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Knowledge Hiding Mediates in the Relationship Between Workplace Ostracism and Organizational Commitment in Healthcare Settings

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ABSTRACT

Workplace relationships are essential in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviors, especially in knowledge-intensive fields such as health care. This paper examines the impact of workplace ostracism on organizational commitment, with knowledge hiding as a mediating variable. The paper uses the Conservation of Resources theory, which holds that employees' psychological and professional resources are at risk due to social exclusion, which provokes defensive knowledge-hiding tendencies. Partial least squares structural equation modeling was conducted on survey data collected from healthcare workers. The findings suggest that Workplace ostracism augments knowledge hiding and decreases organizational devotion. Knowledge hiding also undermines employee commitment to the organization and, to some degree, mediates the relationship between ostracism and commitment. Such results in the exclusionary workplace experience, which then leads to undesired organizational outcomes, are reflected in behavioral reactions. The research paper also adds value to the literature by explaining how social exclusion influences commitment and by offering practical recommendations for healthcare managers seeking to foster an inclusive environment and a culture of knowledge sharing.

Introduction

Close cooperation, continuous knowledge exchange, and interdependence are among the elements that healthcare organizations rely on to deliver effective patient care. Medical practitioners are used to working under pressure, and interpersonal relationships are very critical in this field. Once such relationships fail, they may have a harmful impact not only on employees but also on the organization's stability and service quality. The insight into the interpersonal issues that interfere with collaboration is therefore particularly significant in a healthcare environment.

Ostracism at the workplace is one of these problems that arise when employees feel disregarded, marginalized, or socially shunned by their colleagues or supervisors (Ferris et al., 2008). Although ostracism may not be immediately obvious, research consistently shows its harmful effects. Past studies link workplace ostracism to psychological stress, reduced attention, and negative attitudes toward work, like lower organizational commitment (Li et al., 2021; Noor, 2024). Even small acts of exclusion can impair team performance and increase emotional exhaustion in healthcare settings.

Another growing concern is knowledge hiding, which involves intentionally keeping requested information from others (Connelly et al., 2012). Unlike accidental non-sharing, it includes actions like avoiding questions or falsely claiming ignorance. In healthcare, this behavior can undermine coordination, learning, and trust, where effective and timely information sharing is crucial (He et al., 2021; Jena, 2021). Theories like Conservation of Resources and social exchange can help explain how knowledge hiding relates to workplace ostracism. Ostracism jeopardizes employees' social and psychological resources, and they become defensive to protect themselves (Hobfoll, 1989). Secrecy will enable employees to maintain access to valuable resources without additional adverse interactions (Riaz et al., 2019). Also, ostracism prevents the rules of reciprocity and makes people less willing to share knowledge (Han, 2024).

According to prior studies, workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding deteriorate such an attachment by reducing perceptions of support, trust, and fairness (Ain et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2021). Nevertheless, relationships have seldom been studied as a single model, albeit in a healthcare setting. To fill this void, this paper focuses on knowledge hiding as a mediating variable between workplace ostracism and organizational commitment among healthcare workers. This study offers a context-specific understanding of how social exclusion shapes commitment and provides a practical recommendation for how healthcare organizations can foster inclusive, knowledge-sharing workplaces by combining resource-based and relational

perspectives.

Literature Review

Workplace ostracism is the feeling employees experience when they are ignored or excluded by others (Ferris et al., 2008). This tendency is indirect and unclear, making it hard for employees to respond or even seek assistance. Although it is subtle, previous studies indicate that ostracism has a significant negative impact on employees' work experiences.

The Conservation of Resources theory is one explanation for these effects (Hobfoll, 1989). According to this theory, individuals attempt to guard treasured personal resources, such as social networks and a feeling of belonging. Such resources are endangered when employees feel excluded, which can lead to stress and demotivation. In the long run, such a loss of resources complicates employees' positive attitudes toward their organization. Organizational commitment is the feeling employees have toward their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Studies have always indicated that ostracism undermines this attachment. Li et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis indicating that affected employees express lower affective commitment. Recent research also indicates that perceptions of exclusion decrease perceived support and fairness, thereby reducing commitment (Noor, 2024).

Generally, the available literature indicates that workplace ostracism diminishes employees' emotional attachment to their organization.

Hypothesis 1: Workplace Ostracism is negatively related to Organisational Commitment.

Knowledge hiding is defined as the deliberate concealment of information sought by others (Connelly et al., 2012). In this behavior, one can evade questions or give partial responses. Since concealing knowledge is intentional, it can significantly undermine teamwork and learning in organizations. Ostracized employees usually develop feelings of insecurity and a lack of social support (Hobfoll, 1989). To manage these conditions, they may attempt to defend what they cherish. One of such resources is knowledge. With concealed knowledge, workers reduce their reliance on others and experience no further adverse relationships. Research supports this link. The study by Riaz et al. (2019) found that knowledge hiding is enhanced by ostracism under job-related stress. Al-Dhuhouri and Shamsudin (2023) also indicated that the excluded employees were more likely to conceal the knowledge since they felt more distrusted and misfitting in their organization. These results indicate that the state of being excluded promotes defensive knowledge performance.

Recent findings indicate that perceptions of fairness and reciprocity are also factors. Han (2024) found that employees who are ostracized tend to hide knowledge more often when they perceive

the conduct as legitimate. Studies consistently find that workplace ostracism reliably predicts knowledge hiding.

Hypothesis 2: Workplace ostracism is positively related to knowledge hiding.

Knowledge hiding harms workplace relationships. Withholding information damages trust and hampers cooperation (He et al., 2021). This weakens social bonds and decreases employees' sense of connection. Usually, sharing knowledge fosters positive interactions and trust. On the contrary, when employees hide knowledge, it leads to fewer positive exchanges and weaker work relationships, which can, in turn, reduce their emotional attachment to the organization.

This pattern is supported by empirical evidence. Ain et al. (2022) Research shows that knowledge hiding exacerbates emotional harm and reduces loyalty within organizations. Nguyen et al. (2021) Research shows that hiding knowledge reduces trust and emotional attachment, especially during change. Past studies also link frequent knowledge hiding to disengagement (He et al., 2021). In summary, hiding knowledge negatively impacts organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 3: Organisational Commitment is negatively related to knowledge hiding.

Research shows that knowledge hiding mediates the effect of workplace ostracism on organizational commitment. When employees feel isolated, they lose resources and experience increased stress, leading to knowledge hiding as a form of self-protection. While reducing discomfort, it harms work relationships. Riaz et al. (2019) found that ostracism impacts work outcomes through knowledge hiding, and Al-Dhuhouri and Shamsudin (2023) reported that ostracism decreases positive attitudes by increasing knowledge hiding. This highlights knowledge hiding as a key mediator.

Studies indicate a longer process. First, ostracism can aggravate emotional stress. This strain leads to hiding knowledge and to lower organizational commitment (Han, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2021). Knowledge hiding acts as a key link between ostracism and commitment. The paper examines how workplace exclusion reduces commitment through knowledge hiding.

Hypothesis 4: Knowledge hiding mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and organizational commitment.

Methodology

Measures

Workplace ostracism was assessed using items adapted from the Ferris et al. (2008). The scale assesses employees' perceptions of social exclusion at work, such as being ignored or excluded from discussions. Knowledge hiding was measured with a scale that views it as deliberately hiding information, including evasive responses and pretending not to know. Organizational

commitment was evaluated using items from the affective commitment dimension, reflecting employees' emotional attachment and identification with their organization.

Table 1: ***Validity and Reliability Results***

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	CR	(AVE)
Knowledge Hiding	0.800	0.814	0.515
Organisation Commitment	0.876	0.879	0.574
Work Ostracism	0.877	0.880	0.575

The reliability and convergent validity statistics for workplace ostracism, knowledge hiding, and organizational commitment are presented in Table 1. The values of all constructs exceed the minimum acceptable level for Cronbach's alpha (.70), indicating high internal consistency among the measurement items. Additionally, composite reliability (CR) values exceed recommended thresholds, indicating that the indicators consistently measure their intended latent constructs. The average variance extracted (AVE) measures of all the constructs exceed.50, indicating that convergent validity is satisfactory and that the constructs capture a significant percentage of variance in the indicators of the constructs. Together, these findings provide strong evidence that the measurement model is in accordance with existing psychometric standards and can be further subjected to structural analysis (Hair et al., 2022).

Discriminant Validity Assessment

Table 2: ***Fornell-Larcker Criterion***

Construct	1	2	3
Knowledge Hiding	0.718		
Organisation Commitment	-0.420	0.757	
Work Ostracism	0.379	-0.585	0.758

Based on the Fornell-Larcker criteria, the study demonstrates satisfactory discriminant validity among the constructs. The diagonal values are the square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) and are the highest for each construct relative to the correlation with the construct. Knowledge Hiding has a square root of AVE of 0.718, which is higher than its correlations with Organizational Commitment (0.420) and Workplace Ostracism (0.379). Otherwise, the Organizational Commitment has a higher diagonal value (0.757) than the correlations with the other constructs, indicating a clear conceptual difference. Workplace Ostracism also fulfills the requirement because its AVE (0.758) is higher than its correlations with Knowledge Hiding and Organizational commitment.

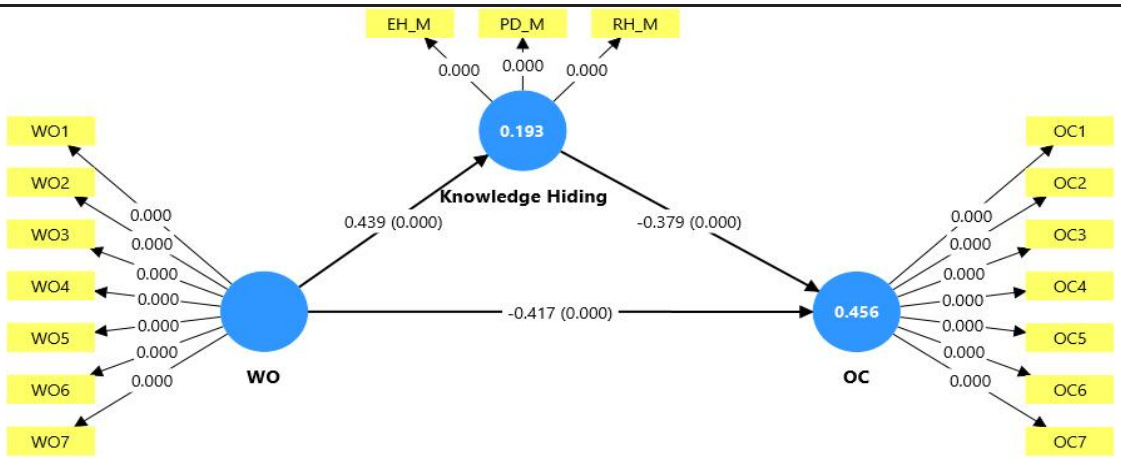


Fig. 1 Path Model

Table 3: R^2

Construct	R-square
Knowledge Hiding	0.193
Organisational Commitment	0.456

Table 3 shows the coefficient of determination (R^2) for the endogenous variables. Knowledge hiding explains 19.3%, and Organizational commitment explains 45.6% variance. Workplace ostracism has significant explanatory power regarding knowledge hiding, and therefore, episodes of social exclusion have a key influence on employees' knowledge-hiding behavior. Even though the explained variance is moderate, it aligns with previous studies indicating that knowledge hiding is not only interpersonally but also contextually dependent (He et al., 2021).

Table 4: *Direct and Indirect Effect Analysis*

Hypothesis	β	P value	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Conclusion
WO→ KH	0.439	0.000	0.233	0.595	Supported
KH→ OC	−0.379	0.000	−0.518	−0.231	Supported
WO→ OC	−0.417	0.000	−0.706	−0.399	Supported
WO→ KH→ OC	-0.166	0.001	-0.307	-0.054	Supported

WO: Work Ostracism, KH: Knowledge Hiding, OC: Organizational Commitment

Note: Research Hypotheses Significant at $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$.

The outcome shows a strong positive relationship between knowledge hiding and work ostracism ($\beta = 0.439$, 95% CI = [0.233, 0.595]). This result indicates that workers who experience more ostracism at work are more likely to deliberately conceal knowledge. Also, the extent of

knowledge hiding negatively impacts organizational commitment (β = -0.379, 95% CI = -0.518, -0.231). This finding means that the more employees indulge in knowledge hiding, the less emotional and psychological attachment they will have to the organization. It is also inferred that the direct impact of work ostracism on organizational commitment is strongly negative (β = -0.417, 95% CI = -0.706 to -0.399). The results of the indirect effect show that knowledge hiding mediates the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Organisational Commitment (β = -0.166, 95% CI = -0.307 to -0.054). The present finding suggests that exclusion and social neglect significantly deter commitment among employees, with no effect on other behavioral mechanisms. Combining the findings, one can say that knowledge hiding partially explains the relationship between work ostracism and organizational commitment. Although ostracism at work directly undermines commitment, it also does so indirectly by promoting knowledge-hiding behavior that further discourages employees' organizational attachment.

Discussion

This research shows that workplace ostracism significantly reduces healthcare workers' organizational commitment, with knowledge hiding serving as a crucial mediating factor. Aligning with resource-based theories, social exclusion leads employees to defend their valuable professional resources by withholding knowledge (Al-Dhuhouri & Shamsudin, 2023; Hobfoll, 1989). In knowledge-intensive healthcare settings, such behavior may help individuals regain control but can also obstruct collaborative relationships.

The results also indicate that knowledge hiding correlates with a lack of organizational commitment, with the purposeful withholding of information undermining trust, cooperation, and the quality of relations. Over time, such relational impairments reduce employees' emotional connection to the organization and lead to disengagement and withdrawal (Ain et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2021). Furthermore, the mediating effect of knowledge hiding indicates that workplace discrimination affects commitment both directly, by diminishing employees' sense of belonging, and indirectly, through behaviors that weaken social bonds. It also suggests that other mental factors, such as emotional stress or perceived unfairness, can impact how employees respond to exclusion. (Li et al., 2021; Noor, 2024).

This study presents several research opportunities for future work. First, the cross-sectional design does not allow causal inference. Longitudinal or time-lagged studies would be a more appropriate choice for examining the dynamics of the processes through which ostracism leads to knowledge hiding and consequent changes in organizational commitment over time.

Second, it could be explored in future research on potential moderating factors that could

counteract the adverse effects of workplace ostracism. Leadership behaviors, psychological safety, ethical climate, and organizational support may reduce employees' desire to conceal knowledge in the presence of exclusion. Such boundary conditions would be examined to gain further insight into how organizations can break the ostracism-knowledge-hiding cycle (Han, 2024).

Conclusion

This study advances the literature by demonstrating that workplace ostracism diminishes organizational commitment among healthcare workers, both directly and indirectly through knowledge hiding. The results elucidate how interpersonal mistreatment reduces emotional attachment to the organization by integrating social exclusion and defensive knowledge behaviors into a unified explanatory framework.

The findings emphasize the need to address workplace ostracism and to avoid information suppression in healthcare environments, where teamwork and knowledge sharing are vital. Fostering inclusive cultures and building trust can reduce defensive reactions and enhance organizational commitment. In summary, this research adds to theoretical understanding by clarifying how ostracism influences commitment, offering useful insights for healthcare leaders seeking to cultivate resilient, cooperative, and committed teams.

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