This study establishes a model based on coopetition theory to explain the formation of team performance in virtual teams. We tested the model in information technology (IT) organizations, and found applicability of coopetition in influencing team performance and knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is indirectly influenced by team politics and social capital (i.e., trust, social interaction and shared vision) via the mediation of cooperation and competition, while team performance is indirectly affected by team politics and social capital via the mediation of cooperation, team emotional intelligence and team competence.
This suggests that team emotional intelligence and team competence are positively related to teaming consequences such as knowledge sharing and team performance.

This study differs from previous research in certain important ways. First, a majority of previous research related to interactions among team members focuses on either competition or cooperation, which often resulted in a one-sided understanding of team members and their team outcomes. The coopetitive relationship between team members is worth studying to avoid managerial misunderstanding because simultaneous cooperation and competition among the members substantially complicate teaming and its outcomes. This study examining the team outcomes based on coopetition generates further in-depth understanding regarding critical determinants in the context of coopetition.

Second, many previous studies of cooperation or competition (i.e., coopetition) emphasize face-to-face interaction styles among team members without taking the contexts of communication technology into consideration (e.g., Kent et al. [14]; Thomas and Bostrom [15]; Townsend et al. [16,17]). Virtual teams work collaboratively in geographically dispersed locations but still share the same interests, goals, needs and practices that define face-to-face teams (e.g., Chiu, Hsu, and Wang [18]). Due to advances in information technology facilitating communication and information sharing, more companies are moving towards using virtual teams. Regrettably, few theoretical attempts to integrate the coopetition literature in the settings of virtual teams have emerged. For that reason, examining the applicability of coopetition among virtual team members is a necessary and essential complement to previous studies given the abundant research on face-to-face teams.

Third, while some prior empirical studies have examined coopetition at the firm level (e.g., Tiessen and Linton [19]), this study is one of the few to use primary survey data collected from team members to test the determinants and outcomes of coopetition based on teams. Research supports and extends the notion that coopetition is not only important among intra-organizational partners, but also among inter-team parties (or inter-organizational parties) and these interactions are key for a team’s or firm’s long-term viability [20].

Last, this study pioneers the expansion of coopetition by including team EQ/IQ as critical variables influencing team outcomes. Most previous research related to coopetition considers cooperation and competition to the neglect of other factors (e.g., Bouncken and Fredrich [22]; Lin et al. [21]; Luo et al. [20]). This study aims at filling a gap in the literature of coopetition by demonstrating how team EQ/IQ and coopetition jointly influence team outcomes. While previous literature has so far privileged a focus on inter-firm relationships [23], little attention has been paid to intra-team relationships, which is examined by this study.

2. Theory and hypotheses

This study establishes a model based on coopetition to explain the relations among team performance and knowledge sharing across virtual teams. In the proposed model (see Fig. 1), knowledge sharing and team performance are indirectly affected by team politics through the mediation of coopetition and by social capital (i.e., trust, social interaction and shared vision) via the mediation of coopetition, team emotional intelligence and team competence. The rationale and justification about the proposed model and its figure are provided in the following section.

2.1. Coopetition and knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing across team members can be both competitive and cooperative in nature [20], resulting in an interesting paradox. The competitive nature often happens since the acquisition of knowledge can generate private gains for individuals,
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