the limited scope of mechanisms used for explicit knowledge protection, such as legal and formal measures (e.g., patents, trade secrets, contracts). However, the importance of empirical investigations exploring specific methods of tacit knowledge protection is often underestimated. This indicates that future studies should further inspect and identify strategies for MNEs' tacit knowledge protection in

IJVs. In addition, the notion of finding a balance between transfer and protection will offer a basis for this body of research (i.e., studies on tacit knowledge transfer/protection). To elaborate, when transferring tacit knowledge, MNEs should devise a proper strategy by which a balance between making the mandated knowledge available to IJVs and their local partners (for the transfer) and maintaining the stickiness of their knowledge (for protection) is well-kept. This argument suggests that finding such a balance would also be a promising future research avenue. In the overall process of knowledge transfer and protection, the role of managers managing the MNE–IJV relationship is relatively underexplored, given that tacit knowledge largely resides in individuals, systems, and tools; thus, future studies taking a microfoundation approach (Felin, Foss, & Ployhart, 2015; Foss & Pedersen, 2019) should pay more attention to the role of individual managers in knowledge transfer and protection.

Lastly, the relative bargaining power of the focal MNE and IJVs could influence the coordination and transfer/protection of knowledge to local partners, thus future studies should pay more attention to the network level bargaining power of MNEs and local partners (cf. Nebus & Rufin, 2010), and its impact on knowledge transfer/protection in IJVs. Such studies could also examine whether bargaining power of different actors is beneficial for learning and developing different types of innovation in IJVs.

## 7. Theoretical implications and conclusion

The purpose of this study was to provide an integrative review of the current literature on MNEs' knowledge transfer/protection in IJVs. To achieve this goal, this paper began by examining the publication trend over two decades (from 2000 to 2022). In this process, we not only recognized the popularity of the research topic (i.e., MNEs' knowledge transfer/protection in IJVs) in high-impact journals in business studies but also captured the trends, which can be summarized as (1) the predominance of KT-focused papers over KP-focused studies throughout the period and (2) the gradual increase in scholars' attention toward knowledge protection. In addition, the research paradigms and methodologies adopted in the literature, which were mainly empiricism and quantitative methods, were also identified. In the second process, qualitative analysis, an overall landscape of literature was presented with a framework that outlined the external and internal conditions of MNEs' knowledge management. By adding detailed explanations of host countries' institutional isomorphic pressures (i.e., external environment) and MNEs' control dynamics within IJVs (i.e., internal environment), we were able to highlight important themes and areas of interest in previous studies.

In the next stage of the analysis, we suggested four major directions for future studies. First, scholars may switch their focus (which has primarily been devoted to MNEs' technology delivery to IJVs) to the knowledge flow between IJVs and local partners. Second, the flourishing of studies on local partners' technology acquisition will inevitably lead to the increased potential of MNEs' knowledge protection (against IJVs and local partners) as a promising research topic. Third, scholars may delve into the transfer of MNEs' implicit know-how to IJVs, which has been underexamined in studies because the spotlight has been cast on explicit technology transfer. Fourth, putting MNEs' tacit knowledge transfer under scrutiny would subsequently prompt discussions on how to safeguard this particular type of knowledge (i.e., implicit managerial know-how), which will emerge as a promising avenue for future studies.

### 7.1. Theoretical implications

The contributions of this paper can be explained as follows. This review assessed the current state of KT and KP studies, enabling scholars to reflect on our current understanding of this important research area. In this regard, we make a theoretical contribution by applying and combining two theories (institutional theory and bargaining power

theory) to explicate MNEs' knowledge management in IJVs. As illustrated in Fig. 5, we assessed different types of institutional isomorphism (e.g., regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive) and three domains of IJV control (e.g., extant, focus, mechanisms), thereby linking them to the external/internal environment of MNEs' knowledge transfer and protection in IJVs and enriching our understanding of both theories and the current research topic. In other words, when we consider the business environments that influence knowledge management in IJVs, we should simultaneously look at both external and internal environments. If we overlook a certain aspect between them, an accurate analysis of the environment should not be possible. In this vein, by consolidating institutional and bargaining power theories, various structures of rules and norms shaping and affecting external environments and the internal ability of IJVs influencing knowledge management will be minutely investigated, which may guide researchers in future research areas that deserve deeper examination.

More specifically, the following is a detailed description. The external environment is in part affected by regulative isomorphism, and it is distinguished by a prominence given to explicit regulatory processes involving the capacity to establish rules, inspect another's conformity to them, and, as needed, manipulate sanctions—rewards or punishments—in an attempt to influence future corporate behavior (Scott, 1995; 2008). In contrast, normative isomorphism includes normative rules that mediate a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension of social life (i.e., values and norms), while cultural-cognitive isomorphism is broader than normative characteristics, embracing elements such as common beliefs, shared logic of action, and mental models (Scott, 2008). All these components forming an institutional isomorphism are enacted and built by various institutional entities owning ontic and/or moral power to create the rules and prohibit corporate aberrations that form a firm's external environment, facilitating knowledge transfer or obstructing knowledge appropriation. In addition, separate from this isomorphism, we clearly explain that the level of control that parent firms exercise on their IJVs (i.e., extent of control), the scope of the subsidiary activities that parent firms decide to control (focus of control), and MNEs' means used to control (i.e., control mechanisms) significantly influence knowledge flow between MNEs and IJVs (Khan et al. 2015). That is, we theoretically contribute to our current knowledge by concurrently casting light upon the various external and internal factors affecting MNEs' knowledge management in IJVs.

In addition, going beyond a mere summary of past academic achievements and a report of the situations at hand, this paper presents novel paths for future studies by introducing emerging themes and research gaps captured through the analysis process. This information may serve as helpful guidance to scholars who wish to explore new research problems and ideas (regarding MNEs' knowledge management in IJVs), thereby contributing to the expansion of our knowledge base and the creation of new knowledge in this research area. Lastly, considering the practical usage of review articles from an academic

perspective, this paper, particularly the information on bibliometric trends (e.g., journal distributions), may assist scholars in strategically selecting suitable journals to which they would submit their work, thereby increasing their chances of getting published in a reputed peer-reviewed journal in business studies.

### 7.2. Limitations

Despite these contributions, this study has some limitations. The most prominent among them is the weakness of qualitative research. To elaborate, this paper follows the format of an integrative review and relies on qualitative methods, which entail a higher likelihood of lacking rigor than those that take a different approach (e.g., systematic reviews) or that adopt statistical methods (e.g., meta-analyses). In addition, the articles retrieved in the publication analysis may not fully cover all existing KT/KP studies. The reason for this is based on the shortcomings of the search technique (i.e., keyword search). A keyword search often has issues with including false positives (i.e., articles that are irrelevant but detected by the keywords) or a failure to spot search targets that do not contain the keywords. On a further note on the retrieved samples (i.e., articles on the research topic), since the bibliometric analysis in this review focused only on counting the total number of publications in a set period of time, we did not take into account additional information (e.g., citation counts). Citation counts represent the academic influence of articles and can be used as an index to identify pivotal publications in a research area. Although there are some limitations, we believe that this review provides valuable information and insights to readers, especially those who wish to further investigate MNEs' knowledge transfer/protection in IJVs. To conclude, although this study confesses some inevitable limitations beyond our control, this review can become a catalyst for future research on MNEs' knowledge management in IJVs and ultimately contribute to advancing the field of IB studies.

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### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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## Appendix A. List of previous studies that investigate the interplay between KT and KP in IJVs

Author (s)	Purpose	Research Context	Method	Findings
Oxley & Sampson (2004)	To explore an alternative response to hazards of R&D cooperation: reduction of the scope of the alliance.	International R&D alliances (electronics and telecommunications equipment companies)	Quantitative	When partners are direct competitors, even protective governance structures (e.g., IJVs) provide insufficient protection to induce extensive knowledge sharing among alliance participants. Rather than abandoning potential gains from cooperation, partners limit the scope of alliance activities to those that can be completed with limited knowledge sharing.
Ho & Wang (2015)	To identify the paradoxes of withholding or sharing of knowledge in knowledge transfer and learning processes in ISAs, which result from contextual differences between alliance partners.	Taiwan-based ISAs (information and communication technology (ICT) industries)	Quantitative	Institutional distance between partners deters knowledge protection and absorptive capacity, thus decreasing the alliance performance. Relational

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Author (s)	Purpose	Research Context	Method	Findings
Contractor (2019)	To counter assertions about technology leakage/spillovers being benevolent, and to develop paradigms that illuminate a question about how can MNEs find the optimum balance between conscious disclosure and secrecy.	IJVs in China (R&D investment-related JVs)	Qualitative	capital alleviates the negative impacts and enhances knowledge transfer. MNEs can reduce their use of EJVs when the scope of R&D activities is limited to research-oriented ones or when academic institutions are chosen as local partners, and a cultural distance between the host and home countries strengthens these effects.
Huang & Chiu (2020)	To highlight the moderating role of knowledge tension on the relationship between management control and MNE's satisfaction with IJV's performance.	IJVs (Taiwanese-Chinese) in China	Quantitative	The effect of split- or MNE-dominant- management control on IJV satisfaction differs depending on whether MNEs or local partners encounter sharing-protection tension or not.

**Appendix B. List of knowledge transfer-related articles (79 papers)**

Author & Year	Journal	Quantitative	Case study	other	Theoretical (Conceptual)	Data (Primary)	Data (Secondary)
Isobe, Makino, & Montgomery (2000)	AMJ	1				1	
Steensma & Lyles (2000)	SMJ	1				1	
Griffith, Zeybek, & O'Brien (2001)	JIMarket	1				1	
Lane et al. (2001)	SMJ	1				1	
Tidd & Izumimoto (2002)	Technovation	1				1	
Tsang (2002)	SMJ	1				1	
Beamish & Berdrow (2003)	LRP	1				1	
Berdrow & Lane (2003)	JWB		1			1	
Child & Yan (2003)	JMS	1				1	
Glaister, Husan, & Buckley (2003)	IBR			1		1	
Dhanaraj et al. (2004)	JIBS	1				1	
Tsang, Nguyen, & Erramilli (2004)	JIMarket				1	1	
Yan & Child (2004)	JBR	1				1	
Hanvanich et al. (2005)	IBR	1					1
Kandemir & Hult (2005)	IMM				1		1
Lin (2005)	MIR				1	1	
Nakamura (2005)	IBR	1					1
Si & Bruton (2005)	JBR	1				1	
Luo (2005)	JIBS	1				1	
Zhao, Anand, & Mitchell (2005)	JMS		1			1	
Jaussaud & Schaaper (2006)	JIM	1				1	
Anh et al. (2006)	IBR	1				1	
Aguilera (2007)	JIBS			1			1
Demir & Söderman (2007)	IBR		1			1	
Hau & Evangelista (2007)	JBR	1				1	
Lyles & Salk (2007)	JIBS	1				1	
Meyer (2007)	JIBS			1			1
Salk & Lyles (2007)	JIBS			1			1
Xu & Lu (2007)	JBR	1					1
Inkpen (2008)	SMJ		1			1	
Li & Zhou (2008)	JWB	1					1
Steensma et al. (2008)	JIBS	1				1	
Zhan & Luo (2008)	MIR	1				1	
Chen et al. (2009)	SMJ	1				1	
Evangelista & Hau (2009)	JWB	1				1	
Li et al. (2009)	SMJ	1					1
Mahmood & Zheng (2009)	RP	1					1
Pak, Ra, & Park (2009)	IBR	1				1	
Zhan, Chen, Erramilli, and Nguyen (2009)	APJM	1				1	
Zhao & Anand (2009)	SMJ	1				1	
Fang & Zou (2010)	JIBS				1	1	
Park (2010)	APJM	1				1	
Farrell et al. (2011)	IMM	1				1	
Park (2011)	IBR	1				1	
Park et al. (2012)	IMR	1				1	
Shi, Sun, & Peng (2012)	JMS	1				1	
Choi & Beamish (2013)	APJM	1				1	
Dutta & Beamish (2013)	JIM	1					1
Yao et al. (2013)	IBR	1				1	
del Mar Benavides-Espinosa & Ribeiro-Soriano (2014)	JBR	1				1	
Huang & Chiu (2014)	APJM	1				1	
Park & Harris (2014)	IBR		1			1	
Shi et al. (2014)	JIBS	1					1
Ott, Liu, & Buck (2014)	IBR	1				1	
Isidor et al. (2015)	IBR	1				1	

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Author & Year	Journal	Quantitative	Case study	other	Theoretical (Conceptual)	Data (Primary)	Data (Secondary)
Khan & Nicholson (2015)	IMM				1	1	
Khan et al. (2015)	GSJ		1			1	
Khan et al. (2015)	JIBS	1				1	
Lu & Ma (2015)	APJM	1					1
Park et al. (2015)	IBR	1				1	
Cheng, Cai, & Jin (2016)	JBR	1				1	
Park & Vertinsky (2016)	JBR	1				1	
Tsang (2016)	MIR	1				1	
Park, Oh, & Kasim (2017)	IMR	1				1	
Minbaeva et al. (2018)	JWB	1				1	
Zhang, Wu, & Chen (2018)	IMM	1				1	
Barmeyer & Davoine (2019)	IBR		1			1	
Dong et al. (2019)	JBR	1				1	
Acharya, Rechberg, & Dong (2020)	JKM	1				1	
Chang et al. (2020)	IMM	1				1	
Liu et al. (2020)	IMM	1				1	
Wang et al. (2020)	IMM	1				1	
Ali et al. (2021)	IBR	1				1	
Bai et al. (2021)	JBR	1				1	
Jin & Wang (2021)	JBR	1				1	
Kapoor & Aggarwal (2021)	JKM	1				1	
Lee, Xiao, & Choi (2021)	JBR	1				1	
Pedada et al. (2021)	JBR	1					1
Park et al. (2022)	JIM	1				1	
		63	7	4	5	65	14

**Appendix C. List of KP-focused articles (19 papers)**

Author & Year	Journal	Quantitative	Case study	other	Theoretical (Conceptual)	Data (Primary)	Data (Secondary)
Oxley & Sampson (2004)	SMJ	1					1
Simonin (2004)	JIBS	1				1	
Hagedoorn, Cloudt, & van Kranenburg (2005)	JIBS	1					1
Nielsen (2007)	IBR	1				1	
Zhang et al. (2007)	JIBS	1					1
Nielsen & Nielsen (2009)	JMS	1				1	
Oxley & Wada (2009)	MS	1					1
Wen & Chuang (2010)	APJM	1					1
Chen et al. (2014)	JIMarket	1				1	
van Kranenburg, Hagedoorn, & Lorenz-Orlean (2014)	GSJ	1					1
Ho & Wang (2015)	IBR	1				1	
Li & Xie (2016)	MIR	1					1
Krammer (2018)	JWB	1					1
Contractor (2019)	JIBS				1		1
Inkpen et al. (2019)	JIBS			1			1
Huang & Chiu (2020)	JIM	1				1	
Lioukas & Reuer (2020)	JM	1				1	
Sun et al. (2021)	JIBS	1					1
Genin et al. (2022)	JIBS	1					1
		17	0	1	1	7	12

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