

Effects of Personal Social Capital on the Isomorphism of Stricto Sensu Graduate Courses

Efeitos do Capital Social Pessoal no Isomorfismo de Cursos de Pós-Graduação Stricto Sensu¹

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ABSTRACT


This research investigates whether personal social capital influences institutional isomorphism. Two premises were considered: i) neo-institutional theory and institutional isomorphism provide tools for explaining the homogenization of practices and structures between organizations and ii) personal social capital in organizations contributes to institutional isomorphism. The study was developed in two aspects — one theoretical and the other empirical — which made it possible to corroborate the proposed hypothesis. Quantitative research methods were used in the empirical aspect, with a sample of 176 coordinators of stricto sensu postgraduate courses. Higher education institutions (HEIs) were evaluated in two facets: i) organizations subject to isomorphic phenomena, such as firms from other sectors, and ii) responsibility for the perpetuation of these processes, from the training of teachers (who will become masters of future managers) and the knowledge they generate. At the end of the research, it was confirmed that personal social capital has a positive effect on institutional isomorphism through the internal relations of the coordinators. The manifestations of coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphisms in the HEIs were also identified.


Keywords: personal social capital, neo-institutional theory, institutional isomorphism¹

RESUMO

Com esta pesquisa foi investigado se o capital social pessoal produzia efeito sobre o isomorfismo institucional. Duas premissas foram consideradas: i) a teoria neoinstitucional e o isomorfismo institucional fornecem ferramentas para explicar a homogeneização de práticas e estruturas entre as organizações e ii) o capital social pessoal nas organizações contribui para o isomorfismo institucional. O estudo desenvolveu-se em duas vertentes — uma teórica e outra empírica — que permitiram corroborar a hipótese proposta. Métodos de pesquisa quanti-

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RESUMO

tativos foram utilizados no aspecto empírico, com uma amostra de 176 coordenadores de cursos de pós-graduação stricto sensu. As instituições de ensino superior (IES) foram avaliadas em duas facetas: i) organizações sujeitas a fenômenos isomórficos, como empresas de outros setores, e ii) responsabilidade pela perpetuação desses processos, desde a formação de professores (que se tornarão mestres de futuros gerentes) e o conhecimento que eles geram. Ao final da pesquisa, confirmou-se que o capital social pessoal tem efeito positivo sobre o isomorfismo institucional por meio das relações internas dos coordenadores. Também foram identificadas as manifestações de isomorfismos coercitivos, normativos e miméticos nas IES.

Palavras-chave: capital social individual, teoria neo-institucional, isomorfismo institucional

Introduction

Practices such as digital transformation, the adoption of agile methodologies for team management, or the use of certain business models end up becoming cognitive prerequisites for many organizations to operate in their markets, making their adoption mandatory as pointed out, for example, by Pollach (2022), Piazza and Abrahamson (2020), Alec Cram (2019), and Alec Cram and Newell (2015).

The use of these “one-size-fits-all” models has been increasingly present and propagated not only by the managers of organizations in the sectors themselves but also by research studying the practices of companies that have experienced vertiginous growth. Many of these surveys end up becoming publications that are received by managers, and endorsed by them, as prescriptions for what their firms should be like Pollach (2022).

Perhaps such practices can be effective under certain conditions and periods, but would they always be for all organizations in the same sector? Or would they be efficient for organizations of various natures and sectors? Probably the answer to at least one of these questions is negative.

This research aimed to analyze the process of dissemination of organizational practices and formats using the educational sector, more precisely the coordinators of stricto sensu graduate courses. This group was considered relevant to understand how the phenomenon occurs among the organizations of the education sector itself. It was understood that the coordinators of stricto sensu graduate courses

play an important role in the expansion of this phenomenon among the organizations of the most diverse sectors since they are responsible for the formation of new teachers, who, in turn, will train the future managers of the organizations, and for academic production.

From the theoretical point of view, we sought the use of a framework that explains precisely how organizations tend to become homogeneous in practices and values, a process called institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This was allied to the evaluation of a potential driver of institutional isomorphism, personal social capital in organizations (Ben-Hador et al., 2021). We sought with this last concept to understand the role of internal and external relationships to higher education institutions [HEIs] of the coordinators of stricto sensu graduate courses in the phenomenon, starting from contributions from authors such as Adler and Kwon (2002) and Chen et al. (2016) the authors identify network ties (e.g. bridging ties and strong ties, which indicate a relationship between the concepts of isomorphism and personal social capital.

Thus, the general objective was to evaluate how the personal social capital of the coordinators of stricto sensu graduate courses influences the institutional isomorphism in the courses under their management. The specific objectives were: i) to evaluate the intensity of the manifestation of the personal social capital of the coordinators of stricto sensu graduate courses and; ii) to evaluate the intensity of the manifestation of institutional isomorphism in Brazilian HEIs. With this research, we sought to shed light on a relationship little addressed between personal social capital in organizations and institutional isomorphism, thus opening new lines of study. In addition to this theoretical contribution, this research is expected to provide a practical contribution to the managers of educational organizations and policies for the education sector.

The present work is structured as follows. The first part consists of this introduction. The second part refers to the theoretical foundation of each of the central constructs of the research — personal social capital in organizations and institutional isomorphism — in addition to the relationship between them. In the third part, the methodological procedures used in the research are presented. In the fourth part, the results of empirical research are analyzed. In the fifth and final part, the results of the research and proposals for future studies are discussed.

Literature Review

PERSONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ORGANIZATIONS

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) use a popular and perhaps universal saying, "It is not what you know, but whom you know [...]" (p. 225) and add, "This common proverb sums up much of the conventional wisdom about social capital" (p. 226). The use of popular wisdom is interesting because, while introducing the concept, it reflects some of its characteristics as the idea that through third parties a person can be more effective, making one's "network of contacts" a valuable resource. Another idea inherent in this quote is the implicit finding that social capital permeates different dimensions of people's daily life. This characteristic would foster interest in the concept and encourage its use in the approach to research problems of various natures.

Bourdieu (1985), one of the forerunners of the concept of social capital, defined it as a set of real or potential resources of different natures that could be mobilized through a network of interpersonal relationships in favor of individuals who recognize each other as peers mainly for sharing similar social and cultural attributes. Thus, this author saw social capital in two basic components: i) the network of relationships itself and; ii) the resources that could be mobilized through this network.

Another precursor to the concept is Coleman (1988). For him, social capital resides in different entities that provide individual relationships, such as organizations or families. Social capital is productive and enables individuals and collectivities to achieve certain results that would be impossible without it. Coleman (1988) identified three forms of social capital: i) obligations, which would be, as defined by the author, "credit notes" that could be requested among the actors of the network. Such notes would be convertible in favor, provision of financial resources, etc., and expectations would depend on the confidence and extent of the total obligations present in a social structure; ii) information channels facilitating action; and iii) social standards, which would vary according to the sanctions coming from them.

Leana and Van Buren III (1999) introduced the concept of organizational social capital by referring to social capital as a resource of organizations that reflects the character of social relations within the organization. It involves levels of

collective goal orientation and shared trust of members, which create value by facilitating successful collective action. They consider that social capital is set that can benefit both the organization creating value for shareholders and its members and improving employee skills.

Organizational social capital is composed of the associability defined by Leana and Van Buren III (1999) as the disposition and ability of individuals of an organization to subordinate their objectives to collective goals. The second component is confidence that, according to the authors, would be both necessary and the result of successful collective actions. That is, for an organization to be able to perform well collectively, it is necessary to have pre-existing trust among its actors. At the same time, well-implemented collective actions reinforce the feeling of trust in this group. Leana and Van Buren III (1999) differentiate between fragile confidence, based on cost assessments and short-term results between parties that would not survive occasional transactions, and resilient confidence, which would remain even in transactions with costs higher than the results expected by the parties.

This second form of trust, resilient confidence, is based on norms and values shared among individuals. Another important contrast made by the authors is between dyadic confidence and generalized confidence. The first form depends on direct knowledge among the actors. That is, A relies on B by knowing him and having previous experience of interacting with B. The second form of trust is based on reputation. That is, individuals A and B do not know each other, but A relies on B given their reputation. In collectivities with strong social capital, associability would be present, in addition to resilient and widespread trust.

Adler and Kwon (2002) analyzed the contributions of several authors and proposed a new definition that could be used in this field of study. For them, the central intuition that guides social capital research is that the goodwill that others have for us is a valuable resource, and this resource would flow between individuals in the context of social relations (differentiating this context from the market and hierarchical relations). Adler and Kwon (2002) clarify that the sharing of capital is internal when developed among members of a particular collective, such as a community (e.g., among neighbors), association (e.g., between the associates of a representative entity), or organization (basically among employees of a company or institution). Social capital is classified as external when it consists of nourishing relationships

between individuals from different collectivities (e.g., between organizations, communities, or distinct associations).

Acquaah et al. (2014) identified that previous studies had pointed out the following factors as determinants of social capital: i) structural aspects of the network (relationships, ties, and connections); ii) trust and reciprocity; and iii) shared norms and values. They proposed an additional determinant for social capital: legitimacy. According to the authors, for an organization to properly develop its social capital, it would be paramount to obtain and maintain the social license to operate” (p.12). Later the authors establish that building relationships enables the organization to obtain and sustain its social license to operate (Acquaah et al., 2014, p. 12). Thus, legitimacy is one of the determinants of the social capital of an organization, and it is reinforced by the relationships immersed in the social capital of this organization.

Since the study by Acquaah et al. (2014), the most important contribution to the present research is by Ben-Hador et al. (2021). These authors propose the introduction of the concept of personal social capital in organizations, which is the social capital of the individuals who make up an organization generating benefits for these individuals themselves or for their organizations. It is important to mention that the authors make it clear that organizational social capital is different from the sum of the personal social capital of the employees. Personal social capital in organizations is an intangible asset generated from the individual internal and external relationships (to the organization itself) of its employees. With this, personal social capital in organizations would be composed of two other mutually independent concepts: internal personal social capital and external personal social capital.

Table 1 presents a summary of the definitions adopted in this work about personal social capital in organizations (conceptualization, antecedents, results, and dimensions).

Assuming the proposed lenses for the investigation of the research issue of this study, it can be predicted that the coordinators of *stricto sensu* graduate courses develop their personal social capital internally and externally to their respective educational institutions, which would to some extent influence the practices and formats of the programs about their management. As advocated by Coleman (1988), social capital is characterized by the sharing of norms and beliefs among

its participants. To this extent, there are three possible consequences, not mutually exclusive to each other: i) when developing their personal social capital, coordinators tend to do so through relationships with other individuals who share the same beliefs and are oriented according to the same standards, which would enhance similar ways of thinking and acting; ii) by developing their personal social capital, coordinators absorb new beliefs and values shared by their peers; and iii) by developing their personal social capital, the coordinators influence their peers with their personal beliefs and values.

Table 1. Personal social capital in organizations: summary of the definitions.

Definition adopted	Antecedents/ generators	Results	Dimensions
Ability to secure or obtain assets and resources, knowledge, and information by individuals for their own benefit or their organizations through internal or external networks, trust, shared standards, and license to operate	Associability and trust (resilient and widespread): Leana and Van Buren III (1999) Social license to operate: Acquaah et al. (2014) Obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms: Coleman (1988)	Obtaining resources: Bourdieu (1985) Cooperation: Putnam (1993)	Structural, relational, and cognitive: Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998)
Acquaah et al. (2014, p. 13); Ben-Hador et al. (2021)	Social networks: Acquaah et al. (2014)		

Sources: Created by the authors based on Acquaah et al. (2014, p. 13); Bourdieu (1985); Coleman (1988); Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998); Leana and Van Buren III (1999); Putnam (1993); and Ben-Hador et al. (2021)

Add to this the fact that the academic environment has intrinsic characteristics that presuppose the development of internal and external relationships (to the HEIs) between peers (i.e., personal social capital) by which the very development of

science takes place, as demonstrated by Ferreira (2020), and would even count on characteristics pointed out by Leana and Van Buren III (1999) as present in collectivities with strong social capital, resilient and widespread associability, and trust. This mechanism suggests a tendency in academia to adopt similar practices among organizations (in this case, HEIs). The phenomenon that describes the homogenization of practices among different organizations is called institutional isomorphism, introduced by neo-institutionalism.

NEO-INSTITUTIONAL ISOMORPHISM

Driven mainly by works by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), neo-institutionalism developed from the conception that even rational agents, such as managers of organizations, make decisions whose main objective is not to obtain organizational efficiency. The external environment is the source of these decisions by propagating and legitimizing practices, values, and norms. Thus, organizations perform actions that do not necessarily generate more efficient results, but merely legitimate outputs to their social context of action.

As one of the main foundations of the new institutionalism, one can identify the concept of organizational field, introduced by Meyer and Rowan (1977), that considers competing organizations, direct or indirect, consumers, their suppliers whether from sources, financial resources, or others, professional associations, class entities, partners, and corresponding legislative and control bodies. This concept is central in neo-institutional theory because it is the external environment from which the practices, values, and norms that constitute the legitimate parameters for each organization emanate.

Despite the apparent incoherence, this mechanism of rational agents guiding decisions and actions in search of legitimacy, not efficiency, is important for the survival of organizations. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) clarify that being recognized as legitimate and respectable makes it easier to negotiate with other organizations. As noted by Suchman (1995), legitimacy is important for obtaining resources and other forms of support that are necessary for survival in institutional contexts. Nite and Edwards (2021) observe that "to survive, organizations must accommodate institutional expectations, although these expectations may have little to do with technical aspects of performance " (p. 1025). In a way, it can be said that "[...] the

new institutionalism aims to develop a sociological view of institutions" (Popadiuk et al., 2014, p. 457).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) propose to analyze the paradox that constitutes the core of neo-institutional theory: why do rational actors make their institutions more and more similar? As highlighted by Mizruchi and Fein (1999), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) use a historical argument from organizational fields. For them, in the first moments of a field, their participants exhibit a diversity of practices and structural forms. This period is characterized by growth in the number of organizations. The proliferation of organizations results in greater competition between them, with the resulting extinction of some of the organizations. At the end of the process, only the organizations that fit the environment would be left, with similar characteristics. This process, called competitive isomorphism, has already been studied and described by researchers of organizational ecology theory, such as Hawley (1966) and Hannan and Freeman (1977).

For DiMaggio and Powell (2005), a concept is needed to explain why organizations tend to isomorphism in the long run. The authors address this gap using the institutional isomorphism construct, which considers that "organizations compete not only for resources and clients, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social adequacy, as well as for economic adequacy" (DiMaggio & Powell, 2005, p. 77). For this reason, with all organizations seeking to achieve the same standards of legitimacy, they tend toward homogeneity of characteristics in the long term. DiMaggio and Powell (2005) call this homogenization of organizations in the maturity period of the field's institutional isomorphism. The phenomena of competitive isomorphism and institutional isomorphism could thus be understood as temporally complementary.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) present a classification of institutional isomorphism with three modalities: i) coercive, ii) normative, and iii) mimetic. Coercive isomorphism occurs as a result of formal or informal pressures exerted by organizations on which firms depend or by which they are regulated or even by cultural expectations of society. Explicit pressures are due, for example, to sectoral regulations that establish standards and processes to be followed in each organizational field. Thus, such a phenomenon would be especially present in highly environmentally important fields, such as the educational sector. Using the theoretical lenses pro-

posed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) in *stricto sensu* graduate courses, coercive isomorphism is expected because of the standardization established by the Ministry of Education and the resulting process, such as the four-year evaluation of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) (MEC, 2014). Implicit pressures occur from undeclared impositions. In the educational sector, social expectations, such as the introduction of disciplines in certain courses or even the adoption of quotas, can generate isomorphic pressures

Normative isomorphism arises from the effects of shared norms and values of relevant or professional occupational groups that are institutionally based, so that the work ideologies, ethos and practices of organizations align with these values (Harrow, 2011, p. 5). According to Popadiuk et al. (2014), this modality of institutional isomorphism comes mainly from pressures generated and disseminated from formal education and from opinion-makers, who occupy prominent roles in organizations. Through the promulgation of norms (prescriptive dimension, indicating what is mandatory in social life) and values (conceptions of what is preferable or desirable with the construction of standards with which existing structures or behaviors can be compared and evaluated), such pressures generate legitimation patterns on a cognitive basis, defining and conditioning the way of understanding the world and the actions of other individuals.

Thus, organizations play a central role in normative isomorphism by valuing a certain training at the time of hiring new employees for a given role and by seeking personnel from among organizations in their organizational field, resulting in the migration of employees between organizations and the exchange of practices among these professionals. Another agent of propagation of normative isomorphism is associations of representation of professional groups or trade associations, "[...] the growth and the constitution of professional networks that permeate organizations and through which new models are rapidly disseminated" (DiMaggio & Powell, 2005, p. 80). By analyzing graduate courses, one can identify the requirements for the composition of the faculty, present in public notices of hiring teachers, and students of HEIs, in addition to the relationships developed between teachers and researchers from different HEIs as potential mechanisms of propagation of normative isomorphism.

Mimetic isomorphism is verified by imitation processes between organizations, especially in times of great uncertainty or ambiguity. It occurs, for example,

at a time of economic or sanitary crisis when organizations adopt standardized responses to the uncertainty of the environment seeking to reproduce patterns of behavior like those performed by institutions seen as more apt to face the moment of uncertainty. In these situations, firms tend to choose as models the organizations they consider more successful, better prepared, or more legitimate. In this sense, the years 2020 to 2021 were a highly promising period for the evaluation of mimetic isomorphism, given the uncertainties and ambiguities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a health crisis that unfolded into a global economic crisis. The educational sector, for example, was hit by difficulties such as the fall in the number of enrollments in public HEIs (INEP, 2022), deterioration of the mental health of students (Gundim et al., 2021) and teachers, and the impossibility of performing face-to-face activities. It can be verified that the impacts also extended to stricto sensu postgraduate courses (Assunção-Luiz et al., 2021).

As pointed out by Popadiuk et al. (2014), it can be concluded that the institutional isomorphism construct has three dimensions: i) departure from authority and the dependency relationship, generating coercive isomorphism; ii) a cultural and cognitive dimension, resulting in normative isomorphism; and iii) a third derivative of uncertainty, leading to mimetic isomorphism. A summary of the vision adopted in this paper is presented in Table 2.

The exploration into neo-institutionalism allowed us to better corroborate and define the mechanism identified at the end of the previous section. Organizations in an organizational field characterized by well-developed personal social capital tend, in the long run, to exhibit isomorphic practices and formats. Therefore, assuming, as a premise, that the academic sector constitutes an organizational field with the presence of strong personal social capital of its organizations, it can be hypothetically assumed, for example, that stricto sensu graduate courses have characteristics of institutional isomorphism and that the personal social capital of the coordinators of their courses is one of the driving threads of this phenomenon.

Table 2. Institutional isomorphism: summary of the definitions.

Definition adopted	Antecedents/generators	Results	Dimensions
Organizations compete not only for resources and clients, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, social adequacy, and economic adequacy, generating in the long term the so-called institutional isomorphism, which consists in the homogenization of practices and structures.	Dependency relationship: DiMaggio and Powell (1983)	Legitimacy: DiMaggio and Powell (1983)	
	Uncertainty and ambiguity in the environment: DiMaggio and Powell (1983)		
DiMaggio and Powell (1983); Harrow, (2011); Popadiuk et al. (2014)	Organizational expectations: Nite and Edwards (2021)	Confidence: DiMaggio and Powell (1983)	Authority, cognitive impairment, and uncertainty: Popadiuk et al. (2014)
	Norms and values/cognitive criteria within professional groups: Popadiuk et al. (2014)		
	Processes of formation of individuals and interaction between them: Popadiuk et al. (2014)	Organizational support and other resources: Suchman (1995)	
		Homogenization of practices and structures: DiMaggio and Powell (1983)	

Sources: Based on DiMaggio and Powell (1983); Harrow, (2011); Nitea and Edwards (2021); Popadiuk et al. (2014); and Suchman (1995).

THEORETICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS

The relationship of formation between personal social capital in organizations and institutional isomorphism is corroborated in the study by Adler and Kwon (2002), who suggest the characteristic of recursion between social capital and institutional isomorphism with i) patterns of legitimacy influencing social capital from normative

standards and values and, at the same time, ii) the social capital propagating institutional isomorphism, based on norms and values propagated among participants.

Despite this recursion, this research aims to exclusively evaluate the influence of organizational personal social capital on institutional isomorphism, specifically in HEIs. This postulate is based theoretically and empirically on the work of Chen et al. (2016), who concluded that social capital generates positive effects on institutional isomorphism in firms in emerging economies. From these postulates, the hypothesis of this research is established:

- H₀:** The personal social capital of the coordinators of stricto sensu graduate courses causes positive effects on institutional isomorphism in the programs under their management.

Research Method and Measurement

SAMPLE SELECTION AND DATA COLLECTION

As a locus of the research, it was proposed to study the university education sector for three reasons: i) the relevance of education (at its different levels) for the socio-economic development of countries, as pointed out in studies by Johansen and Arano (2016) and Saviotti et al. (2016) that demonstrate the direct relationship between the number of years of education of individuals and the level of wealth generated for these people and their geographic regions; ii) the role of HEIs in the growth of the level of education of countries from the training of future professionals and the development of scientific research; and iii) the challenges and changes that HEIs have been going through in recent years, such as the growth of distance learning and the following economic crises that have negatively impacted enrollment and public resources destined for education, as identified by INEP (2020) and Bradesco (2021).

Stricto sensu graduate courses were adopted as a research sample, considering that they have fundamental participation in the education of teachers who will train professionals and researchers in the future. Data were collected from the coordinators and former coordinators of stricto sensu graduate courses in the area of "social sciences and applied knowledge," according to CNPq (2008) classifica-

tion. This area brings together courses in public administration and business; accounting sciences and tourism; architecture, urbanism, and design; communication and information; urban and regional planning/demographics; and social work. It was chosen as the research locus i) because it is the area of knowledge of the authors of the research and ii) due to its importance, since it corresponds to 9.1% of the total number of stricto sensu graduate courses in Brazil (639 out of 7,022) or 13.9% of the total number of stricto sensu graduate programs in the country (631 out of 4,558), according to CAPES (2016, 2021).

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE CONSTRUCTS

For the measurement of personal social capital, it was used the scale developed by Ben-Hador et al. (2021). The authors propose that personal social capital is formed by two concepts: internal personal social capital (organization) and external personal social capital (organization). This view is of central importance since the scale proposes specific indicators to measure each of these concepts. Internal personal social capital is measured using four dimensions: i) participation in events at HEIs, ii) ties with influential people in the HEI, iii) strong ties, and iv) weak ties. External social capital is measured in two dimensions: i) participation in events outside the HEI and ii) ties with influential people outside the HEI. There are 15 questions directed to the measurement of internal personal social capital and seven to external personal social capital. Indicators are measured in the format of a six-point Likert scale.

To evaluate institutional isomorphism under its three forms of manifestation — coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphisms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) — scales were used that were able to treat each of these phenomena in a well-delimited way. It was from this criterion that the Nyahas et al. (2017) and Zhang and Hu (2017) scales were chosen. Both scales are Likert type, with six points. The final scale consisted of 10 questions: two questions for the identification of coercive isomorphism, four for normative isomorphism, and four for mimetic isomorphism.

Questions were included in the questionnaire that allowed the identification of level of training, gender, main assignment at the time, area of knowledge in which it operates, time on the current assignment, geographical region of the HEI in which it operates, and nature of the HEI. A total of 176 valid answers were

obtained, which corresponds to 26.7% of the submitted forms (636 coordinators responsible for 639 courses were identified). Data collection was performed during the months of April and May 2022, using a closed-structured questionnaire and the Google Forms tool, sent to the coordinators of stricto sensu graduate courses in the area of social sciences and applied knowledge by sending a link via e-mail. The courses, their respective coordinators, and e-mails were identified by CAPES (2016) in March 2022.

It is noteworthy that the respondents adequately represented the population (coordinators of courses approved by CAPES, regardless of the area of knowledge) or at least the sample (total coordinators of stricto sensu postgraduate courses in social sciences and applied knowledge) research. Therefore, the proportion of the genders of the respondents is quite like that of the total sample, the geographical regions of the HEIs of the respondents' mirror with great proximity to the population and the distributions of the nature of the HEIs of the total sample and the participants were quite similar.

For the statistical hypothesis analysis, an analysis based on structural equations was performed using the SmartPLS 3.0 software (Ringle, 2015). The first step was to evaluate whether the measurement model revealed discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability. The second step was to verify whether the structural model met the adjustment criteria related to structural coefficients and direct and indirect effects.

Data Analysis and Results

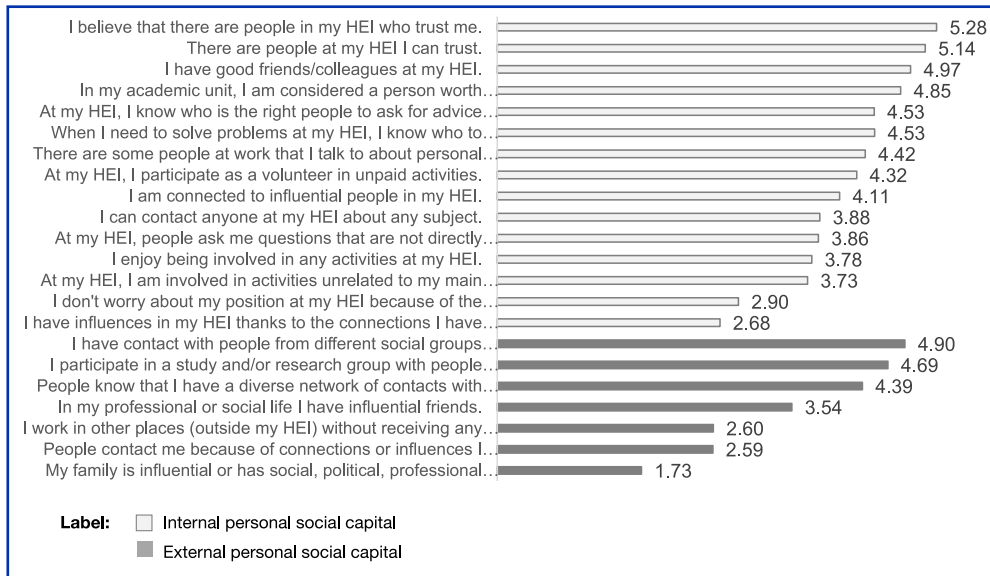
MEASUREMENT MODEL

Intensity of personal social capital of the coordinators of stricto sensu postgraduate courses (specific objective 1)

As shown in Figure 1, a positive manifestation of internal personal social capital was verified for the sample studied, since of the 15 indicators used, averages below 3.00 were obtained for only two. In the case of external personal social capital, hetero-

geneity was higher, with four indicators with averages higher than 3.00 and another three with lower averages. Thus, the manifestation of external personal social capital could not be validated.

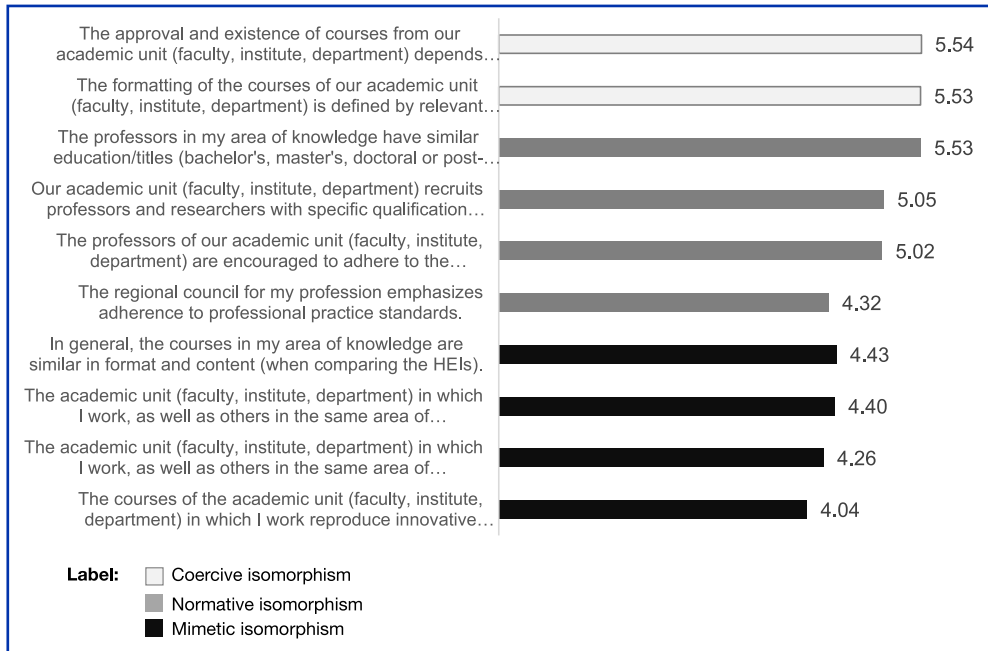
Figure 1. Average values of intensity of personal social capital in organizations.



Intensity of institutional isomorphism in stricto sensu graduate courses (specific objective 2)

Figure 2 shows the indicators used in the measurements of coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphisms, respectively. It is observed that, in general, there was some homogeneity in the mean values, with values between 4.04 and 5.54 on a scale ranging from 1 to 6, with the highest value indicating total agreement with each statement. Among the 10 indicators used to measure institutional isomorphism, five had mean values higher than 4.00 and less than 5.00, and the other five resulted in mean values higher than 5.00. Thus, for 100% of the respondents, values were obtained that indicate some level of agreement. These aspects indicate agreement of the respondents, since all values are higher than 4.00 (in the scale used, this value corresponded to "little agreement").

Figure 2. Mean values of intensity of institutional isomorphism.



STRUCTURAL MODEL

To evaluate whether the model proposed to validate the research hypothesis meets the prerequisites of convergent, discriminant, and reliability validity, several analyses were performed, according to Table 3. The conclusion was positive in all analyses, attesting to the validity of the model.

Table 3. Reference values of analysis adjustment statistics.

Statistics	Reference value	Authors
CONVERGENT VALIDITY		
Factor loadings	Greater than 0.7 ($t > 1,96$)	Cabelo Jr et al. (2005)
Factor loadings	Larger than cross-loads	Hair Jr et al. (2005)
Average variance extracted (AVE)	Greater than 0.5	Hair Jr et al. (2005)

DISCRIMINATING VALIDITY		
Cross loadings	Smaller than factor loadings	Hair Jr et al. (2005)
Square root of the AVE	Higher than correlations between latent variables	Fornell; Larcker (1981) Hair Jr et al (2005)
FIABILIDADE		
Cronbach's alpha	Higher than 0.6	Hair Jr et al. (2005)
Composite reliability	Greater than 0.7	Hair Jr et al. (2005)
R ²	2% - small; 13% medium; 26%- large	(Cohen, 1988)
f ² – Effect size	0.02 – small; 0.15 medium; 0.35 – large (Cohen, 1988)	(Cohen, 1988)

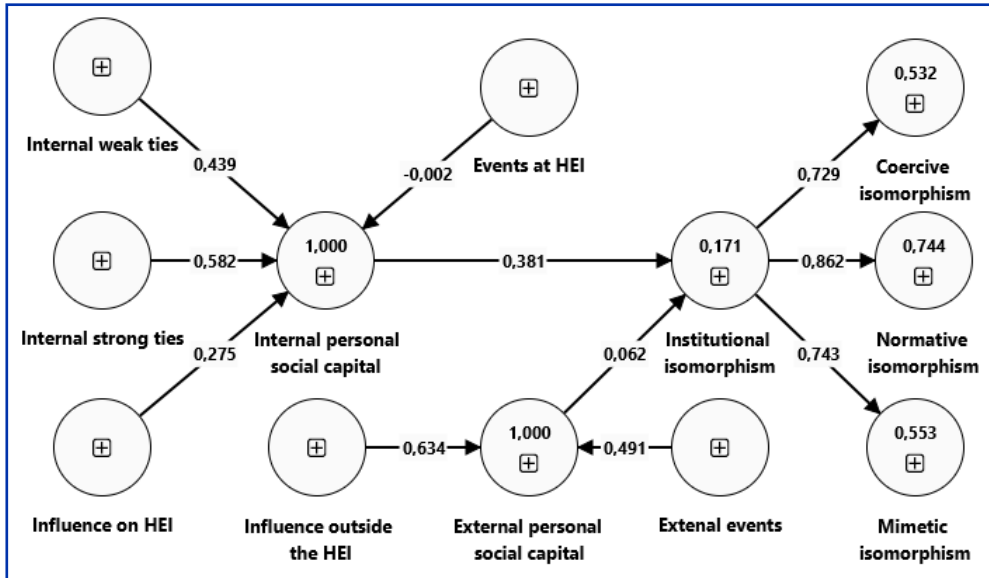
Source: Adapted by the authors.

Figure 3 characterizes the complete model of this research, with the variables involved, relationships between them, and structural coefficients that point to the coefficient of explanation of each exogenous variable on the endogenous variables with which it is related. To specifically verify this last feature, bootstrapping with 2,000 samples was used.

After performing this calculation, we analyzed the structural coefficients between internal personal social capital and its formation variables (weak ties, strong ties, ties with influential people within the HEI, and participation in events in the HEI). There is a preponderance of weak and strong ties in the explanation of internal personal social capital, with coefficients of 0.439 and 0.582, respectively. One can realize that the variable ties with influential people outside the HEI have a structural coefficient of 0.634 in relation to external personal social capital, being higher than the coefficient of participation in external events in relation to external personal social capital (0.491). The structural coefficients of institutional isomorphism in their relation to coercive isomorphism, normative isomorphism, and mimetic isomorphism are 0.729, 0.862, and 0.743, respectively. It is apparent that the structural coefficient between internal personal social capital and institutional isomorphism is considerably higher (0.381) than the coefficient between external personal social capital and institutional isomorphism (0.062). The latter coefficient is not considered significant at the 5% level. Thus, only the internal dimension of personal social capital could be

considered significant to the explanation of the institutional isomorphism construct, which can explain 17.1% of it. This finding confirms the hypothesis that internal personal social capital influences institutional isomorphism (even in a small proportion).

Figure 3. Complete search model.



Discussion

Despite the long tradition of studies on social capital, it was only in the study by Ben-Hador et al. (2021) that the construct of personal social capital in organizations was well defined and a scale was proposed for its measurement. No previous empirical work on the construct was identified by searching Web of Science. Neither has any previous study been identified on the manifestation of institutional isomorphism in stricto sensu graduate courses. However, Versiani et al. (2018) investigated through quantitative methods of research the manifestation of the phenomenon in basic education. The authors used questionnaires to obtain the answers of 551 teachers from the basic cycle of public schools in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais. Another characteristic that differentiates the study by Versiani et al. (2018) from the present study is

that in the former study the manifestation of institutional isomorphism was evaluated in an aggregate manner. In other words, the manifestations of coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphisms were not evaluated separately. Puttick (2017) verified the manifestation of these three modalities of institutional isomorphism in a separate way, observing another population, secondary schools in the United Kingdom, and using a qualitative method, ethnographic research.

Regarding the hypothesis of this research, that is, the influence of personal social capital in organizations on institutional isomorphism, Adler and Kwon (2002) proposed in a theoretical essay the existence of a relationship of recurrence between personal social capital and institutional isomorphism, thus launching a challenge for researchers to empirically validate this hypothesis. However, only one work in this sense was identified, that of Chen et al. (2016), which verified, by quantitative methods, that the internal social capital and external social capital of a company translate into institutional isomorphism. Chen et al. (2016) worked with a sample of 382 Taiwanese textile companies, with data collected through a two-step email survey, one at the end of 2013 and another between December 2015 and January 2016. Likert-type scales with five points were used. It is important to highlight that the authors worked with the social capital in an aggregate manner; that is, they evaluated the social capital of the organizations analyzed (i.e., at their aggregate or collective level, not the personal social capital of the managers of these firms, contrary to what is proposed in this research). Another aspect to be observed when comparing the work of Chen et al. (2016) and this article is the importance of the cultural context of the population surveyed. Thus, one should understand the differences between the different sectors of activity textile compared to educational and nationalities Taiwanese and Brazilian.

Conclusions, Contributions, Limitations, and Future Research

This research established as the main objective of research to evaluate whether the personal social capital of the coordinators of stricto sensu graduate courses causes effects on institutional isomorphism in the programs managed by them. The secondary objectives were i) to evaluate the intensity of the manifestation of the per-

sonal social capital of the coordinators of *stricto sensu* postgraduate courses and ii) to evaluate the intensity of the manifestation of institutional isomorphism in *stricto sensu* graduate courses.

The research was developed from two aspects: one theoretical, with a systematic bibliographic review, and one empirical, by the application of a quantitative methodology. The empirical stage was carried out establishing as its locus the coordinators of *stricto sensu* graduate courses in the area of social sciences and applied knowledge because of their public relevance (due to their importance in the formation of future researchers and in the scientific construction of the country) and their relevance to the proposed hypothesis (they are a group expected to develop strong personal social capital internal and external to the organization and, due to their role of social training and generation of science, have the potential to perpetuate standards of norms and values, for example). Additionally, there is the opportunity to evaluate the manifestation of the three modalities of manifestation of institutional isomorphism: i) coercive isomorphism, ii) normative isomorphism, and iii) mimetic isomorphism. This is a sector whose role in regulatory bodies is quite strong, and it is present, for example, through requirements for the approval of new courses and for the maintenance of existing courses (e.g., the evaluation of the National Graduate System carried out every four years by CAPES). Such presence suggests the existence of normative isomorphism (or at least isomorphic pressure of this nature) that motivated the evaluation of the existence of said phenomenon, as well as the verification of the existence of normative and mimetic isomorphism.

It is concluded with this study that only internal personal social capital has a significant and positive effect on institutional isomorphism. No effect of external personal social capital on institutional isomorphism is identified. On the other hand, the research hypothesis was confirmed, since it was demonstrated that personal social capital in organizations explains 17.1% of institutional isomorphism. The manifestations of coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphisms were also verified, all high and with considerable manifestations of personal social capital, especially internal, as seen in Figure 3. The results obtained suggest that in the organizational field studied, normative aspects are so well disseminated that they are only reinforced by the internal social capital of individuals, with no space for the emergence of new values and norms from the external capital of its components.

This paper presents theoretical and empirical contributions to address the little explored relationship between personal social capital in organizations and institutional isomorphism, demonstrating the theoretical relationship between constructs, and how this relationship occurs, and the importance of personal social capital in organizations for explaining institutional isomorphism. In addition, this research constituted an evolution in the evaluation and understanding of institutional isomorphism in *stricto sensu* graduate studies. As suggested by Versiani et al. (2018), who evaluated the manifestation of the phenomenon in elementary school schools, it would be interesting to verify it at other educational levels.

From a practical point of view, research enables HEIs to have two lines of analysis and action: i) identify the need to encourage teaching staff in the development of more external personal social capital by its coordinators and ii) consciously assess their course development and management policies given the time that their coordinators receive not only coercive but also normative and mimetic pressures. The research may also lead to public policies of the Ministry of Education.

Limitations can be pointed out in the following characteristics of the research.

It was identified from the theoretical perspective, recursively in the relationship between personal social capital in organizations and institutional isomorphism, with isomorphic pressures conditioning social capital and vice versa. However, in the research, only the relationship of the influence of personal social capital on institutional isomorphism was significant.

The research focused on the empirical evaluation of the hypothesis and research objectives of a well-specified group, the coordinators of *stricto sensu* graduate courses.

A convenience and therefore non-probabilistic sample was used. These characteristics make it impossible to generalize the conclusions of this study to organizations from other organizational fields and even to other academic levels.

Opportunities for future studies arise from these limitations. Empirical evaluation of the influence of institutional isomorphism on personal social capital in organizations. Use of the control variable of the HEI at its most micro level, segmenting the institutions of the respondents among the municipal public, state public, federal public, private for profit/private purposes, private non-profit confessional, private non-profit community, and private non-profit philanthropic. Empirical study with

other target audiences, including other academic levels. Another possibility is the use of qualitative research methods to investigate how professors including coordinators of postgraduate courses develop their external social capital.

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