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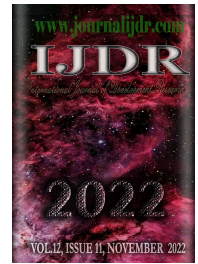
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RELATIONAL GOVERNANCE AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE AND COOPERATIVE IDENTITY: A THEORETICAL ESSAY

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ABSTRACT

The opportunity to overcome difficulties is what motivates the creation of cooperatives. Trust and reciprocity are the anchors of a successful cooperative agreement, therefore, in a relationship of high mutual interest and dependence, trust and reciprocity must be the objective of the actors (leaders, managers, and associates) that are part of the cooperative agreement. Trust and reciprocity are consolidated by perceptions of organizational justice. This theoretical essay aims to propose some reflections and hypotheses: (i) the importance of perceptions of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) for the maintenance of cooperative agreements; (ii) the role (complementary or substitute) of relational and contractual governance for the performance of cooperation; (iii) relationships based on trust and reciprocity as a necessary condition for long-term cooperation.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies in psychology and organizational behavior suggest that perceptions of fairness explain important results in the organizational environment, such as employee commitment (Konovsky, 2000) and consequently their performance (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt & Rodell, 2011). Fairness can be measured in terms of adherence to rules (consistency, accuracy, correctness, respect, and justification) that can be frequently encountered and often applied, especially in relations between cooperatives (Leventhal, 1980; Bies & Moag, 1986; Seal et al., 1999; Colquitt & Rodell, 2011). The same finding in this regard can be seen in studies by Free (2008) when he states that perceptions of injustice in the sense of obtaining unfair advantages seem to have a negative impact on the performance of inter-organizational alliances. Studies by Walker and Pettigrew (1984), Brockner and Siegel (1995), Luo (2008), and Ren, Gray, and Kim (2009) suggest that perceptions of justice determine the performance of these cooperation processes. The literature review on governance structures suggests that, in order to protect against the problem of opportunism and stabilize the relationship between two cooperative organizations (strategic alliance), governance is examined in two dimensions, namely,

contractual and relational governance (Ness & Haugland, 2005; Poppo & Zenger, 2002; Roath et al., 2002). Some scholars advocate the use of contractual agreements (Kale et al., 2000; Osborn & Baughn, 1990), while others suggest mutual trust and commitment as essential elements to maintain long-term cooperation (Kale et al., 2000). A study with the 15 largest dairy companies in the European Union identified that the choice of cooperatives for strategies of consolidation and inter-organizational collaboration can be explained by two attributes inherent to this form of governance, namely, risk aversion and equity restrictions (Van der Krogt, Jerker & Viggo, 2007). Researchers have given increasing attention to mechanisms that curb opportunism based on the logic of transaction cost economics, with a primary focus on economic forces such as contractual protection, shared ownership, investments in relationship-specific assets, and relational governance (Barthelemy & Quelin, 2006; Brown, Dev & Lee, 2000; Buvik & Reve, 2001; Dahlstrom & Nygaard, 1999; De Vita, Tekaya & Wang, 2010; Lumineau & Quelin, 2012), which require the establishment of formal governance structures. However, in other studies, this logic was complemented by the Social Exchange Theory (Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964) and considers restrictions on the behavior of individuals due to social norms (Luo, 2007, 2008; Poppo & Zenger, 2002). In reality, social forces complement economic forces by reducing opportunism and

governing exchanges in long-term partnerships, that is, economic transactions gradually become embedded in social relations. Therefore, Social Exchange Theory provides important insights into the dynamics of continuity of economic transactions beyond those obtained only by applying economic theories (Cai, Yang & Hu, 2009; Granovetter, 1985; Luo, 2006, 2007; Poppo & Zenger, 2002). A growing body of research suggests that economic and social relationships are complementary in guiding long-term economic transactions. While the economic order provides the fundamental institutional basis of the organizational structure, the social order nourishes the continuity of an exchange between the parties (Luo, 2002, 2007). Economic forces alone are insufficient to suppress opportunism and promote continuity, especially when the environment is turbulent and uncertain (Lumineau & Henderson, 2012; Luo, 2007; Poppo & Zenger, 2002). The survival of cooperatives is positively related to their ability to face the challenge of pursuing long-term goals and, at the same time, provide short-term benefits to their members (Goel, 2013; Jussila, Goel & Tuominen, 2012; Sashi, 2012). On a short-term orientation, members perceive cooperatives as transitory and geared towards delivering quick, tangible results. Members are less concerned with long-term investment and the cooperative's performance is often evaluated to the extent that the tangible results justify the existence of the cooperative agreement in economic terms (Eriksson & Pesamaa, 2013; Ferriani, Fonti & Corrado, 2013; Pesamaa, Eriksson & Hair, 2009).

On the other hand, when cooperative management encourages and is guided by a long-term vision, members perceive the cooperative as permanent and have more patience, investment, and commitment to maintaining future exchanges. Consequently, the assessment of cooperative performance involves broader aspects than mere financial and market indicators. It is necessary to assess the general state of the terms of the cooperation and the moral values that outline the actions of the members in relation to the governance of the cooperative. If partners know they have reliable partners, they are more likely to take risks, so long-term orientation is particularly useful when the cooperative operates in markets characterized by uncertainty and risk (Ferriani, Fonti & Corrado, 2013; Villena, Revilla & Choi, 2011). In cooperative agreements, it is difficult to reconcile short-term objectives and the generation of economic value in the long term, given that when trying to reconcile short-term and long-term objectives, members of a cooperative often start from conflicting assumptions about the attitudes of their partners towards relation to the cooperative agreement, as is the case, for example, individualism, self-interest, competition versus collectivism, reciprocal altruism and cooperation (Pesamaa, Hair & Eriksson, 2008). It is a very complex and difficult task to reconcile the need to meet expectations of quick and tangible results to satisfy the immediate benefits of each member of a cooperative with a long-term relational governance perspective that requires commitments based on mutual trust and reciprocity (Dickson, 1996). When members of a cooperative believe that the purpose of cooperating should be to produce immediate tangible returns, there is a serious risk that they lose focus and simply lose interest in maintaining the cooperative agreement. This situation characterizes the initial phase of the life cycle of cooperatives, which is why it is crucial to encourage the creation of a genuine atmosphere of reciprocity based on giving and receiving efforts that can be reconciled with the maximization of long-term value, encouraging cooperative members to be patients and recognize that the sacrifice required from their short-term goals will be compensated by the long-term results, remaining committed and maintaining the investments in the cooperative (Novkovic & Holm, 2012). From this context, this theoretical essay proposes some reflections on the role of perceptions of organizational justice in the long-term maintenance and relational performance of strategic alliances between cooperatives. As research questions, whose objective is to align the theoretical development proposed in this study, the following are suggested:

1. Do perceptions of organizational justice determine the maintenance of cooperative agreements?
2. Does relational governance complement or replace contractual governance in the quest to reduce opportunistic behavior in cooperative agreements?

3. Does building relationships based on trust and reciprocity in cooperative agreements allow parties to mutually benefit from resources and expertise and maintain long-term cooperation?

METHOD

This study is a theoretical essay and consists of exposing ideas and points of view on the topic addressed here, seeking originality in the approach, without, however, exploring the theme in an exhaustive way. The reader of the essay, at the end of the reading, will not have an answer, or a conclusion. Perhaps you will have a doubt, a concern, or even a feeling (which can even be negative). That is, if the arguments presented manage to break with the stigmas left by reading this essay, such a reader will be led to an aporia (Boava, Macedo & Sette, 2019). "Different from the traditional method of doing science, in which the form is considered more important than the content, the theoretical essay requires subjects, essayist and reader, capable of evaluating that the understanding of reality can also occur in other ways" (Meneghetti, 2011, p. 321).

DEVELOPMENT

Dimensions of organizational justice: The concept of justice has permeated scholarship for centuries, as philosophers thought and wrote about this topic long before sociologists, psychologists, and organizational scientists. Herodotus, for example, described the achievements of Solon whose ideas supported the reforms of the Athenian government. Plato outlined the rules of a justly administered state. Aristotle observed that people in different roles defend different rules, arguing that democrats are for freedom, oligarchs for wealth, and others for the nobility of birth (Colquitt, 2001), are merely prescriptive approaches, given that they sought to determine what types of actions are truly fair (Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007; Ryan, 1993). Current understandings of justice differ greatly, especially in the field of organizational studies. Psychologists and management scholars are less concerned with knowing what is fair and more concerned with knowing what people believe to be fair, whose essence pursues a descriptive agenda (Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007). Individuals make decisions virtually every day of their organizational lives, some of which deal with the salaries they receive, the projects they undertake, and the social environments in which they operate. These decisions produce economic and socio-emotional consequences and induce individuals to critically question whether the decision-making process was fair (Colquitt, 2001; Cropanzano & Schminke, 2001). The concept of organizational justice was introduced by Greenberg (1987) and goes back to the seminal article by Adams (1965) who highlighted the relevance of the perception of justice by the employees of an organization, introducing his Equity Theory (ET). The relevance of ET for studies of organizational justice and, specifically, for distributive justice, is that it sheds light on the importance of the fair distribution of results in exchange relations between the employee and the company that employs him or in relationships inter-organizational. ET discusses the link between the sharing of rewards against each party's contribution and responsibility, and justice promoted where outcomes are consistent with implicit allocation norms such as fairness or equality (Moorman, 1991; Colquitt, 2001; Carnovale *et al.*, 2019; Dong *et al.*, 2019; Greenberg, 1987; Holtz & Harold, 2011; Kim & Mauborgne, 1993; Luo, 2007; Roch & Shanock, 2006).

According to Leventhal (1976), the equity rule is the only one that determines that rewards and resources are distributed considering the contributions of the recipients, whose assumptions support most research on measures of distributive justice (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975; Homans, 1961; Leventhal, 1976; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992; Moorman, 1991; Price & Mueller, 1986; Sweeney & McFarlin 1993). As the distribution of rewards was not always as important as the process by which they were allocated, the focus of organizational justice research has shifted to procedural justice, the perceived fairness in the process by which outcomes are achieved (Lind, & Tyler, 1988), the fairness of the procedures that produce a certain

result, but not the result itself (Dong *et al.*, 2019; Liu *et al.*, 2019; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992; Thibaut & Walker, 1975), the perception that procedures and criteria used in decision-making are impartial, representative, transparent, correctable, ethical and consistent with contractual codifications by the contracting parties (Luo, 2008), procedures that embody certain types of normative principles, such as consistency, suppression bias, accuracy, correctness, representativeness and ethics (Leventhal, 1980). The clarity of the model of two dimensions of justice (distributive and procedural) was questioned when the interactional dimension was introduced, whose concept is based on individuals' perceptions of the quality of treatment received from supervisors to subordinates, for example, during the process decisive. Folger and Bies (1989) identified the managerial responsibilities associated with ensuring interactional justice in the implementation of procedures in the organizational environment, as being: (i) giving adequate consideration to the views of employees; (ii) suppressing prejudices; (iii) applying decision-making criteria agreed upon among employees; (iv) give timely feedback following a decision; (v) provide a rationale for the decision taken; (vi) be truthful in communication and (vii) treat employees with courtesy and civility.

Colquitt (2001) also proposes a subdivision for the interactional justice dimension, that is, interpersonal justice and informational justice. Interpersonal fairness is perceived when dealings between related parties (employees or organizations) are fair. In the case of informational justice, perception occurs when the organization transmits effective information to individuals or provides a reasonable explanation of the outcome of the decision, allowing individuals to understand the criteria by which the internal distribution of benefits is carried out, that is, if each party can obtain explanations or answers about the results of the decision, their willingness to participate and maintain the relationship may be greater, reducing the possibility of opportunistic behavior. It should be noted that the two dimensions of interactional justice (interpersonal and informational) are studied separately in the literature of social psychology and management, although, in some studies on inter-organizational relations, it is verified the use of a single dimension for this type of justice (Luo, 2007). The results presented by the literature on this topic suggest that interpersonal and informational justice should be classified as two distinct dimensions (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). The four-dimensional model of justice (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) was supported by at least two meta-analytical reviews, the first of which was carried out with 183 studies for the period between 1975 and 2000 (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001) and the second, with 493 studies in the period between 2001 and 2010 (Colquitt *et al.*, 2013). It is also observed that the use of four dimensions is used in a wide range of sectors and settings (Streicher *et al.*, 2008; Shibaoka *et al.*, 2010; Olsen *et al.*, 2012). This methodology has been translated and used in several countries, including the United States (Colquitt, 2001), Germany (Streicher *et al.*, 2008), Japan (Shibaoka *et al.*, 2010), Norway (Olsen *et al.*, 2012), Australia (Maharee-Lawler, Rodwell & Noblet, 2010) and Spain (Diaz-Garcia, Barbaranelli, & Moreno-Jimenez, 2014), for example.

Perceptions of organizational justice and cooperation: In general, studies on organizational justice are mostly concentrated on micro-level aspects of organizations, which has resulted in a scarcity of studies potentially applicable to some macro-level phenomena, in particular, those related to the way in which results are allocated between organizations, such as, for example, in strategic alliances between cooperatives (Kim & Mauborgne, 1993). Perceptions of fairness affect the efficiency of strategic alliances (Ariño & Ring, 2010; Kumar, Scheer & Steenkamp, 1995), which in extreme cases can result in increased conflict between the parties and reduced commitment in the relationship, which enhances its termination in the short term (Breugré & Acar, 2008). Griffith, Harvey, and Lusch (2006) claim that perceptions of procedural justice are relevant to improving long-term orientations and relational behaviors. These perceptions build an image of mutual respect and dignity between the parties, produce positive expectations and stabilize the partnership,

and encourage the parties to align their private interests with solidarity gains and mitigation of dysfunctional behaviors (Brockner & Siegel, 1995; Luo, 2008). Contextualizing the case of strategic alliances between cooperatives, with regard to distributive justice, the parties are more likely to cooperate in an existing relationship, especially when the environment is more turbulent if they believe that the rewards obtained are proportional to what they invested in the relationship. relationship, that is, if they perceive that they are being treated fairly. In the specific scenario of strategic alliances between cooperatives, the perception of distributive justice occurs when the sharing of cooperation rewards is fair due to the contribution, commitment, and assumption of responsibility by each party. Rewards can be monetary, such as financial resources, as well as non-monetary, such as knowledge acquisition and reputation enhancement. It is observed that the sharing of monetary rewards is more likely, given that they are objectively established in a formal contract. In the case of sharing non-monetary rewards, executives of an alliance between cooperatives assess whether there is distributive justice based only on their perceptions (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984; Williamson, 1999; Luo, 2007).

In an alliance, it is possible that the parties have different strategic objectives, even so, the effect of perceptions of distributive justice on the performance of the partnership is observed as positive, that is, when the parties believe that they obtained a fair share of rewards, there will be a low level of conflict, a high degree of commitment in the relationship and a greater effort to invest in the long term for the survival of the relationship (Luo, 2002, 2007; Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 1995). From the literature review on this topic, it is suggested that a high level of distributive justice contributes to raising the level of performance of the cooperation process, as well as the perception of a high level of interpersonal justice helps and facilitates alliances between cooperatives, reducing opportunistic behavior and positively influencing the level of partnership performance. Fair treatment in interpersonal relationships strengthens information sharing and relational attachment, which in turn creates the so-called social capital that improves cooperation patterns. The construction of social capital through the perception of interpersonal justice derives from open communications, timely feedback, mutual respect, and learning between the parties, which encourages coordination and reduces the bureaucratic cost of relationships (Beamer, 1998; Beugré & Acar, 2008; Luo, 2007). When a party believes that a partner is willing to share valuable information in the expectation that any information provided will be used and protected properly, a positive informational perception is identified and it is expected from then on, an increase in the proportional level of this perception, the that induces solidarity, that is, the sharing of information significantly influences the resolution and coordination of problems that naturally arise in successful strategic alliances (Begré & Acar, 2008; Dekker, 2003). Luo (2007) discovered during his visits to emerging countries that when cooperatives chose their partners to build strategic alliances, they not only evaluated their ability to generate future benefits but also their integrity, benevolence, reliability, and potential affective leadership commitment. of the alliance. It is not always easy to maintain trust in partner cooperatives, which are sometimes dominated by fear of opportunism. This fear cannot be alleviated if the distribution of outcomes, joint decision-making processes, and interactions between parties are not conducted fairly. The absence of a perception of justice generates distrust and compromises the stability of cooperation (Luo, 2007). In Vietnam, for example, many strategic alliances faced varying levels of conflict when procedures were biased and procedural power was inconsistent with the investment made by one of the parties. The French automaker Peugeot, for example, ended its strategic alliance with Chinese partners because it perceived injustice when local partners undermined its managerial autonomy and its power to participate and decide on processes (Harwit, 1997; Luo, 2007).

Trust and reciprocity: the bases of cooperation: The satisfaction and the intention to remain associated with cooperatives depends on the price received for their products, however, the importance of commitment to building relationships to ensure the long-term survival

of cooperative agreements should be highlighted, that is, if partners fail to see what's best for them, their collective enthusiasm tends to wane. The exchange of benefits between partners is a necessary condition for maintaining future exchanges. If they do not quickly realize the tangible benefits of cooperation, the cooperative loses its legitimacy and runs the risk of premature failure (Axelrod, 1984). It is up to reciprocity to ensure that benefits are distributed in proportion to the contributions made by cooperative partners (Axelrod, 1984). In the absence of reciprocity, one party exploits the other, disproportionately benefiting from the cooperative. Given these characteristics, trust is the primary condition for long-term exchange between members and the cooperative. In the case of trust, one party believes in the integrity of the other and each one assesses the risk of the relationship, in particular, that is, trust will define the perceived risk involved in the uncertainty to achieve shared goals. Therefore, when partners know each other better and have more knowledge and more shared experiences, uncertainty decreases and trust between individuals is stronger. This means that the partner who does not truly trust the other assesses the degree of trust in the relationship and thus estimates how long it is likely to last (Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Pessama, Eriksson, & Hair, 2008, 2009). Trust between the parties to cooperation complements the obligations explicitly defined in formal contracts. Trust involves personal relationships (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994) that are based on previous experiences (Gulati, 1995) and involve honesty and trust, encouraging partners to trust each other in exchange relationships. Many studies have shown that trust leads to commitment (Axelrod, 1984; Ekelund, 2002; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Mukherjee & Nath, 2003; Rodriguez & Wilson, 2002; Wetzels, Ruyter, & Van Birgelen, 1998; Wong & Sohal, 2002; Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001). Trust can be reinforced through interpersonal commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and ultimately increase the commitment necessary for cooperation (Mavondo & Rodrigo, 2001).

Parties assess the degree to which any safeguards against opportunistic behavior are needed, i.e. when trust is limited, partners typically include a premium for the risk involved in the relationship. Thus, knowing the level of trust is especially valuable for promoting long-term orientation in cooperatives. As cooperative partners engage in collaboration, they make an initial contribution and expect a return that meets their expectations; such relationships, therefore, involve uncertainty and risk, so at least knowing the level of trust that regulates the cooperation environment is a fundamental condition for cooperatives to exist in the long term (Axelrod, 1984; Gao, Sirgy & Bird, 2005; Villena, Revilla & Choi, 2011). The literature recognizes that trust stimulates cooperative behavior between individuals, groups, and organizations (Axelrod, 1984; Mayer & Davis, 1995; Mcallister, 1995; Schoorman, Mayer & Davis, 2007), being essential in an interpersonal relationship (Zaheer, Mcevily, & Perrone, 1998) that regulates exchange relationships and further reduces fear and opportunistic behavior that can arise in a partnership (Villena, Revilla, & Choi, 2011). Individuals who trust each other also find that they reduce partnership uncertainty and risk by increasing mutual commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and encouraging long-term cooperation (Ganesan, 1994). Therefore, trust perceptions are important for the further development of the relationship in cooperation. The role of reciprocity in strengthening long-term relationships is also highlighted and, in this sense, reciprocity is conceptualized as the practice of giving and receiving, being crucial for economic development (Portes, 1998), driven by exchange norms in which individuals feel obliged to return favors (Mavondo & Rodrigo, 2001). It can be defined as a component of an individual's cognitive system (i.e., values, ideas, and experiences) that collect information, facts, and feelings about how past exchanges have performed and use them to assess the expected value of current decisions and determine commitments. futures that can induce, in the case of positive perception, commitment (Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 1995; Mavondo & Rodrigo, 2001). Reciprocity is also a universal feature of human behavior (Goulder, 1960) that monitors and controls the perceived risk that cooperative partners carry with them. By reciprocating good deeds, individuals increase their chances of receiving future benefits. Thus, reciprocity channels selfish

impulses towards the maintenance of social systems (Deckop, Cirka & Andersson, 2003), therefore, in the context of cooperatives, reciprocity stimulates commitment and creates incentives for cooperation to be established and maintained in the long term. Deepening the discussion on obstacles to cooperation, it is relevant to understand opportunism. Williamson (1985) defines opportunism as the pursuit of self-interest, with intent or the incomplete or distorted disclosure of information, specially designed to deceive, distort, disguise, obfuscate and confuse. In the context of cooperation, opportunism is broadly defined as the behavior of a party that is motivated to pursue its own interest with the intention of obtaining gains at the expense of the other (Das & Rahman, 2010). It refers to the act or behavior carried out by one of the parties to seek its unilateral gains to the detriment of the other, through the breach of implicit or explicit contracts, abuse of power, retention, or distortion of information.

Luo (2006) differentiates between two forms of opportunism: strong and weak. Strong form opportunism includes those actions that violate contractual norms (terms, clauses, and conditions) that are explicitly codified in the main body of a contract, as well as in its various supplements signed at later stages. On the other hand, weak form opportunism involves those behaviors that violate relational norms not explicitly stated in the contract, but incorporated in the common understanding of all members in a specific relationship, which consequently harms the interests of one of the parties. The author specifies three major distinctions between these two types of opportunism: (i) in the strong form opportunism is more observable because it reflects the violation of explicitly specified clauses in a contract, while opportunism in the weak form reflects the violation of implicit norms; (ii) strong-form opportunism has a faster, but less durable, effect in a cooperative relationship because contracts include clear provisions for dealing with violations while breaking relational rules does not enact immediate punishment measures; and (iii) strong form opportunism is more repairable because contracts usually provide clear formal solutions to solve problems while repairing violations of relational norms is more subtle and less clear. Researchers have given increasing attention to mechanisms that curb opportunism based on the logic of transaction cost economics, with a primary focus on economic forces such as contractual protection, shared ownership, investments in relationship-specific assets, and relational governance (Barthelemy & Quelin, 2006; Brown, Dev, & Lee, 2000; Buvik & Reve, 2001; Dahlstrom & Nygaard, 1999; De Vita, Tekaya, & Wang, 2010; Lumineau & Quelin, 2012), all of which require the establishment of formal governance structures. However, in other studies, this logic was complemented by one that is based on the Social Exchange Theory (Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964) and considers restrictions on the behavior of individuals due to social norms (Luo, 2007, 2008; Poppo & Zenger, 2002).

In this context, it is suggested that social forces complement economic forces by reducing opportunism and governing partnerships in the long run, that is, economic transactions gradually become embedded in social relations. Therefore, social exchange theory can provide important *insights* into the dynamics of the continuity of economic transactions beyond those obtained only by applying economic theories (Cai, Yang & Hu, 2009; Granovetter, 1985; Luo, 2006, 2007; Poppo & Zenger, 2002). A growing body of research suggests that economic and social relationships are complementary in guiding long-term economic transactions. While the economic order provides the fundamental institutional basis of the organizational structure, the social order nourishes the continuity of an exchange between the parties (Luo, 2002, 2007). Economic forces alone are insufficient to suppress opportunism and promote continuity, especially when uncertainty is high (Lumineau & Henderson, 2012; Luo, 2007; Poppo & Zenger, 2002). The perception of fairness in the organizational or inter-organizational environment is fundamental for all social exchanges, as perceptions of fairness nurture the continuous commitment to a repetitive exchange, even under uncertainty and risk, that is, the parties in an exchange with socially incorporated rules follow social principles such as equity (Adams, 1965) and reciprocity (Blau, 1964). Thus, behavior, including the fight against

opportunism, can be guided by social forces such as fairness, trust, and attachment (Luo, 2006). Fairness reinforces commitment (Johnson, Korsgaard & Sapienza, 2002), improves resource allocation (Kim & Mauborgne, 1993), and reduces opportunism (Luo, 2007). It also alleviates relational uncertainty, which can be difficult or even impossible to reduce through formal contracts, and creates lasting economic incentives that combat opportunism and promote long-term cooperation (Luo, 2007).

Contractual and relational governance: Formal contracts represent promises or obligations to perform particular actions in the future. The more complex the contract, the greater the specification of promises, obligations, and dispute resolution processes. For example, complex contracts can detail roles and responsibilities to be performed, specify procedures for monitoring and penalties for non-compliance and, most importantly, determine the results or outputs to be delivered to each party (Poppo & Zenger, 2002). In a cooperative agreement, parties may prefer an explicit contract, as it ensures that the terms of cooperation will apply, as well as controlling the type and amount of information shared, reducing the risks that the knowledge transfer may exceed the intended scope, and lay the foundations for a lasting trust between the parties (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992), that is, even if the parties do not fully follow the contract, it still provides a set of normative guidelines to regulate relationships (Lee & Allen, 2002). According to Lusch and Brown (1996), a formal contract can establish how future situations will be handled, providing rules and procedures to maintain the relationship and reducing uncertainty about behaviors and results. In addition, if one of the parties does not comply with the contractual norms, there are legal and economic consequences for the violation of the norms, which in itself discourages the intention of one of the parties to obtain an advantage over the other and, thus, improves the quality of the contract. cooperation, given that it is the state that judges what is lawful in a contractual relationship (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992).

Drawing up a complex contract is expensive, so parties bear the cost only when the consequences of a breach of contract are considerable. Scholars of transaction cost economics generally point to three categories of risks that require contractual (or integration) safeguards: asset specificity, measurement difficulty, and uncertainty. The importance of contracts may therefore diminish over time as trust emerges from a repetitive exchange relationship. Thus, contracts can play a critical role in the early stages of a partnership but later diminish in significance when patterns of cooperative behavior and reputation emerge (Poppo & Zenger, 2002). On the other hand, governance based on relationships (relational governance) is based on aspects of mutual trust and commitment, whose foundations are constituted by several theories, such as the social exchange theory, the resource dependency theory, and the theory of relational capital, as essential coordination mechanisms to guarantee the performance of cooperation (Lee & Allen, 2002). Relational governance is the culture and informal systems that affect the subject of the relationship and that are embodied in a mechanism that encourages self-management, such as, for example, sharing information, trust, and cooperation, making the relationship delimited by norms and common social mechanisms, imposing obligations and generating expectations through social processes that promote relational norms and depend on mutual adjustment and joint action, through which both parties in cooperation behave with the aim of achieving goals together (Wu, Yang & Zhu, 2019).

Many scholars have observed that governance emerges from the agreed values and processes found in social relationships (Noordewier, John, & Nevin, 1990; Heide & John, 1992), which minimizes transaction costs compared to formal contracts (Dyer, 1996; Dyer & Singh, 1998). In relationship-governed exchanges, fulfillment of obligations, promises, and expectations occur through social processes that promote norms of flexibility, solidarity, and information exchange. Flexibility facilitates adaptation to unpredictable events. Solidarity promotes a two-way approach to problem-solving, creating a commitment to joint action through mutual adjustment. Information sharing facilitates problem-solving

and adaptation because parties are willing to share private information with each other, including short- and long-term plans and goals. As the parties commit to such norms, mutuality and cooperation characterize the resulting behavior (Poppo & Zenger, 2002). Relational governance is the process by which the parties to a cooperative relationship establish or adjust the rules and norms related to their collective actions (Grandori, 2006; Paswan *et al.*, 2017; Benítez-Avila *et al.*, 2018), it is the social construction of mechanisms that define roles and modes of production, align efforts and reduce conflicts in an inter-organizational relationship (Pichon-Riviere, 1984). and it is established when a group creates mechanisms related to its actions, simultaneously shaping roles, functions, and decision-making, positioning itself at the center of formation, development, and conflict resolution. It is a set of mechanisms for controlling and encouraging collective action built by the actors themselves (Benítez-Avila *et al.*, 2018), given that working together can create tensions in relation to roles, obligations, ways to raise funds, and how to use them. the information. These mechanisms encourage synergy and cohesion between the parties, combating opportunistic behavior (Granovetter, 1985), that is, in the long term, the partnership will tend to reaffirm its social ties, improving cooperation performance (Pichon-Riviere, 1984). Based on a literature review on relational governance, it is possible to define its characteristics from the following elements: (i) origin in the organization's environment: what situation, problem or opportunity led to the creation of each governance mechanism (Liu & Zhang, 2013; Chen *et al.*, 2018; Latusek & Vlaar, 2018); (ii) prior condition of relationships: building relational governance requires a relationship environment with a predominance of trust and commitment (Latusek & Vlaar, 2018) that facilitates dialogue to resolve tensions and develop rules for action (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Barney & Hansen, 1994; Rusbult & Lange, 2003; Gilbert & Behnan, 2012); (iii) content of the relational governance mechanism: rule, routine, practice, standard objective, norm, ethical value, behavioral control, incentive to collective action, modes of production or management objectives (Hilmer, Pedersen, & Johannsen, 2018; Fremeth & Marcus, 2017; Mishra & Dey, 2018) and (iv) consequences of relational governance: positions, functions, roles, dynamics of cooperation, modes of production, decision-making, behavior of actors (Farokhi *et al.*, 2018).

Mutual trust promotes learning and transfer of knowledge for three reasons, namely: (i) it facilitates intensive interaction between the individuals involved in the cooperation, allowing to locate the sources of knowledge, contributing to its transfer and complex and tacit learning in every interface of the cooperation; (ii) it decreases the fear of opportunistic behavior, as it facilitates fluidity in the exchange of knowledge and depends on the degree of openness and transparency between the partners, as suspicion stimulates a protectionist behavior on the part; (iii) encourages partners to establish unusual knowledge-sharing routines by facilitating the learning of information and *know-how* and accelerating its transfer between parties (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Doz & Hamel, 1998; Kale *et al.*, 2000; Zaheer *et al.*, 1998). The mechanisms by which relational governance mitigates the risks of cooperation are economic and sociological in nature. Economists emphasize the rational origins of relational governance, particularly emphasizing expectations of future cooperation that encourage cooperation in the present. Sociologists emphasize the social norms and ties that arose from the earlier exchange (Uzzi, 1997). Trust is therefore considered a trait that becomes embedded in a given cooperation. In essence, once a partner is given trusted status, they are expected to behave reliably in the future. For economists, trust status is conditioned to benefits accruing over time, in contrast to benefits accruing from opportunistic moves that break trust status (Klein, 1996). This logic, common to game theory, argues that reward expectations of future cooperative behavior encourage cooperation in the present (Baker, Gibbons, & Murphy, 2002). It is also observed in the literature that there is a consensus that mutual trust is a necessary condition for a lasting and effective relationship (Palay, 1984; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Saxton, 1997; Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone, 1998). Trust reduces transaction costs and improves cooperation performance, that is, from a relational point of view, trust is an

important mechanism of persuasion and encouragement for the stability and long-term maintenance of cooperation, given the reduction of uncertainty in the behavior of the parties (Hewett & Bearden, 2001; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Another aspect to highlight is that trust is positively related to the reduction of functional conflicts, less stagnation, and a greater desire to resolve disagreements, which increases productivity and the very performance of cooperation (Baker *et al.*, 2002; Klein, 1996; Lee & Allen, 2002; Poppo & Zenger, 2002). Some authors understand that relational norms, such as trust, are seen as substitutes for complex and explicit contracts or vertical integration (Adler, 2001; Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1997), suggesting that Formal contracts can undermine a company's ability to develop relational governance. To the extent that they signal mistrust between partners and by undermining trust, they encourage rather than discourage opportunistic behavior. This argument proposes that relational contracts can replace formal contracts (Ghoshal & Moran, 1996; Macaulay, 1963; Fehr & Gächter, 2000), that is, the presence of a relational governance device eliminates the need for contractual governance (Larson, 1992; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Macaulay, 1963).

Formulation of Hypotheses: According to the reflections presented in the development of this essay, the following hypotheses are formulated that can be tested in future investigations:

1. Perceptions of distributive justice are positively associated with the performance of the strategic alliance between cooperatives.
2. Perceptions of procedural justice are positively associated with the performance of the strategic alliance between cooperatives.
3. Perceptions of interactional justice are positively associated with the performance of the strategic alliance between cooperatives.
4. Contractual governance is positively related to the reduction of opportunism in strategic alliances between cooperatives.
5. Relational governance is positively related to the reduction of opportunism in strategic alliances between cooperatives.
6. Relational governance complements contractual governance in the quest to reduce opportunism in strategic alliances between cooperatives.
7. Relational governance replaces contractual governance in the quest to reduce opportunism in strategic alliances between cooperatives.
8. The perception of trust increases the commitment needed to strengthen cooperation.
9. The perception of reciprocity increases the commitment needed to strengthen cooperation.

CONCLUSION

In improving the performance of a cooperative arrangement each dimension of fairness has a unique property and role. Based on the principle of equity, the perception of distributive justice discourages the opportunistic behavior that usually occurs in a relational contract. In the case of procedural justice, through the principle of instrumentality, processes are efficiently formalized by imposing barriers to the search for private incentives. Interactional justice, having the principle of social exchange as a theoretical support, intensifies socialization and actions that encourage the sharing of knowledge. Based on the reflections proposed in the development of this essay, the importance of cooperative leaders and managers monitoring perceptions of organizational justice in all its dimensions is highlighted, with the aim of strengthening cooperation between all actors that are part of the agreement. cooperative. The use of organizational justice creates a solid basis for cooperation between these actors, especially in environments of risk and uncertainty. Governance based on contracts and relationships can contribute to the development of cooperation. Formal governance provides clearly articulated contractual terms, solutions, and dispute-resolution processes; relational governance, on the other hand, promotes trust, and relational norms of flexibility, solidarity, bilateralism, and

continuity, making the combination of these two governance mechanisms enhance the performance of cooperation. The presence of clearly articulated contractual terms, resources, and dispute resolution processes, as well as relational norms of flexibility, solidarity, bilateralism, and continuity, can inspire confidence in cooperating. Well-specified formal contracts can actually promote more cooperative, long-term, and reliable exchange relationships. The continuity and cooperation encouraged by relational governance can lead to refinements in formal contracts that further strengthen cooperation. Relational governance can increase the likelihood that trust and cooperation will protect the partnership against risks poorly protected by the formal contract. Finally, relational governance can help overcome the adaptive limits of formal contracts by strengthening the commitment to continue cooperation despite complications and unexpected conflicts. The quality of a cooperative agreement depends on the degree of commitment between the actors (leaders, managers, and associates) of the cooperative agreement. It is suggested that in long-term relationships, the parties have a high degree of commitment, as in case of their lack, the relationship will inevitably come to an end sooner or later. Commitment based on trust and reciprocity is therefore fundamental to maintaining and building relationships and there is sufficient theoretical evidence of its importance for building and continuing a successful cooperative relationship.

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