

HOW KNOWLEDGE HIDING INCREASES PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES' ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL ACTS: A STUDY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TARGET

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ABSTRACT

Drawing from Conservation of Resource theory, this study takes target's perspective on co-workers' knowledge hiding and its impact on target's political acts. We further propose that knowledge hiding depletes target's cognitive resources which in turn lead target to disengage morally. Resultantly, morally disengaged employees tend to engage in political acts. Using survey method, data was collected from 234 respondents working in public sector organizations of Pakistan. We employed CB-SEM to analyse hypothesized relationships. Results display a positive relationship between knowledge hiding and political acts suggesting that greater likelihood of experiencing knowledge hiding from co-workers' triggers target employee to engage in political acts. Results also indicate that knowledge hiding increases ego depletion by expending one's cognitive resources and in turn leads towards one's moral disengagement. Finally, data also provided support for serial mediating effect of knowledge hiding on political acts through ego depletion and moral disengagement.

KEY WORDS

knowledge hiding, moral disengagement, ego depletion, political acts

CLASSIFICATION

JEL: D23, M12, M54

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge, undoubtedly, is an important resource to create value for organizations [1, 2]. This value creation, however, is only possible when employees are ready to share knowledge with others. Therefore, organizations exert increased efforts to promote knowledge sharing at work [3-5]. Unfortunately, instead of sharing the knowledge, employees are found to engage in knowledge hiding, referred as individuals' deliberate effort to conceal or withhold the requested knowledge from others at work [6]. In the North America, 76% employed individuals hide knowledge [7]. In China, 46% employees were found to involve in knowledge hiding [8]. Given its prevalence in the organizations, knowledge hiding is reported as detrimental to both organizations and employees [9]. Consequently, researchers have extensively investigated the predictors of knowledge hiding, with an aim of providing practical recommendation to curbing this negative employee behaviour, e.g. [10-13]. Surprisingly, limited research has examined the outcomes of knowledge hiding (see [14, 15]). These studies have found that knowledge hiding can harm organizations [16], teams [17, 18], and knowledge hider herself or himself to a certain extent [19, 20]. At individual level, most of the studies however have examined knowledge hiding from the perspective of knowledge hider. It is argued that knowledge hiding can also significantly impact the knowledge seeker, therefore researchers have highlighted the need of inquiry into this particular research stream in order to control the negative consequences of knowledge hiding [21].

Despite high emphasis is being placed on target's perspective of knowledge hiding, yet very limited studies have empirically examined knowledge hiding from this perspective. For example, [22] examined the impact of knowledge from target's perspective on the relationship with perpetrators and future withholding of knowledge by using self-construal theory, and found that target of knowledge does not always consider this behaviour as a harmful. Similarly, [23] also found that targets' perception of knowledge hiding positively impacts their creativity. Although these studies sufficiently enhance our insights on knowledge hiding from target's perspective, this research still has some limitations. First, these studies either have tested direct impact of knowledge hiding on targets or did not employed any explicit theory to explain this relationship. Second, the underlying mechanisms through which perception of knowledge hiding impacts the behaviour of target yet needs to be understood well. Earlier research has largely focused on emotional mechanism; we argue that other cognitive or psychological mechanism can also transmit the effect of knowledge hiding on target's actions.

Taking the above limitations into account, present research contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, drawing on conservation of resource (COR) theory [24], it adds to the promising research on knowledge hiding and workplace politics from perspective of target by identifying perceived co-workers' knowledge hiding as a key determinant of one important political behaviour – target's engagement in political act. In fact, when targets lack or lose valuable resources (i.e. emotional or knowledge resources), they tend not only to protect their existing resources, but also try to get new resources by engaging in instrumental behaviours [25]. The example of one such behaviour is targets' engagement in political acts, refer as individuals' self-serving behaviour with an intention to maximize self-interest by shaping others' perception, cognition, and behaviour [26]. Although, researchers have studied target's engagement in political acts as a reaction to the co-workers' negative behaviour, such as gossip [25], there is not any study that has explicitly examined political act as a response to co-workers' perceived knowledge hiding – a type of negative work behaviour. By developing and empirically testing the link between knowledge hiding and political acts from target's perspective, we address this limitation in current literature on the outcomes knowledge hiding at individual level. Second, this study develops and tests a serial mediation to explore the mechanisms of how targets'

perception of co-workers' knowledge hiding influences their behaviour. Based on COR theory [24], we argue that knowledge hiding, as a form of negative workplace experience, may affect the targets' cognition negatively, which in turn can form their perception about the co-workers accordingly. For example, negative perception about co-workers can deplete one's emotional resources, thereby leading to individual's ego depletions [27, 28], and moral disengagement. Examining such indirect links can help us to better understand the ways through which targets' perception of co-workers' knowledge hiding can motivate them to engage in the acts of politics. Finally, this research has important implications for practice. Particularly, by developing the relationship between targets' perception of co-workers' knowledge hiding, their emotions, behaviours, and outcomes, it can offer key practical interventions as organizations are increasingly trying to curb undesirable employee behaviours, such as knowledge hiding and workplace politics.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

KNOWLEDGE HIDING AND ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL ACTS

Knowledge hiding refers to "an intentional attempt by an individual to withhold or conceal knowledge that has been requested by another person [5; p.65]. Although some similar or overlapping concepts (i.e. knowledge hoarding) exist in the literature, it differs from those concepts because it is an individual's deliberate effort and involves willingness for the act of knowledge hiding. Moreover, it is a multidimensional construct, consisted of three important facets [21], namely, evasive knowledge hiding (a situation in which the knowledge hider deceives and provides incomplete or incorrect information by making a false promise of complete answer in the future), rationalized knowledge hiding (a situation in which the knowledge hider provides a reason for unable to make available the requested knowledge), and playing dumb (a situation in which knowledge hider pretends to not possess the requested knowledge). Playing dumb and evasive knowledge are deceptive nature, whereas rationalized knowledge hiding does not involve deception [29]. Since knowledge stockpiles in individuals' mind, therefore it is requested from the individuals. When employees perceive knowledge hiding as an intentional act by their co-workers, they consider it as a negative behaviour and tend to act accordingly. A wide range of studies (e.g. [8, 14, 16, 17]) have reported several individual level outcomes of knowledge hiding, and highlighted the importance of curbing this destructive workplace behaviour.

Political acts are self-serving actions that are done with an aim to maximize personal or organizational benefits by influencing the cognition, attitudes, and behaviours of other individuals at work [30, 31]. Engagement in political activities helps employees to gain valuable job resources in terms of power, information, favour, and rewards [25]. Acts of political influence make it possible for the employees to achieve their specific goals [31]. For instance, by engaging in political acts can enable the employees to build personal (informational) linkages with other organizational members and utilize these to influence the process of resource distribution in the organizations [32]. Engagement in political acts may benefit the actors, but it can harm the interests of employees as well as the organization [25, 26]. Therefore, researchers have called for more inquiry to explore the antecedents of political acts in the organizations.

Drawing on conservation of resource theory, which asserts that people tend to maintain their existing resources in order to acquire future new resources, present study has proposed target's perception of co-workers' knowledge hiding as an antecedent of targets' engagement in the political acts. Individuals invest their valuable resources (i.e., emotions, time, and knowledge) to deal with unfavourable situations and gain the personal as well organizational benefits [25].

Knowledge hiding, however, emasculates this process, which shows that targets are getting less resources against high cost [11]. This imbalance may motivate the targets to demonstrate self-serving behaviour, such as political acts, in order to get escape from unfavourable situation, to preserve and gain more valuable resources, and to minimize the potential losses [25]. Perception of knowledge hiding can engender the feelings of disadvantage and loss, which in turn can motivate the targets to take urgent actions that can significantly impact others' cognition, affect, and behaviour to get the desired knowledge resources [14, 33]. Taking this into account, we expect that targets' perception of co-workers' knowledge hiding can lead them to engage in political acts in the organizations. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₁: Target's perception of co-workers' knowledge hiding will be positively related to target's engagement in political acts.

TARGET'S PERCEPTION OF COWORKERS' KNOWLEDGE HIDING AND TARGET'S MORAL DISENGAGEMENT: TARGET'S EGO DEPLETION AS A MEDIATING MECHANISM

Since individuals perceive co-workers' knowledge hiding as a potential threat to their knowledge resources, leading to a stress response. As a result, the targets may engage in sense making of their work experience, and try to know co-workers' intentions behind knowledge hiding by questioning "why did they hide knowledge from me?" [34]. They may employ counterfactual reasoning, and reconstruct this experience by thinking that the knowledge hider should or could have behave differently [35]. As targets recall the experience of knowledge hiding, they may be engrossed in unpleasant thoughts, and feeling [36]. For example, they may overthink and worry excessively about co-workers' knowledge hiding, and its potential negative effects to perform their job effectively [37]. To overcome these thoughts and feelings, the targets invest more regulatory resources that leads to ego depletion – a mental state in which individuals' (finite) self-regulatory resources are diminished [38]. According to the COR theory, when individuals try understand others' motive behind a certain act i.e. knowledge hiding, it dwindles their ability to conserve the self-regulatory resources. Resultantly, they feel depleted, and exert less self-control to handle unfavourable situation.

Depleted individuals may have weak self-regulation of morality [39]. This may trigger moral disengagement – individuals' disassociation from their internal moral standards [40]. Morally disengaged people are more prone to engage in self-serving behaviours, and care less about the impact of their behaviour on others [41]. They violate their own moral standards, and discount the moral implications of their behaviours without feeling guilty [25]. A fundamental principle of ego depletion perspective is that depletion resulted from early efforts of self-control reduces individuals' self-control on subsequent behaviours [42]. Prior studies such as [39, 43, 44], suggest that individuals who feel depleted lack adequate control to inhibit moral disengagement. If co-workers' knowledge hiding behaviour is causing depletion, then the depletion that targets experience may decrease their capacity to limit moral disengagement during their interaction with their co-workers.

Knowledge hiding behaviour is also perceived as an immoral behaviour violating the norms of workplace. Hence, employees feel that they are the victims of co-workers' knowledge hiding. In order to control this feeling, they may reason that their co-workers deserve the same behaviour. In this way, they justify their act of moral disengagement. We argue that perception of co-workers' knowledge diminishes employees' self-control, which in turn inhibits their capacity to solve moral issues in a systematic manner [45]. They avoid to engage in complex moral reasoning to protect their limited regulatory resources by following a simple philosophy of "tit for tat", and do not consider it as immoral [41, 46]. Taking this into account, it is plausible that targets' perception of co-workers' knowledge hiding may precipitate moral disengagement via mediating effect of targets' ego depletion. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₂: Target’s perception of co-workers’ knowledge hiding will be positively related to target’s moral disengagement through the mediating influence of target’s ego depletion.

A SERIAL MEDIATION OF TARGET’S PERCEPTION OF COWORKERS’ KNOWLEDGE HIDING

Political act at work describes employees’ self-serving behaviours that maximize their personal interests by altering the perception, cognition, and behaviours of others [25]. Moral disengagement permits individuals to engage in self-serving behaviours by disassociating themselves from their internal moral standards without feeling moral distress [47]. Similarly, ego depletion triggers moral disengagement. Weak self-regulation and self-control increase resource depletion [48]. Empirical evidence indicates that depleted individuals have fewer self-regulatory resources for moral sanction [49]. This increases employees’ likelihood to morally disengage [50], setting the stage for self-serving behaviours, such as political act [51].

Taking the aforementioned theoretical and empirical discussion into account, it is logical to assume a serial mediation linking targets’ perception of co-workers’ knowledge hiding and targets’ engagement in political acts. Targets’ ego depletion in response to perception of co-workers’ knowledge hiding may weaken their capability to act in moral way. According to COR theory, individuals in the state of ego depletion are motivated to follow those behaviours that instrumental to acquire new resources without considering the moral implications of such behaviours on their co-workers. Hence, targets’ ego depletion may trigger targets’ moral disengagement, leading to targets’ engagement in political act as resource protecting and acquiring tactic [39, 43]. Combining hypotheses 1 and 2 with these arguments, we hypothesize that ego depletion and moral disengagement serially mediate the link between knowledge hiding and political act. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H₃: Target’s perception of co-workers’ knowledge hiding will be positively related to target’s engagement in political acts through serial mediation influence of target’s ego depletion and target’s moral disengagement.

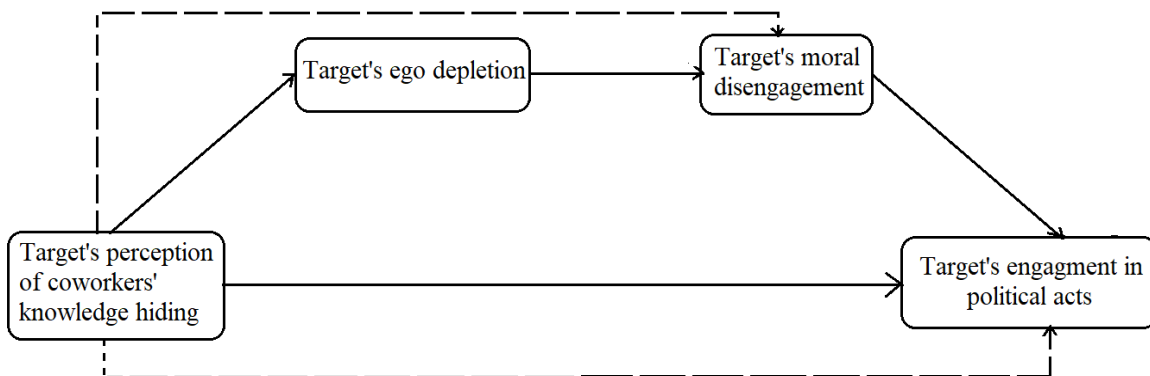


Figure 1. Graphical illustration of proposed research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

This study has drawn sample from different public sector organization in the Punjab province of Pakistan. The reason behind selecting Punjab province was its large workforce concentration, economic significance, and diversity of service-sector organizations. Further, Punjab province represents logistical feasibility and access to organizations supported data quality and response rates. Lower and middle level administrative staff from these

organizations were particularly focused as these employees play important role in the functioning of public sector organizations. These employees were selected because they work under direct supervision of immediate boss and are exposed to day-to-day behaviors and organizational practices related to the study constructs. We employed cross-sectional research design. The data were gathered by using a self-administered questionnaire survey regarding knowledge hiding, political acts, ego depletion, and moral disengagement. The survey design is suitable for data related to the subjective responses of the respondents. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the target respondent. This approach facilitates the researchers to contact the readily available participant from different organization [52, 53]. In particular, this method is suitable for the face-to face administration of the questionnaire, helping the researchers to develop direct rapport with participants, and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their perspective about the phenomenon being under study. Moreover, face-to-face interactions also resulted a more engaged response that increases the reliability of the collected data. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed with an aim to receive substantial amount of responses, above 200 as recommended for CB-SEM, to test the hypotheses. The data collection period spanned from March to May 2024. Out of 350 distributed questionnaires, 250 (71,43% response rate) questionnaires received back. Sixteen incomplete questionnaires were discarded to from the sample. The final sample comprised of 234 with the response rate of 67%. Of these, 61,5% were male respondents, 71,4% were aged between 31 to 50 years, over 63% have tenured of 6 to 15 years, and 62,4% had university education.

To control and assess the common method bias, we used procedural and statistical remedies. First, respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were assured. Second, double barreled items were avoided. Third, ethical approval was received from relevant board of studies. Finally, Harman's single-factor test was performed. The results revealed that a single factor accounted for 36,79% of variance that is less than the threshold value of 50%, confirming that this study is not suffered from this issue.

MEASUREMENT

To measure the constructs of this study, the participants indicated the degree of agreement with the statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The independent variable of this study was measured through a 12-item scale developed by [5]. A sample item includes "My co-worker agreed to help me but never really intended to". The Cronbach's alpha of this measures is 0,955. Political acts were measured using 4-items scale by [54]. The sample item includes "I engaged in self-serving behavior", with the Cronbach's alpha of 0,937. Ego depletion was measured through a 5-items scale by [55]. An example of item from this measure is "Generally speaking, I feel like my willpower is gone". The Cronbach's alpha of this measure is 0,913. We measured moral disengagement by using 8-item scale by [51]. An example item from this measure is "It is okay to spread rumors to defend those you care about", with the Cronbach's alpha of 0,958.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data were analyzed by using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and AMOS. Before the main analysis, we screened the data to detect the mission values and outliers in the data set as they can bias the distribution of data. No significant missing values and outliers were found in the data set. Then, we assessed the assumptions of multivariate analysis and found satisfactory. Next, descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) reliability (i.e. composite), validity (i.e. discriminant and convergent), correlation analysis, and hypotheses testing were carried out.

CORRELATIONS, RELIABILITY, AND VALIDITY ANALYSES

CFA was carried out to ascertain the distinctiveness of construct, employing different widely accepted indices for evaluation. The adequacy of a model is determined by fulfilling particular threshold criteria including Comparative fit index (CFI) > 0,95, Goodness of fit index (GFI) > 0,95, Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) > 0,80, Standardized root mean square adjusted (SRMR) < 0,09, and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < 0,05. The results presented in Table 1 exhibit that all indices exceed the established threshold values, confirming the appropriateness of the model.

Table 1. Goodness-of-fit indices for measurement model.

Construct	CFI	GFI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Political Acts	0,975	0,959	0,876	0,036	0,031
Knowledge Hiding	0,961	0,995	0,926	0,021	0,019
Moral Disengagement	0,991	0,965	0,938	0,026	0,046
Ego Depletion	0,967	0,961	0,884	0,035	0,028

Table 2 represents the correlations, reliability, and validity of all constructs. The CR of all measures exceeds the cutoff value of 0,70. Moreover, the AVE values also surpass the threshold of 0,50, representing the convergent validity. Additionally, the square roots of AVEs (diagonal values) are greater than values of correlations with other constructs, suggesting the discriminate validity. The results confirm the strong relationship between the variables, with moral disengagement and political acts having strongest relationship ($r = 0,343^{**}$).

Table 2. Correlations among variables, square roots of AVEs, reliability, and validity. PA – Political Acts, KH – Knowledge Hiding, MD – Moral Disengagement, EG – Ego Depletion, CR – Composite Reliability, AVE – Average Variance Extracted.

	PA	KH	MD	ED	CR	AVE
PA	(0,866)				0,937	0,750
KH	0,321**	(0,819)			0,961	0,671
MD	0,343**	0,330**	(0,860)		0,958	0,740
ED	0,298**	0,304**	0,292**	(0,860)**	0,913	0,676

*significant at 0.05 level

**significant at 0,01 level

HYPOTHESES TESTING

To test the direct hypothesis, we conducted covariance based SEM using AMOS. The results (Table 3) exhibit a significant positive association between target’s perception of coworkers’ knowledge hiding and target’s engagement in political acts ($\beta = 0,206$; $p < 0,01$), providing support for Hypothesis **H₁**.

Table 3. Direct path regression weights.

Direct Effect	β	S.E.	C.R.	p	Remarks
Target’s perception of KH of coworkers → Target’s engagement in PA	0,206	0,069	2,968	0,003	Supported

In order to test the indirect hypotheses, this study has used PROCESS macro program. This statistical tool is based bootstrapping technique. Table 4 shows that ego depletion significantly mediates the relationship between target’s perception of coworker’s knowledge hiding and target’s engagement in political acts ($\beta = 0,0708$; 95% CI= [0,0237, 0,1278]), thereby supporting Hypothesis **H₂**. Similarly, ego depletion and moral disengagement serially significantly mediates the association of Target’s perception of knowledge hiding of coworkers and Target’s engagement in political acts ($\beta = 0,0159$; 95% CI= [0,0039, 0,0343]), providing support for Hypothesis **H₃**.

Table 4. Indirect path coefficients for hypothesized relationships.

Indirect Effect	β	BootSE	LLCI	ULCI
KH → EGO_DPL → MRL_DSE	0,0708	0,0264	0,0237	0,1278
KH → EGO_DPL → MRL_DSE → POL_ACTS	0,0159	0,0079	0,0039	0,0343

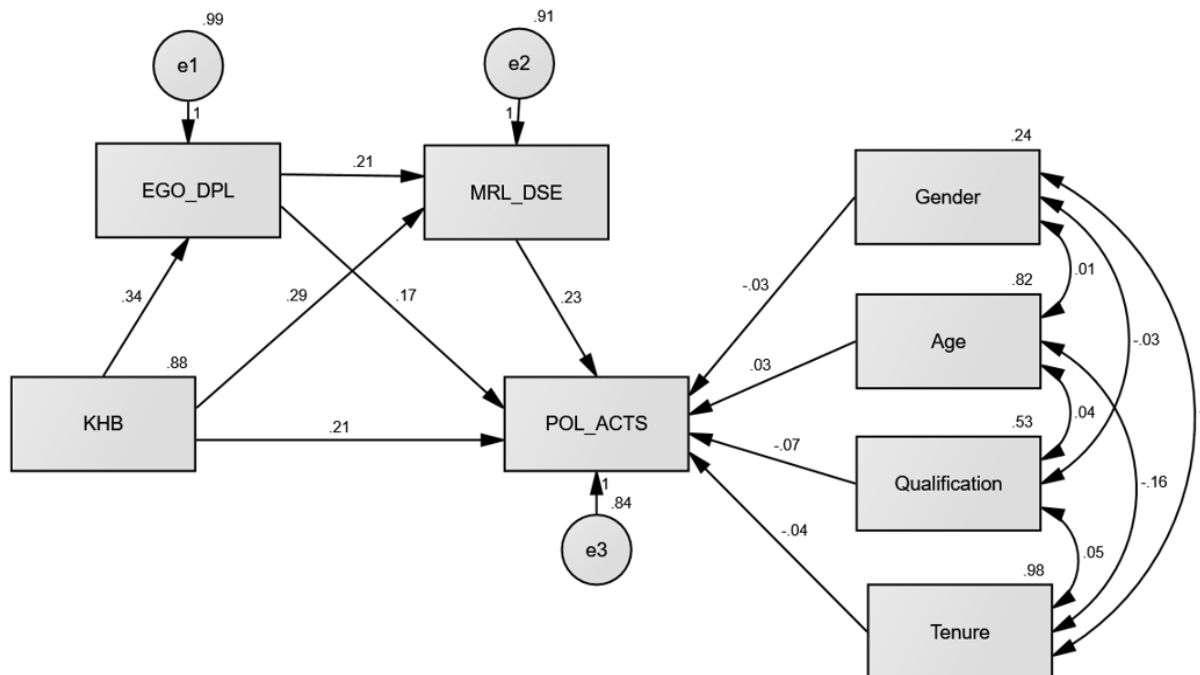


Figure 2. Structural model results for proposed research.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Drawing on the COR theory, this research unveiled the relationship between employee (target) perception of coworker’s knowledge hiding and target’s engagement in political acts by examining the serial mediating effects of target’s ego depletion and target’s moral disengagement. These findings indicate that targets’ perception of coworkers’ knowledge hiding leads towards his/her engagement in political acts. These findings provide substantial insights into the underlying mediating mechanisms through which coworker’s knowledge hiding can influence engagement of target employee in political acts. This is in line with the previous studies on employees’ negative experience with their colleagues, and its impact on target’s behavior [56]. Additionally, the relationship between coworker’s knowledge hiding and target’s ego depletion suggests that engaging in knowledge-hiding activities may drain target’s/victim’s cognitive resources.

This finding is aligned with the notion that hiding knowledge by coworkers, especially in high-demand work environments, can be mentally taxing for targeted employee and eventually leads towards a state of ego depletion. As targeted employees allocate significant cognitive and emotional resources to deal with feelings and thoughts arising due to knowledge hiding, the capacity for self-regulation diminishes which resulting in increased ego depletion and fosters moral disengagement among targeted employees. Existing research also advocates that depleted self-control resources make it challenging for target employees to adhere to their moral standards, thereby facilitating the rationalization of immoral behaviors e.g. political acts [57]. For example, [58] found that ego depletion undermines one’s self-control, facilitating unethical behaviors, which is consistent with our finding that depleted employees are more likely to disengage morally. Finally, coworker’s knowledge hiding behavior influences target’s political acts by depleting target’s resources and triggering moral disengagement. The target’s

engagement in political acts is likely due to a reduced sense of moral accountability and diminished self-regulatory capacities which in fact stems from coworker's knowledge hiding behavior. In this regard, earlier studies advocated that workplace mistreatments deplete cognitive and emotional resources, and trigger behaviors that directed towards workplace misconduct, c.f. [59, 60].

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Using the COR theory, this study offers a robust framework to comprehend how one's perception of coworker's knowledge hiding instigates one to engage in political acts at workplace. By focusing on the resource loss and subsequent behaviors, this study offers a novel perspective on employees' reactions to negative workplace behaviors, thereby extending the COR theory's relevance to organizational behavior research. Particularly, this study takes target's perspective to argue political acts as target's reaction to coworkers' knowledge hiding and provides a comprehensive understanding of the interpersonal dynamics of knowledge hiding and its broader impact on workplace relationships and individual behaviors. Looking through COR lens, this study also contributes to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting ego depletion and moral disengagement as underlying mechanisms to understand how knowledge hinging triggers political acts. In this regard, this study submits that coworker's knowledge hiding behavior anchors workplace mistreatment which expends target's cognitive resources while dealing with feelings and thoughts arising due to hiding of knowledge from coworkers, thereby s/he experience ego depletion. Since, ego depletion represents a state where critical cognitive resources are diminished and triggers defensive mechanisms to conserve remaining resources, often leading to moral disengagement because target reduces cognitive burden associated with ethical decision making. As a result, target employees engage in political acts by justifying her/his actions on the basis of treatment received from coworkers in the form of knowledge hiding. Nevertheless, this study suggests that knowledge hiding can have far-reaching consequences beyond immediate knowledge concealment, affecting the overall workplace climate, employee interactions, and subsequent workplace behaviors.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study also offers significant implications for practice. First, it is not uncommon for many workers to be at high risk of becoming targets of negative workplace behaviors while at work, and, thus, they are likely to search for ways to get rid of unfavorable occurrences. Thus, managers may use findings of this study to adopt specific strategies that would effectively discourage knowledge hiding practices and preventing its consequences. Moreover, by recognizing that knowledge hiding results in political workplace behaviors, managers can strive for better workplace environment. For instance, managers can develop training and awareness programs on the value of knowledge sharing and the negative impacts of knowledge hiding. These trainings might include development of interpersonal relations, methods of resolving conflicts, effective communication, and others that teach employees the importance of transparency and cooperation. In addition to that, managers can proactive interventions if they identify the signs of knowledge hiding and recognize that it can elicit political acts. Hence, feedback on the issue, reporting systems, and implementation of openness policies to prohibit knowledge hiding can be useful in the early identification and prevention of the problem.

Second, by acknowledging that knowledge hiding behaviors point towards resource depletion and moral disengagement, organizations can safeguard the health and wellbeing of the employees (UN SDG 3) while promoting the decent work environment (UN SDG 8). It is advisable for managers to observe any signs of ego depletion within employees and then help such employees to recharge in order to overcome it. This may be done through continuous contact as well as monitoring of how the employees are performing on the job. Utilizing resources like counseling services, stress management initiatives, and fostering a healthy

workplace culture will go a long way in lessening the effects of knowledge hiding and overall wellness of employees. Besides that, managers are advised to rethink some strategies of recruitment and selection, and prioritized workers with low levels of sensitivity to interpersonal abuse to minimize the adverse impact of knowledge hiding on victims' cognitive and psychological resources. Third, this study establishes the relationship between knowledge hiding and moral disengagement hence managers are encouraged to promote ethical practices by reminding employees of organizational values, moral standards, and ethical values. Further, managers can prevent workplace unethical behaviors such as knowledge hiding, by ensuring that ethical behaviors are rewarded while wrong doers are punished.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Beside important implications, this study also has some limitations. This study follows cross-sectional design which may precludes establishment of causality. Researchers are suggested to use longitudinal and/or experimental design to better understand the dynamics of knowledge hiding and its subsequent consequences upon target employees. Second, findings are restricted to a collectivist society and generalizability is limited to public organizations characterized with strict bureaucratic structures and in Punjab province only. Replication of current study with diverse portfolio of organizational culture and structure would extend insights to better understand the influence of knowledge hiding. Third, this study used interpersonal lens to explain how target employees respond when they are deprived of knowledge from coworkers. In this regard, we used political behavior as outcome to overcome challenges (cognitive, emotional etc.) target employees experience as a result of knowledge hiding. Future studies may investigate other interpersonal and organizational consequences knowledge hiding have, especially from target's perspective. Last but not least, this study did not consider intervention strategies to cope with detrimental effects of knowledge hiding. Future studies may investigate the role of leader, organization, and target's own dispositional factors that are likely to mitigate harmful impact of coworkers' knowledge hiding on target's wellbeing and behavior.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of co-workers' knowledge hiding on target's political acts. Considering a sequential mediating roles of ego depletion and moral disengagement, this study aimed to elucidate the underlying pathways through which coworkers' knowledge hiding may influence political behavior. Findings revealed that one's perception of coworkers' knowledge hiding was found to positively predict one's ego depletion, which in turn prompts one's moral disengagement. Subsequently, moral disengagement was positively associated with one's political acts. These results underscore the cascading effect of knowledge hiding from target's perspective, beginning with diminished cognitive resources and self-control (i.e. ego depletion), leading to heightened deviance from moral standards and values (i.e. moral disengagement), and ultimately culminating in workplace political acts. Taking COR theory to its heart, this study offers a dynamic framework to comprehend how knowledge hiding fosters one to engage in political acts. Moreover, managers should recognize the detrimental effects of knowledge hiding on employees' cognitive, psychological, and moral well-being. By mitigating knowledge hiding and encouraging sharing of knowledge, managers can reduce not only the risks of resource depletion and moral deviation but also improve interpersonal relations among employees and employees' well-being.

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