Knowledge Hiding and Creativity in Higher Education Institutes: Understanding the Contingent Role of Perceived Supervisory Support

Hina Samdani
Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Business Studies, Bahria Business School, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: hina@bahria.edu.pk

Bakhtiar Ali
Professor, Department of Business Studies, Bahria Business School, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Nida Kamal
Senior Lecturer, Department of Business Studies, Bahria Business School, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Abstract *In higher education institutes, knowledge sharing is part and parcel for the success of the individuals and institutions. However, there are a number of instances where employees are found to be indulged in knowledge hiding. This paper explores this novel construct by targeting permanently faculty of private and semi-private higher education institutes of Pakistan. Theorizing on social learning and exchange theory, this study proposes that employees are indulged in knowledge hiding which sensitizes a reciprocal loop of distrust among colleagues and as a consequence the target is later also reluctant to share the required information. This finally leads to decreasing the creativity of the hider too. Furthermore, it has been proposed that perceived supervisory support can play an important role in decreasing the negative effects of knowledge hiding on the creativity of the hider. Implications and recommendations for future research prospects in the said area are also highlighted.*

Key Words
Creativity, Evasive Hiding, Interpersonal Distrust, Knowledge Hiding, Rationalized Hiding. Supervisory Support.

Introduction

Background

A significantly fundamental aspect of organizational life is that for meaningful sharing as well as transfer of knowledge the organizations look towards their employees (Cabrera, 2002; Gagne, 2009). In order to make sure the significant transfer of knowledge, the growing notion is that organizations are required to direct their efforts towards enabling systems supporting knowledge management (Wang & Noe, 2010). Consequently, organizations are looking forward to ensure flourishing such an organizational culture that ensures knowledge sharing among employees and this has been done by developing certain systems to reward employees (Bock, et al., 2005) along with supporting social networking and interpersonal associations among employees (Kuvaas, et al., 2012) to support knowledge sharing culture (Skerlavaj, et al., 2010).

On the other hand, despite the multiple benefits and regardless of all the organizational efforts and encouragement towards enhancing knowledge sharing (Bock, et al 2005), an unfortunate facet is that a number of employees is still not inclined or reluctant towards knowledge sharing. Besides being mindful of the multi-fold benefits rooted in knowledge sharing, employees still realign their behaviours and refrain from knowledge sharing (Connelly, et al., 2012; Skerlavaj, et al., 2018; Babic, et al., 2019). This ultimately leads to have an impact on not only the creativity of the hider but the organization as a whole too. This is crucial since creativity is the driving force reinforcing individuals, teams or the whole organization to improve upon performance which can lead to realize consistent competitive advantage (Rosenbusch, et al., 2011) and this surely demands knowledge sharing. Besides being a low base rate experience, knowledge hiding has quite alarming outcomes on creativity of the organization as well as the hider's (Connelly & Zweig. 2015; Babic, et al., 2019).

Even though a lot of research has been directed towards exploring all those factors that ensure or lead towards sharing of knowledge as endorsed by Wang and Noe (2010), still all such factors which play an important role in defining and further lead towards hiding of knowledge are yet to be explored and need more attention and focus. Although literature has recognised the construct of knowledge hiding earlier (Davenport & Prusak, 1997) and work has been done to further address it as an area in need of consideration by researchers (Webster, et al., 2008; Greenberg, et al., 2007) and to add more, it has been acknowledged by Connelly et al. (2012) as a separate identifiable construct too but then

again with regard to explore knowledge hiding in academia and organization, a lot need to be done and explored, to the extent knowledge sharing has been done.

Contextual Analysis

For the development and progression of any society, faculty members are the part and parcel and the backbone of development (Lucas, 1972) and the same stands true for Pakistan. In terms of any education system in any part of the world, they are the primary and crucially important components as either directly or indirectly they are the factors behind preparing as well as supplying knowledgeable and skilled workforce to different sectors of the economy. This means that in any country and particularly in context of Pakistan, higher education sector must be repleted by such exemplary model institutes that encourage creativity to foster novelty that lead towards significantly outstanding customer service to achieve operational excellence and competitive advantage. However, accomplishing and realizing this excellence in education, necessitates to develop such initiatives that ensure and lead towards capturing, sharing and transferring of knowledge.

Currently, instead of sharing knowledge with the colleagues, employees are reluctant to do so and there can be many different reasons behind this reluctance in sharing of knowledge like fear of losing power, authority or unique status or employees may be hesitant of being assessed by colleagues or others (Bordia et al., 2006) and as a result they make an adjustment in their behaviour. This behaviour of employees has resulted in the need to work on and explore the emerging area "knowledge hiding" (Muqadas, Rehman, Aslam, & Ur-Rahman, 2017).

It is important to understand that sustenance and creativity is the requisite if the higher education of Pakistan desires to reinforce, revive and regenerate itself continuously by wisely and cleverly encouraging, supporting and ensuring knowledge sharing and by renouncing knowledge hiding along with all factors leading towards hiding of knowledge (Ramanigopal, 2013) and this is fundamentally required by higher education sector of Pakistan to achieve sustenance and to be on the road of success (Rafique & Anwar, 2017). The objective of the given study is to explore the fundamental notions behind knowledge hiding construct with case in focus of higher education sector of Pakistan.

Literature Review

Knowledge Hiding

Knowledge refers to the information, views, ideas and know-how relevant and needed to carry out various activities by the employees (Bartol et al., 2002). Importantly, the construct of creativity in research has discussed the impact of sharing of knowledge on the creative behaviour of employees (Connelly, 2012). Although sharing of knowledge undoubtedly proposes competitive advantage in terms of creativity, knowledge hiding has a vice versa impact (Connelly, et al., 2012). In research, knowledge hiding has been identified as a construct a few years back and is endorsed as an intentional effort to either hold back or to conceal knowledge from others when asked or required (Connelly, et al., 2012). Furthermore, Connelly and Zweig (2015) proposed that when individuals doubt others then they start to conceal or hide knowledge which reflects that perceptions play an important role in defining the knowledge hiding behaviour. Similarly, Nerstad and Richardsen (2013) proposed that when employees find it difficult to comprehend a situation they divert their behaviour towards hiding of knowledge. Škerlavaj et al., (2018) also proposed that besides all effort to increase knowledge sharing, employees indulge themselves in hiding of knowledge particularly due to time pressure issues.

Dimensions of Ethical Leadership

Evasive hiding

Evasive hiding takes place when employee when asked for certain information provides incorrect or wrong information to the other individual or colleague. In this context the hider even may make a promise to provide the required information later with no such intention to do so. (Connelly, et al., 2012).

Rationalized Hiding

Connelly, et al. (2012) defined that rationalized form of knowledge hiding takes place when the individual when asked for certain piece of information gives a justification for the reason of not providing the much asked information. In this context, the hider may blame any other party too for preventing his/her from providing the much requested information.

Hiding of knowledge is generally considered to damage the relations and may end up in retaliation in sharing of knowledge in future by the target too (Connelly & Zweig, 2014). Thus it is expected that evasive dimension of knowledge hiding will have a negative impact on the relationship of the hider and the target with an expectation

of similar behaviour by the target in future (Cerne et al., 2014). On the other hand, rationalized hiding is expected to have less negative impact on the relation between the hider and the target as the hider provided a justification for not supplementing the required information. However, knowledge hiding is a multifaceted phenomenon and analysed differently depending upon whether studied from the perception of hider or the target.

Creativity

When looked at through the lens of organizational behavior, operationalization of creativity has been done as a complex, multidimensional notion (Runco, 2008) while from the perspective of behaviorial psychology operationalization has been done on the basis of flexibility, originality and novelty (Shalley & Zhou 2008).

In short with reference to a given social context, creativity is about generation, creation and exploration of ideas and is further categorized as a novel and practical outcome. This outcome can be recognized as a product, service, any technique or a practice as well (Shalley et al. 2004) which is necessary for the survival of organizations. In line with Connelly et al. (2012) and Partick, et al., (2018), this study highlights the importance of need to develop and ensure an exchange based social relationship among employees and this is fundamentally important as creativity necessitates sharing of information and knowledge as well and this exchange is further impacted by potential knowledge hiding behaviour of employees.

Interpersonal Distrust

Distrust is the deficit of confidence and trust in others. In research it is further elaborated as fear or apprehension that other colleagues may result in harming with no concern for betterment of others and as advocated by Grovier (1994) may have intentions which are destructive or harmful for others. Interpersonal distrust is perceived to arise when colleagues are reluctant to share fundamental cultural and intellectual modalities (Sitkin & Roth, 1993).

Rationally, lack of confidence and trust in colleagues regarding their intentions to conceal knowledge or required information leads towards developing negative reciprocal behaviour among employees which leads towards indulging them in work behaviors of counterproductive nature. As a consequence employees respond in a way which is equally negative (Poortvliet & Giebels, 2012) thus leading and facilitating towards developing a sense of satisfaction by penalizing others by behaving in an equally unjust manner (Zhou & Shipton, 2012; Min, 2018).

Knowledge Hiding and Creativity

Theoretically, this study is grounded on two primarily fundamental theories, Social Exchange Theory as theorized by Blau (1964) and Norm of Reciprocity as conceived by Gouldner (1960). These base theories have played an important part in exploring the relationship that exists between knowledge hiding of the employees and their creativity. As theorized by Bandura in his landmark social learning theory (1986) that there is meaningfully great significance of explicit knowledge and know-how in any given learning process and these experiences lead towards defining the behaviour, manners, attitudes and actions of the individuals and aligned with the context of this study these learning relationship ultimately lead towards enhancing the creativity of not only individuals but also of the organization (Bogilović, Černe, & Škerlavaj, 2017). Adding more as advocated by Fong, et al., (2018) creativity plays a crucial role in enhancing the individual as well as organizational performance and in this regard the hiding of knowledge leads towards decreasing the creativity of the individuals and ultimately the organization too.

Perceived Supervisory Support

The employees develop perceptions regarding an organization depending on the way how the organization gauges or assesses its employees. These perceptions are based on the significance or value the supervisors allocate to the contributions and engagement of the employees along with the concern of the supervisors in terms of the welfare of the employees too (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Since these supervisors are the organizational representatives and are embarked with great responsibility regarding leading, managing and gauging the performance of the employees. Grounding on the orientation of their supervisor, which can be positive, negative, compassionate, constructive or damaging, employees develop perception regarding the degree to which the support has been extended to them by their supervisors and ultimately the organization (Marija & Lucy, 2019; Eisenberger et al., 2001).

Literature supports that when the employees perceive their supervisors to be accommodating, supportive, concerned, encouraging and caring then they develop a sense of obligation to play their part in facilitating the supervisor in accomplishing their set goals, which will eventually ensure the accomplishment of business objectives and goals set by an organization (Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003). The given research focuses on analysing this framework while purposes to explore how such positive inclinations i.e. perceived supervisory support (PSS)

impact the association that exists between interpersonal distrust and knowledge hiding behaviour of the employees (Cerne, 2014).
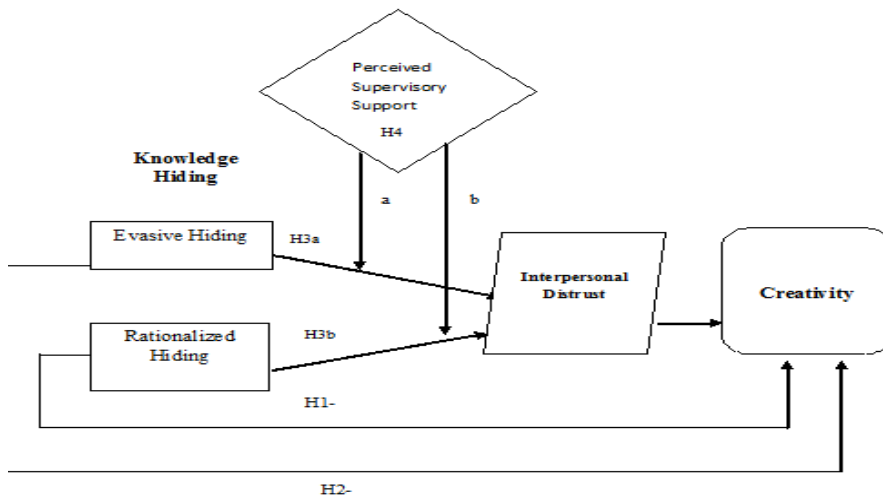
Theoretical Framework

Fig 1. Theoretical Framework

Hypotheses of the Study

H1: Evasive knowledge hiding has a significant negative impact on hider's creativity.

H2: Rationalized knowledge hiding results in a significant negative impact on hider's creativity.

H3a: The association of evasive knowledge hiding along with the creativity is significantly mediated by interpersonal distrust among co-workers.

H3b: The association of rationalized knowledge hiding and the hider's creativity is significantly mediated by interpersonal distrust among co-workers.

H4a: The association of evasive knowledge hiding and creativity of the hider is significantly moderated by perceived supervisory support.

H4b: The association of rationalized knowledge hiding and creativity of the hider is significantly moderated by perceived supervisory support.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study is correlational based on testing of hypothesis in order to analyse the causality among various variables in consideration. The design is cross-sectional based on primary data collection while ensuring non-contrived study setting.

Instrument Development

The study employed a questionnaire and the instrument used in the study has been adopted from the researches carried out by well-known researchers and the items where later adapted as per the context of the study. Measurement of all the items of various variables has been done on a five point Likert scale. This scale is ranged from 1 to 5 where 1 stands for strongly disagree and 5 stands for strongly agree.

Table 1. Reliability Results

Variables	Items	Cronbach Alpha	Source of Instrument
EH	4	.87	Connelly, et al., (2012)
RH	4	.87	
ID	10	.92	Lewicki, et al., (2006)

PSS	8	.81	Eisenberger, R. (2001)
CR	13	.84	Zhou & George (2001)
Total	39	.86	

Population & Sample

The target population is the faculty members working in private and semi-private higher education institutes of Pakistan. In order to collect data the sampling method employed in this study is non-probability convenience sampling.

Unit of Analysis

Faculty members permanently employed in the private and semi-private higher education institutes are the unit of analysis of the given study.

Data Collection Method

Data has been gathered using a structured questionnaire which was uploaded on google docs with link being emailed to the target respondents of the study. In this regard the out of 410 questionnaires 347 have been included for the analysis purpose resulting in a response rate of about 84%.

Data Analysis

SPSS 25 and MS-Excel 2010 has been used in order to carry out the regression analysis of the data. In this regard different steps identified by Baron and Kenny (1986) for mediation and moderation analysis have been employed.

Results and Discussion
Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 below highlights the descriptive statistics as well as the Pearson Correlation statistics of the research a p value < 0.01.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	S.D	EH	RH	CR	ID	PSS
EH	347	2.843	.668	1				
RH	347	2.843	.654	-.174	1			
CR	347	2.765	.546	-.371**	-.384**	1		
ID	347	4.422	.632	.551**	.441**	-.328**	1	
PSS	347	3.234	.493	-.272**	-.232**	.359**	-.287**	1

The values given in the table above depict that most of the variables of the study are weak to moderately correlate with each other in a negative manner. However, the correlation between knowledge hiding, both evasive as well as rationalized and the interpersonal distrust along with the creativity and perceived supervisory support are found to be significantly positive.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 3 below proposes a significantly negative relationship between both dimensions of knowledge hiding on creativity and thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3. Results H1 & H2

Model	coefficients	S.€	β	t-stat	p- value
Constant	3.762	.203		11.797	.000*
EH	-.331	-.063	-.371	-5.601	.000*
RH	-.227	-.072	-.384	-3.939	.000*
Constant	3.819	.179		11.797	.000*

$R^2 = .163$, $\bar{R}2. 164$, $F = 22.890$ $(p < .01)$

Table 4 below highlights the intervening role played by interpersonal distrust between evasive and rationalized form of knowledge hiding on creativity of the hider.

Table 4. Mediation Results

H3a: Mediation of Interpersonal Distrust on Evasive Hiding.

Steps	IV	DV	R^2	F-Stat	B	Beta	T-stat	P-value
1	EH	CR	.146	21.87*	-.331	-.371	-5.061	.000*
2	EH	ID	.306	53.65*	.232	.245	11.010	.000*
3	ID	CR	.108	9.49*	-.372	-.380	-12.982	.002*
4	EH	CR	.395	94.21*	-.456	-.341	-5.757	.001*
	ID				-.389	-.229	-.357	.000*
H3b: Mediation of Interpersonal Distrust on Rationalized Hiding								
1	RH	CR	.218	34.67*	-.227	-.384	-3.939	.001*
2	RH	ID	.208	32.98*	.403	.478	8.840	.000*
3	ID	CR	.108	9.49*	-.372	-.380	-12.982	.002*
4	EH	CR	.376	93.25*	-.134	-.381	-3.611	.003*
	ID				-.368	-.254	-9.806	.000*

H3a -Δ R^2 — .274; *p<.01
H3b -Δ R^2 — .123; *p<.01

The results of the study reflect that the relationship between evasive hiding and hider's creativity is partially mediated by interpersonal distrust and the mediation effect in total is about 27.4%. On the other hand, figures reflect that interpersonal distrust results in partial mediation of the association that exists between rationalized form of hiding and creativity of the hider and the mediation effect is found to be about 12.3%.

Table 5 below highlights the moderation results of the study.

Table 5. Moderation Results

Moderation of Perceived Supervisory Support on Evasive Hiding and Creativity

Steps	IV	DV	R^2	F-Stat	B	Beta	T-stat	P-value
1	EH	CR	.146	21.87*	-.331	-.371	-5.061	.000*
2	EH	PSS	.157	18.75*	-.352	-173	-3.650	.002*
3	PSS	CR	.283	19.80*	.373	.324	2.754	.002*
4	EH*P	CR	.309	4.360*	.362	.247	5.438	.000*
H4b: Moderation of Perceived Supervisory Support on Rationalized Hiding and Creativity								
1	RH	CR	.218	34.67*	-.227	-.384	-3.939	.001*
2	RH	PSS	.254	11.91*	-.284	-251	-12.91	.001*
3	PSS	CR	.283	19.80*	.373	.324	2.754	.002*
4	RH*P	CR	.229	70.57*	.452	.456	8.581	.000*

H4a - Δ R^2 = .188; *p<.01
H4b - Δ R^2 = .095; *p<.01

Discussion

This study is designed to test and explore the influence of knowledge hiding on creativity of the individual who hides the information or knowledge by sensitizing interpersonal distrust through supervisory support that employees perceive has been extended to them. In this regard, initially in Model 1 evasive and rationalized hiding, the two different forms of knowledge hiding, were empirically tested to understand their impact on hider's creativity. The results depicted a significant negative relationship among the given variables. This further reflects that it is important to realise and comprehend various behaviorial dimensions of knowledge hiding in order to ensure that the knowledge sharing culture is well developed and well sustained and knowledge hiding is not present in the organization (Connelly & Zweig, 2014; Cerne, et al., 2014).

Adding more, as advocated by Wang and Noe (2010) employees perceive themselves to be associated with each other due to the trust worthy behaviour and this is further governed through social exchange. The end result is that employees hold themselves responsible to go an extra mile to supplement information when and as required. They also have an idea that in future the reciprocated behaviour would help them to enhance the creativity of the individual, colleagues and the organization too.

Later in the second part of the model the mediating role of interpersonal distrust is studied on the above mentioned relationship. The findings reflect that in case of distrust among colleagues the end result is knowledge hiding for both the give dimensions. Without any doubt it can be conferred that interpersonal distrust plays a critical role for employees while making choices regarding knowledge hiding behaviour.

Nevertheless, in comparison to the two dimensions of knowledge hiding, evasive hiding has more impact in face of mediation of interpersonal distrust. Thus, employees promising to provide the required information later having no intent to do so leads towards developing of interpersonal distrust among colleagues and will later end up in reciprocation similar sort of behaviour. Adding more, with regard to the moderating role of perceived supervisory support it has been summed up that the perceived supervisory support has a significantly positive moderating effect on not only evasive but rationalized hiding as well.

The supervisory support in light of literature further implies that in organizations where supervisor is characterized as encouraging, caring and supporting towards his/her employees or subordinates then in such organizations employees develop a sense of obligation (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). This further leads towards moving employees to play an important role and to try their best to facilitate their supervisors to achieve the goals and targets set by then and organization. They do their best in order to supplement others with the required information without any intention to deceive others by hiding the required information. Such scenarios give birth to knowledge sharing among colleagues in place of knowledge hiding and as a consequence the creativity of not only the individuals rather the organization on a whole is enhanced too.

Implications and Future Research

This study infers that interpersonal mechanism plays an important role in engaging reciprocal behaviour by employees in form of knowledge hiding which correlated decreases creativity of the hider him/herself. Since limited attention has been directed towards the construct of knowledge hiding by researchers so, in terms of theoretical contribution this study has played its part in expanding the nomological network of not only knowledge hiding but creativity too by establishing the emergence of distrust loop amongst the multi-dimensional oriented construct of knowledge hiding along with creativity. For future research, it will be an interesting point to start off to explore the impact of other dynamics of interpersonal distrust on knowledge hiding behaviour. In this regard, moral disengagement can be explored to understand the role played by moral disengagement that results in giving rise to knowledge hiding behaviour among employees.

The role of commitment can also be studied to understand the relationship of knowledge hiding and creativity, as professional commitment can be predicted to moderate the given relationship. Similarly, the influence of commitment on any dimension of knowledge hiding can be studied further. This is important as employees who belong to professions requiring high level of dedication as in case of medical or higher academics, then it is expected of them to supplement with the required information or knowledge regardless of the trust level they share.

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