Impact of Workplace Bullying and Knowledge Hiding Behaviour on Emotional Exhaustion among Pakistani Nurses: A Cross-sectional Study for Exploring Psychological Empowerment as an Effective Role Player in the Healthcare System

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Abstract: *This study aims to extend the literature on workplace bullying and its impact on knowledge hiding directly and through the mediation of emotional exhaustion and psychological empowerment as a moderator after collecting data from 600 nursing staff working in public and private hospitals in Pakistan. The results revealed the negative impact of workplace bullying (WB) on knowledge sharing directly and partially with the mediation of emotional exhaustion (EE). However, the impact is reduced through the moderating effect of psychological empowerment (PE). The finding of our study has several implications for healthcare institutions or academic leaders and policymakers of organizations.*

Key Words: Nursing staff, Health-care system Pakistan, Workplace Bullying, Emotional Exhaustion, Patients satisfaction

Introduction

In the modern era, worldwide crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic has created major catastrophes in humankind. It might take decades to recuperate from its effects (Ozili & Arun, 2020). The COVID-19 epidemic adversely effected the economy and livelihood, resulting in several behavioural changes i.e. psychological distress and suicidal ideation as it is very difficult to see loved ones dying and still striving for survival (Irfan & Islam, 2021). COVID-19 has not only affected people but also the organization's financial positions (Fischer & Horney, 2023). The

financial crisis worldwide has inferred organizations to minimize the cost, leading them to closures, mergers, downsizing, or restructuring (Nguyen, Malik, & Budhwar, 2022). This has resulted in organizational or institutional crises, leading towards insecure employment and scepticism. Workers tend to preserve their resources to save their jobs by involving in knowledge-hiding activities (Vem et al., 2023).

Knowledge hiding is defined as the behavior of deliberately not providing the required knowledge to colleagues when requested (Tan,

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Zhang, & Zhang, 2022). Apparently, knowledge hiding is very likely to lessen the efficiency of discussion among staff members, hinder the cohort of new knowledge, or even extinguish trust (Islam & Chaudhary, 2022). In 2018, American organizations were reported to cost million in efficiency up to US$ 47 losses because of knowledge-hiding behaviour (Connelly, Černe, Dysvik, & Škerlavaj, 2019). These adaptations of negative strategies and negative job-related outcomes have adverse the workplace environment, indirectly triggering an abusive work environment i.e. bullying (Nguyen et al., 2022). Bullying can take many forms, including verbal abuse, physical aggression, and exclusion from decision-making or social activities (Leymann, 1996).

The definition of workplace bullying by Einarsen et al. (2009) is "a condition where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions (Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2009)." Workplace bullying may contain aggressive behaviours of saturated passion, presented as a single phenomenon, happening repeatedly, resulting in performance and creativity decreases, leading towards leave intention (Ren & Kim, 2023). It is further clarified that bullying in the workplace, a staff member faces undesirable comments and actions by their supervisor or institution environment daily, such type of action is followed because of authority discrimination in the institution (Holm, Jönsson, & Muhonen, 2023). This type of action/activity may lead to increased psychological distress, burnout and negative sentiments (Yan, Mansor, & Choo, 2023).

In accordance with García et al. (2022), emotional exhaustion is a frequent workplace bullying outcome affecting individuals' physical and emotional well-being. Workplace bullying victims are found to be more anxious and stressed.

Workplace bullying (WB) is a prevalent and malign issue that affects the well-being of a significant proportion of employees globally (Islam & Chaudhary, 2022). It can also negatively impact job satisfaction (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001), Engagement, and Performance (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). Researchers i.e. Irfan and Islam (2021) stated that employees psychologically empowered are less likely to affected by a negative workplace environment. Researchers i.e. Spreitzer (1995) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) explain psychological empowerment (PE) as an inner work encouragement consisting of four psychological elements (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990): "Meaning", "competence", "self-determination", and "impact" (Juyumaya, 2022).

Further defined by (Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011) that psychological empowerment is an inner work encouragement that enables self-control over one's work role and task performance. The aim of the study is to explore the effect of workplace bullying on knowledge hiding directly and through the mediation of Emotional Exhaustion as suggested by the studies (Islam & Chaudhary, 2022; Yao, Zhang, Luo, & Huang, 2020). The research gap is also supported by the Conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 2001) stating that individuals with a high number of resources are more capable of replenishing the resource they use to accomplish institutional goals (Fischer & Horney, 2023). Therefore, individuals strive to protect resources during tough times (Liu, Liu, & Zhang, 2020). Therefore, we are investigating the relationships in the study.

Hypotheses Development:

Workplace Bullying and Emotional Exhaustion:

Emotional exhaustion (EE) refers to one's feelings leading towards mental strain and fatigue (Ren & Kim, 2023). One of the major symptoms of workplace bullying that affects physical and mental is emotional exhaustion (Islam &

Chaudhary, 2022). In addition, emotional exhaustion affects employees' mental health leading them towards anxiety and depression as a result their efficiency and performance are adversely impacted (Giorgi, Mattei, Notarnicola, Petrucci, & Lancia, 2018). Conservation resource theory supports the discussion by stating that uncertain events at the workplace and the unavailability of resources to cope with the arousal of stress due to these events can lead to a severe reaction from employees (Kumar & Jin, 2022). Similarly, workplace bullying triggers employees to a state of mind where managers demonstrate adverse behaviours and as a result employees' well-being is badly affected, leading them towards fear, stress and anxiety (Farley, Mokhtar, Ng, & Niven, 2023). Therefore, discussing the above details, the study proposed the following hypothesis.

H1 Workplace bullying positively impacts emotional exhaustion at the workplace.

Workplace Bullying and Knowledge Hiding:

The term bullying at the workplace mainly arises from interpersonal workplace conflicts i.e. verbal and non-verbal behaviours (Anasori, De Vita, & Gürkan Küçükergin, 2023). In addition, it is more specific to unjust treatment, loneliness, and victimization employees experienced at the workplace (Nielsen, Notelaers, & Einarsen, 2011). Abusive management and uncivilized behaviour are more likely to harm employees rather than workplace exclusion. Studies reveal that job satisfaction, high turnover intention and job insecurity could be major outcomes of workplace bullying (Irfan & Islam, 2021). Furthermore, workplace bullying could severely harm the mental health of employees leading them towards depression and anxiety (Islam & Chaudhary, 2022).

Knowledge hiding talks about intentionally concealing knowledge when the required information is requested to be shared (J. Wang et al., 2023). This behaviour adversely impacts

innovative behaviour, creativity and performance among employees (Yao et al., 2020) Many researchers suggest that managers are required to motivate knowledge sharing among employees to boost performance among the employees and the institution to succeed (Irfan & Islam, 2021; Islam, Asif, Jamil, & Ali, 2022; Yao et al., 2020).

The above discussion is also supported by the COR theory which states that individuals with a high number of resources are more capable of replenishing the resource they use to accomplish institutional goals (Zhao & Jiang, 2021). Therefore, individuals strive to protect resources during tough times (Liu et al., 2020). Similarly, whenever an employee suffers hardship i.e. bullying at the workplace he/she is more likely to exert his/her strongest personality trait to counter adverse negative behaviours at the workplace (Chen, Richard, Boncoeur, & Ford Jr, 2020). In addition, COR also states to invest in resources in order to regain resources (Hobfoll, 1989). However, employees find it difficult to gain more resources in an adverse workplace environment mainly caused by workplace bullying. Therefore, get involved in the activity of hiding information in pursuance of job insecurity (Aggarwal, Chand, Jhamb, & Mittal, 2020). Therefore, discussing the above details, the study proposed the following hypothesis.

H2. Workplace bullying (WB) positively impacts knowledge hiding

Emotional exhaustion (EE) as a mediator among workplace bullying (WB) and knowledge hiding (KH).

Wright & Cropanzano, 1998 defined very precisely that a condition of psychological distress through the enormous amount of workload, ongoing misbehaviour from a co-worker, and continuous strain in the institution (Raza, Imran, Rosak-Szyrocka, Vasa, & Hadi, 2023). Emotional exhaustion became the most suitable meaning is "burnout" (Yao et al., 2020) and is a "traditional strain variable" (Salanova & Llorens, 2008). The psychological distress indications i.e. nuisances,

respirational, high blood pressure, and antipathy as well as staff might face mood swings, apprehension, and insomnia (Zhao & Jiang, 2021).

Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) state that the significance of WB is Physiological and Psychological distress that affects the well-being of humans, as a consequence, employees adopt knowledge-hiding behaviour. Additionally, the connotations of EE come from un meet able targets, the burden from the head of the department, and unethical behaviours of co-workers, which also enhanced psychological distress (Chen et al., 2020).

The victim of WB faces adverse comments and exploitation from their colleagues and managers in routine working setup, these type of actions is coming because of an imbalance in powers in institutions, and the consistent distress may lead towards knowledge-hiding behaviour (Kaur, 2023). WB indirectly impact the well-being, and achievement of workers which increases the level of fatigue. This type of action may lead to increased psychological distress, burnout and negative sentiments (Holm et al., 2023).

In addition, COR also states to invest in resources in order to regain resources (Hobfoll, 1989). However, employees find it difficult to gain more resources in adverse psychological distress mainly caused by workplace bullying resultantly individuals hiding their knowledge to be a competitive edge in the workplace. Therefore, get involved in the activity of hiding information in pursuance of job insecurity (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Therefore, discussing the above details, the study proposed the following hypothesis.

H3: Emotional exhaustion (EE) as mediating role among workplace bullying (WB) and knowledge hiding (KH).

Psychological empowerment as a moderator among workplace bullying (WB) and emotional exhaustion (EE)

Researchers i.e. Irfan and Islam (2021) stated that employees psychologically empowered (PE) are less likely to be affected by a negative workplace environment. PE has four components which drive inner motivation to enhance the skills of an individual that is "self-determination", "competence", "impact", and "meaning" (Juyumaya, 2022). Further defined by Seibert et al., (2011) that psychological empowerment is an "inner work engagement" reflecting a sense of self-control in relation to one's work and an active bdetermination. Self-determination is a feeling when an employee realizes self-sufficient, and self-employed and acts upon some matter (A. Ahmad et al., 2021). Self-determination indicates the self-sufficiency of employees and where control of routine work for performing a task and learning working procedures (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). Autonomy is meant to be an employee who might choose their step-up work and rely on that initiative (Ayala Calvo & García, 2018). Consequently, Wang and Liu (2015) recommended that employees while performing duties with self-efficiency and self-efficacy in order to meet the homogeneity product (S. Wang & Liu, 2015). **The second component** of PE refer by Shapira and Tsemach 2014 is performing a task with competence, knowledge and skills within stipulated times for assessing the capabilities of an employee in the institution which leads towards persistently facing a challenging situation. The analysis of Aloe et al., 2014 established the direct relationship between competence and exhaustion. While an employee who is competent feels confident to perform their task (Chen et al., 2020). **The third component** of PE refer by Knol & Linge, 2008 & Erdogan et al., 2018 is the impact that shows when staff member desire to succeed in the institution in an efficient manner through best strategy practices and they will ensure the process with utmost effort (A. Ahmad et al., 2021). A lot of studies found that the major factor

impact motivating the staff for performing their jobs effectively (Törnroos, Salin, & Magnusson Hanson, 2020). In addition, they feel more self-determinant to deal with competitive targets and deals through stress management certainly at an institution (Zhou & Chen, 2021). The fourth and last component of PE refers to is meaning of searching reflection which surpasses peripheral results and establishes the initial individuals' personal and work goal goals for motivation and further carrying the responsibilities for future endeavours (Irfan & Islam, 2021; Zhou & Chen, 2021).

The end of four cognitive facets/components might depict the vigorous alignment of working towards control. A positive environment towards his or her work came from the PE theory. A positive working environment where staff member needs to work for feeling the confidence to shape their description very well (Al-Romeedy, Abou-Hamad, & Ali, 2023). Numerous studies recommended that PE might incline harmful work-related stress, and burnout, and act as hypothetically defending aspects (Zhou & Chen, 2021).

It is also considering the fact that engaging the employee in the recommendation process, they might feel psychologically empowered (Saira, Mansoor, & Ali, 2020) and employee may openly feedback to their immediate seniors/leaders, to do employee promote the knowledge-sharing environment (Gonçalves, Curado, & Oliveira, 2023). Therefore, discussing the above details, the study proposed the following hypothesis.

H4. Psychological Empowerment act as a moderator between WB and EE.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework
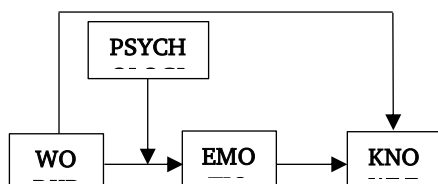
Methodology

Nurses play a vital role in the healthcare system and in patients' overall health and well-being (Irfan & Islam, 2021). Nurses are considered to be mediators between patients and doctors (Hashish, Hamouda, & Taha, 2015). Therefore, it was very important to gather data from these crucial role players. Data were collected from three large cities of Pakistan representing the urban areas i.e. Lahore, Faisalabad and Islamabad. (Roscoe, Lang, & Sheth, 1975) A 1:10 items-to-response ratio was used to select the sample size of 55*10=550. Confidentiality and ethical concerns were considered a high priority. Some of the questionnaires i.e. 435 questionnaires were distributed online via google form out of which we only received 398. Rest was distributed physically considering the busy schedule of the respondents i.e. 200 questionnaires from which we only received 175. Therefore, a total of 600 questionnaires were received. Moreover, convenience sampling was used as respondents were selected as per their willingness.

Measure

We collected responses on a five-point Likert scale starting from "1- strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree."

Psychological Empowerment

A twelve-item scale for measuring psychological empowerment established by Spreitzer (1995) was used. The measuring scale was validated by Islam and Irfan (2022) in the context of Pakistani medical institutions. The Cronbach alpha value was noted as 0.74 for this scale. A sample item comprises, "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job."

Emotional exhaustion

A four-item scale for measuring emotional exhaustion as negativism about work established by Maslach and Jackson (1981) was used. This measuring scale was validated by Islam et. al (2021) and Yao et. al (2020) in the context of Pakistani medical institutions and Chinese technological corporations respectively. The Cronbach alpha value was noted as more than 0.79 & 0.80 for this scale. A sample item

comprises "When you get up in the morning, you feel tired at the thought of facing a new day at work" and "I often feel very tired when I get off work", etc.

Knowledge hiding

A three-item scale for measuring the knowledge-hiding behaviour established by Peng (2013) was used. This measuring scale was validated by Islam et. al (2022) and Khalid et. al (2018) respectively in the context of Pakistani medical institutions. The Cronbach alpha was noted as 0.80 for this scale. A sample item comprises "I try to hide innovative achievements."

Workplace bullying

A nine-item scale for measuring workplace bullying established by Einarsen et al. (2009) was used. This measuring scale was validated by Islam et. al (2021) and Yao et. al (2020) in the context of Pakistani medical institutions and Chinese technological corporations respectively. The Cronbach alpha value for this scale was noted as 0.79 and 0.80. Sample items comprise "Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work" and "Someone withholding information which affects your performance", etc.

Control Variables

In our research, experience, gender, age, and, qualification was controlled as previous studies recommended these variables required to be controlled (Bouckenooghe, Zafar, & Raja, 2015; Lotfi, Atashzadeh-Shoorideh, Mohtashami, & Nasiri, 2018).

Results

600 questionnaires were selected for Preliminary analyses. Out of these, 13 questionnaires were dropped after being found of having missing values (Sekeran, 2003). Secondly, 2 questionnaires were discarded because of having outliers after examining through the stem and leaf method (Islam & Tariq, 2018). Analysis was performed on 585 finalized questionnaires for evaluating (normal distribution Skewness and Kurtosis) values. The following table shows the positive responses of the respondents who agreed to workplace bullying (M= 3.62), Emotional Exhaustion (M= 3.75), Knowledge Hiding (3.81) and psychological empowerment (M= 3.46). The Cronbach's alpha values cleared the (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978) criteria of 0.70. The correlation between all the variables was as follows, workplace bullying correlates to emotional exhaustion (r =0.42, p<0.01), knowledge hiding (r = -0.53, p < 0.01) and psychological empowerment (r =0.22, p<0.01).

Table 1

Correlation and descriptive analysis

Constructs	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD	α
1-Workplace bullying	1				3.62	0.67	0.83
2-Emotional Exhaustion	0.42**	1			3.75	0.53	0.73
3- Knowledge Hiding	-0.53**	-0.64**	1		3.81	0.66	0.82
4-Psychological empowerment	0.22**	0.35**	0.19**	1	3.46	0.62	0.79

Note: ** P < 0.01, N = 585

Hypotheses testing:

SPSS was used to perform hypotheses testing. The results revealed that workplace bullying had a positive association with emotional exhaustion (β = 0.53, P < 0.01) and negative relation with knowledge hiding (β = -0.49, P < 0.01). In addition, there was a negative significant relation between emotional exhaustion with knowledge hiding (β = -0.46, P < 0.01). Similarly, the study's moderator was found to be insignificant with the predictor variable (β = 0.35, P >0.05).

Table 2

Testing Hypotheses via Regression

Associations	B	S.E	p-value
WB→EE	0.53	0.021	0.000
WB→KH	0.49	0.045	0.000
EE→KH	-0.46	0.045	0.000
PE→WB	0.35	0.031	0.563

We used the Baron & Kenny (1986) approach to examine the mediating role of emotional exhaustion between workplace bullying and knowledge hiding. Three-step Hierarchical regressions were performed. Demographical variables were regressed with emotional exhaustion in the first step. Following, WB was regressed with emotional exhaustion (β = 0.32, P < 0.01). Finally, emotional exhaustion was regressed with knowledge hiding and the WB value remained constant specifying partial mediation.

Table 3

Mediation Analysis

Variables	Emotional Exhaustion	Variables	Emotional Exhaustion
	M1(β)	M2(β)	M3(β)
Control variables			
Gender	-0.05	-0.11	-0.12
Age	-0.03	-0.01	-0.04
Qualification	0.13**	0.09	0.07
Work-Experience	-0.02	-0.00	0.01
Independent Variable			
Workplace Bullying		0.43**	0.38**
Mediating Variable			
Emotional Exhaustion			0.68**
R^2	0.02	0.37	0.40
Ẋ R^2	--	0.31	0.03

Three-step hierarchical regression was used to examine psychological empowerment's moderating role. psychological empowerment was noted to be positively moderated between workplace bullying and emotional exhaustion (β = 0.36, p<0.01). The interactional term (WB*PE) had a significant impact on knowledge hiding (β = 0.16, p<0.01), explaining a 3 % variance.

Table 4

Moderation via Hierarchical Regression.

Variables	M1 (B)	M1 (B)
Step 1		
WB	0.36**	
PE	0.42**	

R2	0.24	
Step 2		
WB*PE		0.16**
R2		0.36
Δ R2		0.03

Discussion

Knowledge emergence has become a key point in the business agenda of institutions worldwide. This study also shed light on the importance of knowledge sharing by discussing the adverse effects of hiding knowledge in an institution. In line with Kim et al. (2016), the study discusses knowledge importance in any institution by stating that workplace bullying can adversely affect knowledge sharing and employees are likely to hide information to save their positions. In addition, the study explains the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in enhancing the effect of bullying on knowledge hiding. The result reveals that workplace bullying is likely to trigger emotional exhaustion in employees that would result in knowledge hiding. The whole scenario describes workplace bullying makes the employee feel emotionally exhausted and as a result of this they strive for job security and start to hide knowledge. The study further investigates the moderating role of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) by stating that empowered employees are less likely to become a victim of workplace bullying and emotional exhaustion. In line with Irfan and Islam (2021), psychological empowerment not only helps employees understand the meaningfulness of their job but also builds self-determination also triggers the feeling in them that the work they are doing would have a certain impact. Therefore, they are less likely to engage in activities of knowledge hiding as they have an inner sense of self-efficacy in them (Islam & Irfan, 2022).

Practical Implications

The finding of this research indicates the significance of psychological empowerment as a mechanism for avoiding emotional exhaustion as well as being a victim of bullying in the workplace. Broadly, it also contributes to the institutional atmosphere hypothesis of workplace bullying (Walker, Circo, Alzner, Bearss, & Stephenson, 2022), by indicating that the method of working enhances the institutional atmosphere and lessens the hazard of workplace bullying. The findings of our research have some practical implications which are suggested. First, healthcare institution needs to enhance psychological training program for an employee to improve their performance for avoiding knowledge-hiding behaviour. For example, a supervisor could organize the difficult task of adaptive collaboration between workers, which could benefit the employee and strengthen and support them to increase associateships in the healthcare institution (Huang & Lee, 2022). Moreover, the supervisor should pay attention to the psychological training climate for the establishment of a counsel cell. As our study indicates psychological empowerment as a moderator which mitigates the positive impact of bullying at the workplace on emotional exhaustion, the institution must establish a worthy institutional environment for the employee to offer mutual tolerance training. An institution could also develop an ideal leader-control structure to enhance exposure and offer a healthy working culture, consequently decreasing the possibility of workplace bullying (S Einarsen, 2011; Staale Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009). Second, the finding of the study showed that knowledge-hiding behaviours could promptly occur because of conflict roles, an institute could minimize the conflicting role through effective policies and procedures. Thus, supervisors of the institution understand their employees' abilities and assign their tasks or role accordingly. Psychological training or mentoring could play a supportive role for afresh assigned roles or tasks (Wen, Huang, & Teo, 2023). Our study also demonstrates that decreasing insecure employment and scepticism might condense the knowledge-hiding behaviour which spill-over effect on the performance of an employee. Consequently, a supervisor should consider job restructuring, and empowerment training, and make suitable policies to motivate the personnel for sharing their knowledge or human capital in a generous working environment (Salin & Notelaers, 2020). Furthermore, leadership could play the plausible role of appropriate assistant to

encourage the employees for sharing their knowledge and performs their task effectively according to the vision of the institution which is closely related to knowledge sharing environment (Gillet, Cougot, Moret, Tripodi, & Boudrias, 2023). In situations like this, employees feel more encouraged to share their knowledge which resultantly decreases their knowledge-hiding behaviour. Last, Healthcare institutions should confiscate procedures to support their employee to refill their emotionally exhausted employee within time. For instance, a supervisor could designate some significant assignment to the employee which makes them feel treasured (Said & Tanova, 2021). Furthermore, when the employees are discouraged, the supervisor is required to motivate them within time and provide resources to cope with emotionally exhausted (Altıner & Dikmen, 2023). Moreover, the institution could create a complete emotional catharsis method. When the employees feel depressed, co-workers need to lament and offer psychological comfort (Harbridge, Ivanitskaya, Spreitzer, & Boscart, 2023). Institutions may also offer a section for employees who are continuing to feel depressed, for exhaling their emotions (Ren & Kim, 2023).

Theoretical Implications

Four major involvements have been derived in this study. First, the findings of our study provide the recent form of "knowledge hiding" literature and cover COR theory by enhancing the knowledge hiding and its backgrounds and repercussion in times and after the times of organizational or institutional crises (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). Second, the findings of our study demonstrate the method of bullying at the workplace and knowledge-hiding behaviour from the view of resource harnessed and unharness, providing the latest view for perusing negative circumstances which influence the worker knowledge behaviour. Erstwhile research major concluded that the behaviours management of knowledge sharing includes knowledge sharing, knowledge innovation, and knowledge search, nevertheless, our study provided how to surmount workers from knowledge-hiding behaviours, and emotional exhaustion through psychological training (F. Ahmad & Karim, 2019; Connelly et al., 2019; Di Vaio, Hasan, Palladino, Profita, & Mejri, 2021; Gagné et al., 2019; Islam et al., 2022;

Islam & Chaudhary, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022; Rezwan & Takahashi, 2021; Zhao, Liu, Li, & Yu, 2019). Our finding of research also explores the mediator role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between workplace bullying and knowledge-hiding behaviour. Additionally, we explore the role of psychological empowerment as a moderating factor in this relationship. In doing so, we seek to provide a more nuanced understanding of the mediating role of emotional exhaustion and the moderator role of psychological empowerment in the positive effect of workplace bullying on emotional exhaustion. Moreover, this study practices COR to demonstrate why individuals opt for knowledge-hiding behaviour after victim bullying at the workplace. Hence, our study also supports the academicians to further investigate the method of knowledge-hiding behaviour from distinct contexts. Third, the finding of our study recommends that psychological empowerment efficiently decrease the perception of emotional exhaustion, which mitigate the impact of conflicting role on the behaviour of knowledge hiding. Moreover, negative events i.e. knowledge hiding behaviour while working in an institution suffered by employee leads towards emotional triggering (Islam et al., 2022). The study is not merely divulging the impact of the method of bullying at the workplace on knowledge-hiding behaviour but it also explores the application of psychological training. In addition, to establish the moderating role of psychological empowerment, our findings of the study provide an understanding of the precondition which creates psychological empowerment as a favourable working environment. Hence this atmosphere, the conflicting role is less damaging to individual emotional obstacles which leads towards negative retaliation, inclusive of knowledge hiding. Furthermore, erstwhile different pieces of research revealed the mediating method between harmful circumstances in the institution and knowledge hiding merely involves one variable and slightly determines the complete procedures that how negative events make behavioural changes after repeatedly worker experiencing emotional exhaustion (Gonçalves et al., 2023). The validation of our study is not merely the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion on the connection between bullying at the workplace and knowledge-hiding behaviour. Last, these

findings of the study also demonstrate that employees frequently face job insecurity, conflicting role, and cynicism, particularly during and after institutional catastrophes, consequently employees adopt negative strategies for competitive advantage to hide their knowledge. Even though previous research i.e. Nguyen and Malik (2022), mentions the consequence of the above-mentioned aspects on knowledge sharing behaviour, their consequence on the contradictory conduct, and behaviour of knowledge hiding, has been concealed to investigate.

Limitations and suggestions for further research:

Similarly, to other research, our study has four limitations proposed thoroughfares for future study for academicians. First, the finding of our study observed the theoretical model in a single country, Pakistan. For the future desire of researchers to examine the theoretical model of other countries or circumstances (Khan, Nazir, & Shafi, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022). Furthermore, our study collected data from the three largest cities of Pakistan, while ignoring the rustic population of the country because of an enormous cultural gap between rustic and urban areas. Additionally, the generalizability of results is not possible because of the institutional environment and worker comprehension (Irfan & Islam, 2021). Secondly, the collection of data at one point in time using questionnaire-based, longitudinal, qualitative, and mixed-method research would be helpful to observe the behaviour changes over different intervals (Hayat & Afshari, 2021; Juyumaya, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022). Our study also mentioned that data collection from other countries and analysing of the finding nationwide with the jurisdiction of cultural backgrounds. Additionally, future academicians require to study the different aims of the responder, for instance, the leader-employee pair (Salin & Notelaers, 2020; Yao et al., 2020). Third, the finding of our study is the lack of personality trait variables while examining the conceptual model (Nguyen et al., 2022). Future academicians might include an abundance of personality trait variables to nuanced understanding more knowledge hiding behaviour in relationship with personality trait variables (Vem et al., 2023). Fourth, our study only gathered the necessary variables of psychological and cognoscible capital which also indicate other variables, for instance, relationship identification and relational trust (Hayat & Afshari, 2021; Irfan & Islam, 2021; Islam et al., 2022; Rezwan & Takahashi, 2021), which might essential to be investigated in the future. Additionally, our study observed only the mediating variables at the employee condition preferably the organizational condition and the institutional level, hence for future research, we might look for new intervening variables in two conditions.

Ethical statement

Our research was in accordance with the suggestion of the Code of Conduct of the American Psychological Association (APA). The institutional standard operating procedures (SOPs) were applied, and comprehensive data on our research objectives were given to all respondents before replying to the survey. All applicants gave consent and replied to the questionnaire willingly. The respondent data is treated as anonymous and confidential.

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