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Understanding the Concept of Knowledge Acquisition through International Joint Ventures in Algeria: A Proposition for Future Studies

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Abstract
For the past three decades, knowledge acquisition through international joint ventures (IJVs) becomes a common target behind its formation for local firm in new open oriented markets in the belief that IJVs provide excellent opportunities to obtain foreign Multinational Corporations' (MNC) technological, managerial, and various other capabilities in order to meet customers' requirements and to contend in the competitive market. A vast number of previous studies have tried to examine the determinants and outcomes of knowledge acquisition through IJVs. However, these studies are still insufficient to cover all aspects of this topic, whether theoretically, practically, contextually, or empirically, particularly the lack of studies on such topic in the Algerian oil and gas industry. Therefore, with presenting some facts on foreign direct investments, IJV, and the knowledge transfer performance in Algeria. In addition, as the paper presented pertinent issues, this study intended to propose a conceptual framework that can be studied in future studies. This study suggested determinants, such as knowledge management practices, transfer mechanisms, and environmental uncertainty as s. In addition, IJV's competitiveness as an outcome to IJV's knowledge acquisition

Keywords: *acquisition, international joint venture, Algeria.*

I. Introduction

For the last three decades, many developing countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa have experienced a transition in their economies from central planned to open market-oriented economy. This transition has paved the way for countries to form global strategic coalitions to meet new supplies and demands. Therefore, with these new changes, local firms are forced to face increasing consumer preferences and to fiercely compete with other local and foreign companies. However, local firms are finding it difficult to cope with new challenges, infusing the need for sophisticated technological knowledge and management (Tsang, Nguyen, & Erramilli, 2004; Zhan, Chen, Erramilli, & Nguyen, 2009). To meet these new challenges, firms are required to expand their knowledge resources (C. Park, Vertinsky, & Becerra, 2015). Therefore, firms are learning that one of their most critical assets is knowledge-based (Anh & Baughn, 2013). Knowledge is an indispensable organizational resource capable of

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increasing productivity, fostering growth, and ensuring the survival of business enterprises (Szulanski, Ringov, & Jensen, 2016).

However, few companies have all the necessary information and knowledge to effectively manage complex and dynamic business environments, for example, in globalized markets (C. Park et al., 2015) as well as accessing new knowledge needs that involves major challenges for companies in transitional economies (Liao & Hu, 2007). Many social institutions, such as technology centres, industry associations belonging to sophisticated firms, research consortia, and private organizations in advanced industrial economies that aid the acquisition of technology or management skills are not equally well-developed in transitional economies (Low & Robins, 2014). Instead, firms must often rely on the direct transfer of knowledge from external organizations (Low & Robins, 2014), especially the inflow of technology and knowledge from inward foreign direct investment.

Foreign Direct Investments in Algeria

Algeria situated in the north of Africa is a developing country with a population of over 40 million. By the 1990s, the country had experienced a transition from a planned economy to an open oriented economy (World Economic Forum, 2018). Algeria is classified as having a transitional economy and the country needs to grow and keep up with the speed of today's global business environment. Realizing the many ways that FDI can potentially benefit the country, for instance as a potent tool for enhancing Algeria's economic growth in general, and facilitate the transfer of advanced technology, in particular; hence, policymakers in Algeria as well as many African countries have implemented a series of market reforms and economic liberalization policies, including corporate tax rate reductions for investments operating in specific locations across the country, reduction in social security contributions for new young employees, mutual agreement concession of land given for a lease of 33 years (which provides similar rights to ownership) and tax exemptions on exporting projects during the existence of the project. Furthermore, the Algerian government had announced public spending initiatives (investment plans worth USD 200 billion for 2004-2009, USD 286 billion for 2010-2014, and USD 262 billion for 2015-2019) that had opened the doors to foreign investment in various industries and sectors, such as agriculture, industry, aquaculture, fishing, public works, telecommunications, and transport (Investment Climate Statements on Algeria, 2017; National Agency for Investment Development, ANDI, 2017).

Technology transfer through FDIs is considered as a diffusion of information across national borders (Günther, 2005). The inflow of FDI through MNCs is expected to supply the local market with much needed new capital and capabilities in terms of new advanced technologies, tacit knowledge, materials and production systems, as well as management and workforce skills (Bodman & Le, 2013; Javorcik & Kaminski, 2008; Osabutey, Williams, & Debrah, 2014). According to data revealed by UNCTAD FDI, (2017), the Algerian government's reforms resulted in a dramatic increase in inward foreign direct investment in all sectors in Algeria for the last 10 years from $8222 million in 2005 to $ 27778 million in 2016.

International Joint Ventures in Algeria

While there is a continuous inflow of foreign direct investment into the local market, building cross-border partnerships, international alliances, and international joint ventures aimed at acquiring knowledge can be a business-attractive strategy (Park et al., 2015). Hence, Algerian policymakers had introduced new amendments to inward foreign investment laws related to the transmission of foreign investments in partnership with local firms. The Algerian Official Gazette, as

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reported by the National Agency for Investment Development or ANDI, (2017), Article 4a of the Ordinance states that the production of goods and services by foreign firms, as well as the import and distribution of businesses, can be achieved through a partnership with one or more domestic organizations that must hold at least 51% of the share capital. The prerequisite of the 49/51% investment law necessitates that Algerians possess at least a 51% share in all projects involving foreign investments. Law No. 05-07 came into force on April 28, 2005 and was initially imposed on the oil & gas industry, which was then extended to all areas of foreign investment by 2009. The reason behind imposing the 51/49% rule on the oil and gas industry as a priority came about due to its importance to the national economy. Based on a report by Investment Climate Statements on Algeria (2017), the hydrocarbon sector is a dominant part of the Algerian economy representing approximately 60% of budget revenues, approximately 45% of the GDP, and over 94% of export income. Therefore, the oil and gas sector is important for the country's economy and particular emphasis is placed on acquiring knowledge in the industry to sustain its competitiveness.

Therefore, based on the 49/51% rule, where one of the partners participate with at least 20% and less than 80% of IJV share, this partnership is called an international joint venture. This is because of alliance named as an IJV when a foreign partner holds at least 20% (Dhanaraj & Beamish, 2004). IJV is a legal entity created by at least two independent firms, with one partner being an international company located outside the host country (del Mar Benavides-Espinosa & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2014). Kwok, Sharma, Gaur, and Ueno, (2018) stated that equity in international joint ventures is the formation of a new company entity between two or more partners, where each partner possesses an equity share from the total capital or the redeployment of capital shares of an already surviving company amongst partners. Naturally, contribution to the capital can be in the form of cash or kind, such as clearance fees or development of a land or terrestrial (land used for the project), usage rights from local investors, whereas outsiders (foreign MNCs) can contribute equipment, technology, materials, and machinery. According to Beamish and Lupton, (2016), international joint venture equity and contracts are generally considered as international joint ventures. Apart from "risk-sharing" and "access to oil and gas assets" by foreign partners as being major goals of IJVs, "learning or knowledge acquisition" constitutes an important goal of an IJV (Okonkwo, 2019).

Hence, the formation of international joint ventures has witnessed an incredible increase within a 10-year period (2006 to 2016). Based on the 2017 statistics provided by Algeria's National Centre for Trade Register (CNRC), the number of IJVs in all industries had increased from 19098 to 50422 between 2006 and 2016. The dramatic rise was primarily driven by changes and development in the business environment due to the government's efforts to encourage inward FDI by applying a series of economic liberalization and development policies. These IJVs were expected to benefit from a broad range of knowledge and technological capabilities offered by their advanced foreign partners.

Knowledge Transfer Performance in Algeria

Studies have found that the benefits of learning through IJVs can be measured by changes in the recipient's knowledge, level of innovativeness, or performance in local settings (Easterby-Smith, Lyles, & Tsang, 2008). Therefore, to evaluate knowledge acquisition through the IJV context, researchers studied reports from different Algerian ministries and departments, websites, as well as data bases to obtain an assessment of knowledge transfer performance by these IJVs.

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Unfortunately, I could not find exact information about it. However, there are global reports that can be a benchmark for macroeconomic and microeconomic fundamental information on most of world countries, including Algeria.

Based on the statistics mentioned earlier, an increase in the inflow of FDI, which is translated to the considerable number of IJVs, is not directly linked to the IJV's capability of improving its performance through higher levels of technology and knowledge. As indicated by The Global Innovation Index (2017), which had developed a benchmark for macroeconomic and microeconomic fundamentals for national innovation, it was found that Algeria's position regarding knowledge and technology output was ranked at 107 (out of 128 countries). Algeria has been assessed in terms of knowledge and technology outputs and categorized according to the following criteria, such as knowledge creation (101/128), knowledge impact (81/128), and knowledge diffusion (124/128).

Literature states that knowledge is a valuable strategic resource in an organization's effort to innovate and compete (Nasimi et al., 2013; Van Wijk, Jansen, & Lyles, 2008; Wang, 2013). Nevertheless, the World Economic Forum (2018) report reveals that the innovation indicator is rated rather low at 104 (out of 137 countries). This ranking indicates the low level of innovation at national and organizational levels. According to the table, Algeria was assessed in terms of innovation and the capacity for innovation, company allocation for R & D, quality of scientific research institutions, and public procurement of advanced technology. The assessment also included products, university-industry collaboration in R & D, availability of scientists and engineers and PCT patent application /million population.

More evidence can be found in the World Economic Forum report (2018), which pointed out that Algeria had a very low competitive index being at number 86 (out of 137 countries). Therefore, this shows that the ability to gain competitiveness was still weak and needed improvement, either at the national or organizational levels. In addition, the low level of competitiveness might reflect a lack of knowledge. This is based on Inkpen's (2008) argument, in which he demonstrated that knowledge is an important and strategic resource that provides organizations with competitive advantage.

1. What is the Issue?

From the aforementioned statistics, studies argued that knowledge acquisition by organizations can be measured by changes in the recipient's levels of knowledge, innovativeness, or performance in a local setting (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). However, from the facts and data provided above, this study noticed that there was an increase in the amount of FDI (UNCTAD, FDI, 2018). The FDI by MNCs is a major channel for gaining access to advanced technologies and knowledge possessed by developed countries (Borensztein, De Gregorio, & Lee, 1998; Günther, 2005). This inflow of FDI transmitted to a considerable number of IJVs, particularly in the oil and gas industry, was due to Rule 51/49 (CNRC, 2016; Guide to Investing in Algeria, 2017), where foreign firms are expected to channel their knowledge, technology, skills, machineries and others various capabilities through the IJVs.

However, based on reports from the World Economic Forum (2018) and Global Innovation Index (2017), this study found that the level of technology and knowledge output, innovation, and competitiveness was very low (weak). Moreover, these reports act as a benchmark for macroeconomic and microeconomic fundamentals. Based on this contradiction (while

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there is an inflow of knowledge and technology through FDIs and MNCs), reports concerning Algeria have indicated that there is a low-level of knowledge and technology output in the national and organizational contexts.

As this study focused on international joint ventures in Algeria, where based on the statistics. It could be concluded that there is a lack of knowledge acquisition through IJVs from their foreign partners. Anh et al., (2006) further added that the process of knowledge acquisition has been found to be intricate, generally misunderstood, and often coupled with much frustration. This has resulted in a high rate of failure in IJVs, where over 50 % of IJVs are perpetually struggling or have become outright failures (Bamford, Ernst, & Fubini, 2004). Therefore, this justifies the reason for undertaking a study on knowledge acquisition to understand the determinants and outcome of knowledge acquisition, particularly in the IJV context.

2. Why there is a need for a study?

IJV's the acquisition of knowledge from foreign partners through IJVs is a major concern of this study. A study must be conducted to answer several questions in order to improve the understanding of what determines knowledge acquisition from its foreign partner through IJVs, which in turn can expand the IJVs' productivity. This can be achieved by in-depth examinations of previous theoretical and empirical studies, as well as proposed models by different authors related to knowledge acquisition. Therefore, this study is significant for three reasons.

First, critical literature reviews and meta-analyses have identified a number of different sets of factors (perspectives) that determine cross-border knowledge transfer and acquisition (Ajith Kumar & Ganesh, 2009; Andersson, Dasí, Mudambi, & Pedersen, 2016; Battistella, De Toni, & Pillon, 2015; Bozeman, Rimes, & Youtie, 2015; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Liyanage, Elhag, Ballal, & Li, 2009; Martinkenaite, 2011; Meier, 2011; Michailova & Mustaffa, 2012; Van Wijk et al., 2008), which includes actors' capabilities and characteristics, social perspectives, characteristics of knowledge, reference of context, management characteristics as well as channels and mechanisms (Figure 1). Therefore, undertaking a study contributes to scholarly debates on knowledge acquisition through IJVs as well as fill the gaps in previous studies by proposing potential determinants and outcomes of knowledge acquisition through IJVs. Where in the literature that concerning IJV's acquisition of knowledge from foreign partners since the study pioneered by (Lyles & Salk, 1996), most studies have examined absorptive capacity, disseminative capacity, social capital, and transfer mechanisms as antecedents of knowledge acquisition through IJVs (Anh & Baughn, 2013; Dhanaraj, Lyles, Steensma, & Tihanyi, 2004; Lane, Salk, & Lyles, 2001; Lyles & Salk, 1996; Minbaeva, Park, Vertinsky, & Cho, 2018; B. I. Park, 2011; C. Park, Vertinsky, & Minbaeva, 2013; Rotsios, Sklavounos, & Hajidimitriou, 2018; Tamma, Takyeddine, & Emir Moumene, 2019; Thi Thuc Anh, 2017). However, having limited antecedents are inadequate to understand factors that could possibly influence knowledge acquisition through IJVs. Thus, previous findings should be subjected to verifications. There are still limited studies that simultaneously identify potential factors that determine effective knowledge acquisition, which is a gap in the literature.

Second is the selection of determinant factors that affect knowledge acquisition through IJVs. Knowledge acquisition is obviously not the ultimate challenge and motive for all IJVs, but as presented by knowledge-based theory, one of the rationales behind engaging in IJVs is gaining knowledge, where knowledge is the main source for competitive advantage and superior

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performance (Grant, 1996; Grant & Baden-Fuller, 1995). However, Anh and Baughn (2013) argued that knowledge is not synonymous with performance; the influence of new knowledge on certain outcomes restricts the joint venture's strategy or organisation. This standpoint is consistent with the increase in reported numbers of failed IJVs, where an average of two in five IJVs is perpetual strugglers or outright failures (Bamford et al., 2004; Beamish & Delios, 1997; Damanpour, Devece, Chen, & Pothukuchi, 2012). Additional evidence can be found in the Global Economic Forum (2018), whereby in the context of Algeria, the competitiveness index is found to be relatively low. With the exception of some studies (Anh & Baughn, 2013; Chen, Lin, Lin, & Hsiao, 2018; Idris & Seng Tey, 2011; C. Park et al., 2015; Seng & Taha, 2017; Zhan et al., 2009), there is limited empirical investigation to understand whether transferred resources and knowledge from foreign partners have contributed to IJVs' competitiveness. Therefore, an empirical study is critical to evaluate the direct outcome, which reflects the effectiveness of knowledge acquired from foreign partners.

Thirdly, the research context is a vital consideration to the extent that it influences the nature of the phenomenon that might be observed, and places boundaries and contingencies upon the relevant domain of the findings (George, 2014). In line with this, most previous studies on knowledge acquisition through IJVs in transitional economics were carried out in Asian and African sub-Saharan transition economies. For example, China, Vietnam, and Hungary (Dhanaraj et al., 2004; Kwok et al., 2018; THI THUC ANH, 2017), Ghana and Nigeria (Kivrak, Arslan, Tuncan, & Birgonul, 2014; Ado et al., 2016; Osabutey et al., 2014;(Oguji, Degbey, & Owusu), 2018). However, there is lack of studies related to IJV activities in the Middle East and North African countries (Beamish & Lupton, 2016; Hearn, 2015), particularly in Algeria . The knowledge acquisition process is complicated and differs widely, especially in geographically dispersed environments, hence, the systematic process of knowledge acquisition under specific environments still needs to be studied (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1990; Kogut & Zander, 1993). Knowledge acquisition through IJVs might succeed in a particular country but fail in another. For example, a study on learning in Africa-China IJVs failed to determine how African partners learn through IJVs (Haas & Cummings, 2015). Therefore, the earlier argument is worthy of further examination and it motivates the study on knowledge acquisition through IJVs in Algeria.

Therefore, conducting a study on knowledge acquisition through IJVs in Algeria is vital because it allows academicians and practitioners to get a more definite and in-depth comprehension of the determinants of knowledge acquisition through IJVs and its implications. Furthermore, the study is significant to IJV managers and policymakers in Algeria as it can inspire them to plan programs that effectively maximize the increasing success of knowledge acquisition, which in turn, can be beneficial to IJVs by improving its performances and maintaining the sustainable development of IJVs.

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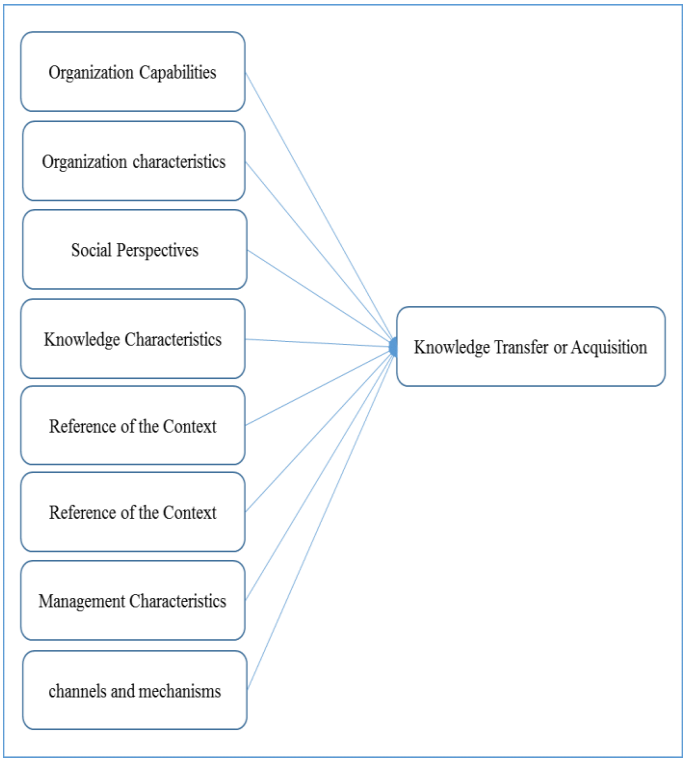

Figure 1: sets of factors perspectives that determine cross-border knowledge transfer and acquisition (created by the author based on previous critical literature reviews).

3. Proposition for Future Studies

This study argues that these previous studies lacked the understanding of what determines knowledge acquisition through IJVs and what are the desired outcomes of knowledge transfer. Therefore, the researchers strongly recommend that future studies conduct a quantitative study on knowledge acquisition from foreign partner through IJVs. Thus, due to the existence of clear gaps in the literature, as shown in the figure 2, this study has suggested that future studies should thoroughly examine the two fold model that includes determinants and outcome of knowledge acquisition through IJVs.

For the determinants, based on previous studies on knowledge acquisition and transfer in different context such as inter-firm collaboration, buyer-supplier, IJVs, and allainces. The authors propose each of knowledge management practice (Evangelista, 2009; Nguyen & Aoyama, 2015; Tamma, Abd. Rahim b., & Fakhrorazi, 2018; Tamma, Jaguli, & Ahmad, 2018), transfer mechanisms (Chen, Hsiao, & Chu, 2014; Tamma, 2019a, 2019b; Tamma, Abd. Rahim b, & Fakhrorazi, 2017, 2018; Tamma et al., 2019; Williams, 2007), and environmental uncertainty. (Battistella, De Toni, & Pillon, 2016; Tamma, Jaguli, et al., 2018).

Transfer mechanisms refers to the method that recipient companies involve in adapting or replicating the knowledge from the donating companies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Mason & Leek, 2008). In other words, IJVs need mechanisms to recognize knowledge based on its contextual nature (Björkman, Barner-Rasmussen, & Li, 2004). Transfer mechanisms indicate whether IJVs need to replicate knowledge because knowledge is obscure and adaptation is based on the context (Williams, 2007). Knowledge management practices refer to a particular set of management practices implemented in the IJV with the purpose of expanding the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational knowledge resources (Andreeva and Kianto, 2012). Knowledge management practices is the management's obligation to its company to develop articulated policies, goals, and organizational learning as well as to assess its workers' performance (Evangelista, 2009). Environmental uncertainty is an important factor that must be considered. As maintained by Battistella et al, (2016), "inter-actor knowledge transfer" is always positioned in a frame of reference. In this vein, previous studies have strongly recommended that environmental uncertainty is a factor that could affect knowledge transfer and acquisition (Battistella, De Toni, & Pillon, 2016; Meier, 2011). Therefore, knowledge exchange can be characterized by variations in its contextual nature, such as instability of technology, demand, competitors, and products.

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Such uncertainties could lead to increased opportunistic risk behavior by its allies, and subsequently decrease the value of relationship-specific properties in a partnership (Gaur et al., 2011). Furthermore, a turbulent environment in developing and emerging markets hastens the obsoleteness of acquired knowledge even before it can be fully utilized (Zhang, Wu, & Chen, 2018).

Regarding the outcome, the authors have suggested that examine the effect of knowledge acquisition on IJV's competitiveness. IJV's competitiveness can be defined as the degree to which a firm performs in a marketplace, compared to its major competitors (L. Y. Wu, Wang, Chen, & Pan, 2008; W. p. Wu, 2008). In this study, IJV's competitiveness reflects a venture's capabilities to conquest and surpass its main rivals after forming international joint ventures with its major partner. This is in context with the product's quality and services and the rapidity in which it becomes aware of market alterations and reacts with marketplace demands and opportunities.

Apart from the conceptual framework, the authors proposed the study to be undertaken in Algeria. In addition, the study suggested that academics should conduct a study in the oil and gas industry as previous literature was mainly concerned with electronic or telecommunication. However, the oil and gas industry have been ignored regardless to its importance to the country's economy, for instance in Algeria, the oil and gas industry is the backbone of the Algerian economy. It represents approximately 94% of export income, 45% of the GDP, and nearly 60% of budget revenues (guide to invest in Algeria, 2017; AND, 2017). In this line, acquisition of knowledge has become a major concern for the oil and gas industry. There is a growing awareness among developing countries for the need to acquire adequate technical knowledge related to the oil and gas industry, particularly in the various chains of control and stages of operations. Usually, these machinery and technologies are not created in isolation, but have evolved as a consequence of continuing arrangements between those who donate technology (foreign partners) and their last consumer (IJV). Hence, knowledge exchange between partners involved in the technical innovation process is crucial to the advancement and success of technology practice.

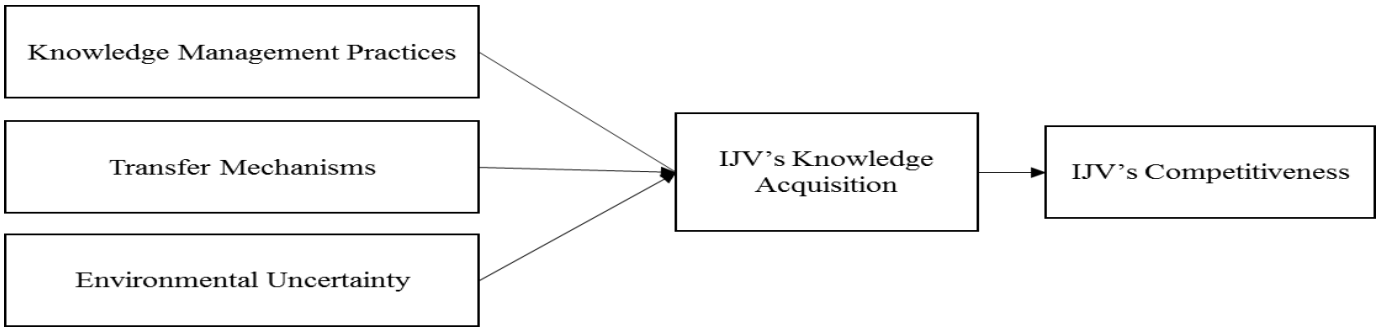

Figure 1.2: Proposed framework

II. Literature Review

Knowledge Management practices and IJV's Knowledge Acquisition

Knowledge management practices refer to a particular set of management practices conducted in IJVs with the purpose of expanding the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational knowledge resources (Schiuma, Andreeva, & Kianto, 2012). Knowledge management practices is the conscious organizational and managerial practices planned to accomplish company objectives via effective and efficient management of a company's knowledge resources (Inkinen & Inkinen, 2016; Kianto, Ritala, Spender, & Vanhala, 2014; Schiuma et al., 2012). This current study had defined knowledge management

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practices as IJVs' managerial practices that aimed to accomplish company objectives (e.g., gaining new technological knowledge) via effective and efficient management of a company's knowledge resources.

Senge (1990) claimed that the essence of a management's commitment is to improve an organization's learning strategies and aims, and the firm should strive to obtain these objectives, and the commitment would enable the firm to achieve its vision for excellence. The commitment to learning might facilitate the formation of pure learning agendas, procedures and routines in order to accomplish aims and visions (Simonin, 2004). Whereas, these benefits can only be realised when the organization's leaders are committed and encourage learning behaviors and attitudes in the firm (Lei, Slocum, & Pitts, 1997; Pham & Swierczek, 2006; Senge, 1990). (Lee, Gon Kim, & Kim, 2012) indicated that top management support is important because it facilitates knowledge processes for greater organizational learning, thus, creating a competency level for advancement in services and products as well as to forecast business dangers and to survive with new market information. Moreover, managers can create a learning culture by inculcating values in their organizations, such as risk taking, courage, efficient communication, empowerment, and maximizing performance (Teare, 1998). Therefore, knowledge management practices can be considered as the core facilitator for organizational learning orientations and outcomes.

Transfer Mechanisms and IJV'sKnowledge Acquisition

Transfer mechanisms are a mode used by firms to conduct knowledge transfer activities (Mason & Leek, 2008), where recipients have to replicate or adapt the received knowledge based on the context. (Björkman et al., 2004) clarified that knowledge transfer is a socially collaborative construct and management scholars have long recognized its contextual nature. Transfer mechanisms are methods utilized by an acquiring firm to replicate and adapt knowledge provided by a parent firm (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Mason & Leek, 2008). Therefore, an IJV must ascertain the nature of knowledge transfer practiced in order to generate broad transfer mechanisms needed to embed foreign knowledge in a local setting.. Therefore, replication of knowledge is crucial due to the inherent causal ambiguity of complex production processes (Lippman & Rumelt, 1982) to the point that it restrains the firm from identifying basic operating knowledge. In addition, one criterion for adapting to knowledge exchange is that the said knowledge should be compatible with the new setting. Hence, knowledge must be modified according to the firm's operating environment because the environment shapes the impact of knowledge (Penrose, 2009).

Williams (2007) had developed an important model that illustrates the effects of replication and adaptation of knowledge transfer. The model has proclaimed that a firm's replication and adaptation are due to ambiguous and contextual knowledge. The model further proposed that firms are inclined toward replication when knowledge is discreet, whereas adaptation is preferred when the exchanged knowledge is understood. Both replication and adaptation of knowledge lead to successful knowledge transfer, thus, prompt the firm's improved performance. Given that, firms not only contribute towards the replication of an accurate embodiment of knowledge, but also emphasize the difficult and tedious adaptation of that knowledge. According to Williams (2007), both replication and adaptation are deemed important in achieving successful knowledge acquisition.

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Environmental Uncertainty and IJV's Knowledge Acquisition

Wong et al., (2011) had defined environmental uncertainty as the degree or variation of instability in environmental factors. Specifically, environmental uncertainty is the extent of turbulence and its effects on products or services, technologies and demand for products or services in the market (Dess & Davis, 1984). In the context of IJV, prior studies have often limited their attention to knowledge acquisition. One of the most important objectives of an organization is to develop and implement a strategy to cope with external environmental factors that can cause turbulence. Traditionally, this strategic response often emphasizes strategic alliances such as IJVs in order to acquire external knowledge (Cassiman & Veugelers, 2006). Battistella et al., (2016) stated that knowledge exchange between organizations is often placed in contextual reference. An organization's quest for external knowledge is highly dependent on the knowledge acquisition and processing context (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Another important factor that influences the search for external knowledge is the turbulence in the firm's operating environment (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Lichtenthaler, 2009).

In developing and transitional countries, it is a relatively underdeveloped economy whereby legal matters and state of financial infrastructure also suffer huge deficits; therefore, creating environmental uncertainty, which includes highly unpredictable markets and consumer demands, hostile competition, and abrupt changes in legal, political, and economical constructs (Li & Atuahene-Gima, 2001). In addition, the effectiveness of a collaborative strategy is also dependent on environmental constraints (Fynes, De Burca, & Marshall, 2004; Holweg, Disney, Holmström, & Småros, 2005).

From the transaction cost economic theory perspective, environmental uncertainty has a major negative impact on the extend of external search. TCE has also suggested that transaction costs be separated into costs for searching, bargaining, and supervising of contracts (Macher & Richman, 2008). Hence, in order to access valuable external sources of knowledge, participating firms should construct and maintain strong relationships with their relevant and useful sources of knowledge. However, the cost of identifying and locating appropriate external sources of knowledge, especially commercially useful knowledge, is likely to increase in turbulent environments. In addition, , the cost of bargaining during knowledge acquisition from external sources also tends to increase. Therefore, firms are expected to lower their extend of external search in order to maintain their transaction costs during external knowledge search in high turbulent environments. Therefore, empirical studies have suggested that environmental uncertainty can hinder activities related to seeking and transferring of knowledge under certain conditions (Levine & Prietula, 2012; Prasad & Junni, 2017; Urbany, Dickson, & Wilkie, 1989; Y. Li, Long, Li, & You, 2014).

IJV's Knowledge Acquisition and IJV's Competitiveness

Traditionally, competition is somewhat simple, in which the factors of production are the most needed effort, and it is easy to measure its success or failure. However, in the present era, modern competition becomes more dynamic. Global competition has increased, meaning that new knowledge, skills, market, product, management concept, and capabilities are continuously changing to adapt to industrial competitiveness. Porter's (1980) generic competitive strategies have described alternative positions in the market that can enhance the firm's competitive advantage by differentiating itself to increase consumer value and thereby achieving better margins, or by lowering costs (Miller & Friesen, 1986).

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Therefore, firm (IJV) competitiveness can be defined as the degree to which a firm performs in a marketplace, compared to its major competitors (L. Y. Wu et al., 2008; W. p. Wu, 2008).

Most companies form IJVs or any other form of alliance to gain necessary knowledge, expertise and other valuable possessions in order to fulfil their knowledge gap. Lack of knowledge can hinder the augmentation of a firm's abilities. That is why partner firms in any form of alliance mostly own different but complementary knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the acquisition of required knowledge through IJV partner(s) not only enhances a firm's capabilities but also improves its allies' comparability. Concisely, enhanced capabilities can facilitate companies to counteract their competitors (E. Fang, 2011). A company can also increase its competitiveness in the market through the integration of necessary information with its internal knowledge. Integration equips the company with complementary marketing abilities, prompt responsiveness to market changes, and innovative product offers (E. E. Fang & Zou, 2009; Zhou & Li, 2012). In the context of IJVs, foreign knowledge is compulsory for skill extension, which will provide distinctive benefits to the company as compared to its rivals (Yli-Renko, Autio, & Sapienza, 2001), suggesting that knowledge-based assets gained through foreign parent companies provide strong competitive advantage to an IJV.

Therefore, it appears that competitiveness has become an essential pillar for increasing performance. Ma, (2000) argued that competitive advantage aids a firm to create better value for customers; hence, it contributes to the firm's performance. Furthermore, competitive advantage can be discrete or compound, knowledge-based (Grant, 1996) or market-position-based (Miller & Friesen, 1986), and is expected to be positively related to performance.

Data in this Study

In the contemporary technology and digital era, researchers were inspired to discuss such topics, which caused the business environment to become more knowledge-based, meanwhile many developing countries were opening their previously closed economies. The market in these economies (e.g. Algeria) still lacked social institutions, such as technology centres, industry association of sophisticated firms, research consortia, and private organizations in advanced industrial economies that aid the acquisition of technology.

This study had collected data on Algeria from previous reports such UNCTAD (2018), Investment Climate Statements on Algeria (2017), Algeria's National Centre for Trade Register, CNRC (2017), National Agency for Investment Development, ANDI, (2017), and World Economic Forum, (2018), Global Innovation Index (2017). In addition, in order to discover theoretical and practical issues related IJV's knowledge acquisition, this study relied heavily on library research and the extensive evaluation of theoretical reviews in the literature on the subject of knowledge acquisition through IJVs with a foreign partner in developing and transitional economies. The library research included online materials to journal article and chapters in books. References were based on online databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. This study highlights knowledge acquisition through IJVs with foreign partner's perspectives in transitional economies. The data used in this study were obtained from previous literature (1996-2018). The first study on this subject matter was pioneered by Lyles and Salk, (1996) and studies on this same context is still ongoing until now, 2018. Therefore, previous arguments, gaps, and logical justifications; this study was conducted to prompt future researchers to undertake an empirical study on knowledge

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acquisition through IJVs from foreign partners in the context of an Algerian setting or any another transitional economies countries.

III. Conclusion

This study has presents practical and theoretical issues related to IJV's from foreign partners in Algeria. The introduction in this study has explained the importance of knowledge and technology, particularly for firms in countries that have recently moved from planned economics to an open-oriented market. In addition, this study focused specifically on Algeria and touching on its policy towards FDI and IJV as a means to gain the knowledge because the local market is unable to generate it. Next, this study displayed Algeria's knowledge transfer performance, which showed the main issues in this study, namely the low level of knowledge and technology output as well as innovation and competitiveness based on the Global Innovation Index (2017) and World Economic Forum (2018) reports. Then, the researcher relying on the practical issue and the gaps that conducted drawing of heavy search on knowledge acquisition through IJVs with foreign partners has maintained and recommended the importance of conducting future studies to fill the gap in the literature. Therefore, this study has opened an avenue for future studies that will enrich the literature, while scholarly debates will contribute to the corpus of knowledge and allow Algerian practitioners and policymakers as well as other transitional economies to obtain a comprehensive assessment that could help them to formulate better policies for dealing with IJVs. Such understanding and awareness could prove valuable for policy makers in order to make the right decision and avoid the failure of IJVs.

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