



Injustice as a predictor of knowledge hiding in school teachers: The moderating role of self-monitoring.

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Abstract- Using data from a sample (n=294) of school teachers from various public and private schools across Pakistan, this study examined an emergent construct knowledge hiding. Injustice was identified as an important predictor of knowledge hiding by teachers. We also tested for the conditional effects of self-monitoring and injustice on knowledge hiding. Data was analyzed using stepwise regressions analysis. Results showed a positive relationship between injustice (procedural, distributive and interactional) and knowledge hiding. We also tested for the moderating effect of self-monitoring and injustice (procedural, distributive and interactional) on knowledge hiding. Results confirmed that for high self-monitors the relationship between injustice and knowledge hiding was weak. In the end implications for practice have been discussed.

Key words: Knowledge hiding, self-monitoring, Injustice, school teachers

I. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is an important strategic resource of an individual (Grant, 1997). In competitive work environments, specifically where performance is evaluated on the basis of how creative an individual is hiding one's knowledge not only affects the creativity of the knowledge hider but also the knowledge seeker. Knowledge hiding is a kind of behavior in which an individual purposefully conceals knowledge whenever requested. One of the reasons for hiding knowledge can be feeling of unjust treatment (Connelly, 2012). Considerable attention has been given by researchers to these matters and we can find extant literature of employee responses to different issues (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989; Huang, Niu, Lee & Ashford, 2012) and organizational injustice (Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002; Jones, 2009). The Exit, Voice, Loyalty, Neglect, Cynicism (EVLNC) model (Naus, Iterson & Roe, 2007) provides a comprehensive explanation as to what kind of general reactions people might exhibit to adverse behaviors like organizational injustice etc. Of particular interest to this study is the silence behavior. It is important to note silence doesn't necessarily mean the absence of speech. Silence pertains to "Intentionally withholding work-related ideas, information and opinions" (Dyne, Ang & Botero, 2003, p.1363). Employees can remain silent due to multiple reasons. For example, when individuals are approached with a specific request for knowledge they may intentionally conceal it by delaying the request for knowledge, hide knowledge due to personal reasons or assume that the requested knowledge is of utmost organizational importance and hence should not be revealed.

Knowledge hiding has been coined as a kind of behavior in which the knowledge hider, intentionally hides knowledge when requested from the knowledge seeker (Connelly, Zweig, Webster & Trougakos, 2012). Some researchers argue that that knowledge hiding is not necessarily with the intention to harm the organization (Connelly et al., 2012) others alternatively pose that it is a kind of counterwork behavior (Cerne, Nerstad, Dysvik & Skerlavaj, 2012). Based on this understanding, this study makes an attempt to study knowledge hiding as a reaction to feelings of injustice. Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960), it is postulated that when individuals feel that their organizations have treated them unfairly they will retaliate by exhibiting counterwork behaviors like knowledge hiding which can be particularly devastating in organizations where creativity is required to be successful. Also feelings of injustice may involve loss of particular resources due to which individuals can hide knowledge in an attempt to conserve resources (Hobfoll, 2000; 2011).

The context in which knowledge hiding is being studied is also of great significance. Understanding the context of the situation in which a study is being conducted is of utmost importance (Johns, 2006). For knowledge creation a context is necessary, knowledge cannot be separated from the context in which it is created (Nonaka, Toyama and Konno, 2000). Culture is considered an important part of the context. In a study on Chinese and Russian cultures both of which are assumed as collectivist cultures, it was observed that individuals prefer in-group face saving (Michailova & Hutchings, 2006) and to share knowledge instead of hiding it so there is need to address this issue that whether people in Pakistan which is also believed to be a collectivist culture (Hofstede, 1983) are there certain type of individuals as we have proposed to be self-monitors, do they also hide or share knowledge as a consequence of injustice. Individuals high on self-monitoring are more interested in impression management so instead of knowledge hiding they may share knowledge even in situations of injustice.

This paper presents a further conceptual clarity of the emergent concept of knowledge hiding, relates it to injustice. It also provides an understanding for the conditional role of self-monitoring as a voice behavior in comparison to knowledge hiding as a kind of silent behavior. In the end future research discussions and implications for practitioners have been discussed.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Injustice and Knowledge Hiding

The workplace of a contemporary organization is no less than a Greek arena, where every player is having a keen eye on the surroundings and the minutest actions of the other players be their peers, managers or subordinates. This zealous observation may lead to people making comparisons of their positions with respect to the positions of others and may develop different perceptions about how fairly they are being treated and how others are being treated in the same organizational settings. These perceptions of fairness can be traced back to the original work of Adam's on Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) and have been termed as perceptions of injustice in literature which can be defined as an individual's belief that he or she has not been dealt with fairly (Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002).

Researchers have made efforts to explicate the distinctions between different types of organizational injustice. A score of researchers agree to the three main types of organizational injustice which are procedural (the perceived fairness of procedures), distributive (the perceived fairness of outcomes such as pay) and interactional injustice (the fairness of the interpersonal treatment the individual receives from a decision-maker) for detailed review please see (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997; Charash & Spector, 2001). If in an organization, an employee has been "shown disrespect, passed over for promotion, given additional responsibilities with no pay increase, denied adequate resources to do the job, or didn't receive what he or she considered adequate credit for work performed from co-workers or management". Crino (1994, p. 315) then he is likely to lose self esteem (Charash & Spector, 2001) and individuals might engage in behaviors which are counterwork.

The relationship between organizational injustice and counterwork behaviors like theft (Greenberg, 1990) retaliation (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997) sabotage (Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002) has been studied by a number of researchers, however in the knowledge and creativity literature researchers point out that when the mere success and growth of an organization is dependent on its individuals sharing knowledge with each other, then a behavior like hiding knowledge can have a devastating effect on the organization's overall performance. In proposing the intellectual and emotional recognition theory Kim and Mauborgne, (1998) argued that when organizations do injustice to people by not appreciating their intellectual and emotional worth, then they may start hoarding knowledge and can also be expected to hide that knowledge when requested. In knowledge hiding the knowledge hider deliberately hides the knowledge when a request is made to reveal that knowledge by the knowledge seeker (Connelly, Zweig, Webster & Trougakos, 2012). Knowledge hiding can be with the intent harm the organization (Connelly et al., 2012), however other researchers believe that it is a kind of counterwork behavior having serious consequences for the organization (Cerne, Nerstad, Dysvik & Skerlavaj, 2012). Hence it can be hypothesized that

Hypothesis 1:

Injustice (procedural, distributive, interactional) will be positively related to knowledge hiding.

The Moderating Role of Self-Monitoring

The initial valuable insight on the theory of self-monitoring was provided by Snyder (1974:1979). According to Snyder, individuals behave differently when it comes to their public appearances and they control their expression and self-presentation. A number of researchers believe that self-monitors tend to engage more in impression management in organizations (Snyder & Copeland, 1989 ; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). People categorized as high self-monitors have a strong desire to project their positive images in front of others. They control their expressive behavior in social situations so that they can exhibit performances as demanded by the situation. They prefer to remain in continuous contact with their social climates so that as and when required they indulge in such behaviors which help them to gain a position of certain prominence. (Gangestad& Snyder, 2000; Turnley & Bolino, 2001).

Research on self-monitoring though reveals that in certain social instances the self-monitor can be at advantage (mba graduates study) but high self-monitors may also engage in undesirable behaviours (Day et al., 2002). In addition to this the self monitoring personality variable has also been used to explain employee voice (Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003). In their article Premeaux and Bedeian (2003) proposed that the high self monitor may speak up so that they can gain favorable treatments from others, so in case of our study we proposed for the moderating effect of self monitoring on the relationship between injustice and knowledge hiding. This possibility may lead to our understanding that in the events of injustice where certain personality types individuals may withhold information and opt for silence, the self-monitors, on the contrary , may use speaking up as an ice breaker and share knowledge, with the prospects that they might be viewed favorably by the management. This discussion becomes the basis for our next hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2:

Self-monitoring will moderate the positive relation between injustice (distributive, procedural & interactional) and knowledge hiding such that for high self monitoring this relationship will be weaker.

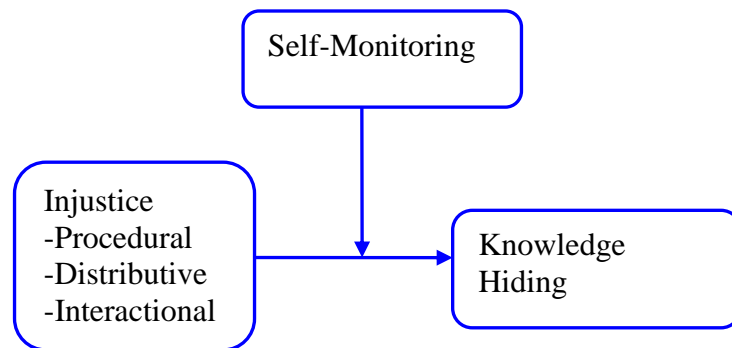


Figure 1: Injustice as a predictor of knowledge hiding and moderating role of self-monitoring

III. METHOD

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

We were interested in the unfair treatment received by school teachers. Hence, we collected data from a number of private and public schools. In these schools specifically at the elementary level, teachers are expected to be very creative and come up with new ideas for teaching children, hence knowledge hiding can be devastating since to be creative it is necessary that individuals have the ability to create new knowledge (Sarwat & Abbas, 2020) and for that purpose knowledge has to be shared not hidden. The teachers were asked

to complete the questionnaire comprising of items on injustice, knowledge hiding, self-monitoring and demographics. Further it was also mentioned on the questionnaire that participation would be voluntary and data would be kept confidential.

We distributed 350 questionnaires in 3 schools and received 311 responses. However, due to missing data we had to exclude 39 questionnaires. Hence our final self-report responses were 294 thereby making our response rate 84%. The majority of respondents (77.6%) were females with an average age of 32 years ($SD = 6.3$). Average experiences was 5.40 ($SD = 1.7$) years (see Table 1).

Measures

All the constructs of this study were measured using self-reported instruments. Organizational injustice was measured on a 5-point likert scale with anchors 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Knowledge hiding was assessed on a 7-point likert scale where 1=not at all, 2= to a very limited extent to 7= to a great extent and self monitoring was measured on a 6-point likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = somewhat disagree 4 = somewhat agree 5 = agree 6= strongly agree

Organizational Injustice. We measured this construct using justice scale of Colquitt (2001), however items were reverse coded to particularly measure injustice. On a 5-point likert with anchors 1 = strongly disagree (Very Unfair) 2 = disagree (Unfair) 3 = neutral (Neither Fair Nor Unfair) 4 = agree (Fair) 5 = strongly agree (Very Fair), respondents were given instructions before each part like "The following questions are about the procedures that have been used to arrive at these outcomes in your organization". Sample item of distributive injustice was "Outcomes reflect the effort you have put in your work" procedural injustice was "You have been able to express your views and feelings during procedures in your organization" and for interactional injustice was "He/she seemed to tailor his/her communication to individual's specific needs". We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to see if distributive, procedural injustice and interactional injustice loaded onto their respective latent factors. Our results yielded a good fit the three factor model ($\chi^2 = 160.24$, $df = 88$; CFI = .94, GFI = .90, IFI = .95, RMSEA = .06). Then we averaged separate scores for each of the type of injustice.

Knowledge Hiding. To measure knowledge hiding, we used the 12-item scale by Connelly et al., (2012). Sample item was in that situation I "Pretended that I did not know the information"

Self Monitoring. We assessed self monitoring with the thirteen item scale by Lennox & Wolfe (1984). Sample items included "I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them" and "In social situations, I have the ability to change my behavior if I feel that it is required".

Assessing Common Method Variance. Apart from innovative performance, all our scales were self report, so as observed by Podsakoff et al. (2003), one possible way to detect common method bias is to conduct an exploratory factor analysis and allow all measurement items to load on a single factor without any rotation. When we loaded all items on a single factor, the total variance explained was less than 17% indicating that common method variance isn't threatening.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviations, correlations and alpha reliabilities of the scales used in the study.

Moderation Analysis.

To test hypothesis 1 and 2 we used moderated regression analysis technique (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). We centered the variables by subtracting the overall means. We also wanted to ensure that there was no collinearity among our predictor variables, which may affect our regression model so we obtained, variance inflation factor (VIF) scores (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998) and the tolerance statistics (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). VIF scores of less than 5 (Chatterjee & Price, 1991) and tolerance scores above .10 (Hair et al., 1998) are considered acceptable. Based on these standards multicollinearity was not a problem in our analysis. We found support for the moderating effect of self-monitoring and all three types of injustice and knowledge hiding. Table 2 depicts these outcomes. From step 3 we can see that the interaction terms are significant for self-monitoring and procedural injustice on knowledge hiding ($\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$)

self-monitoring and distributive injustice on knowledge hiding ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$) and for self monitoring and interactional injustice on knowledge hiding ($\beta = -.17, p < .05$).

Table 2: Moderation Analysis

V. DISCUSSION

Unfair treatment in organizations can cause considerable stress on individuals. The findings of the research provide evidence to support that injustice can enhance knowledge hiding in schools specifically in teachers at the elementary level who are required to be very creative at their jobs. In this study knowledge hiding was theorized as a kind of silence behavior based on assumptions of the EVLNC model (Naus, Iterson & Roe, 2007). We found significant support of knowledge hiding as a consequence of injustice which employees may encounter in their organizations. When an individual develops feeling of injustice, they may feel stressed and in return may indulge in knowledge hiding as a coping mechanism to deal with this stress by choosing to remain silent whenever important information is requested from them.

Alongside employee silence, there is also another group of people who wishes to use their voice (Morrison & Milliken, 2003), some researchers term these individuals as the 'self-monitors' (Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003), so in this study we also tested for the moderating effects of self-monitoring between the relationship of injustice and knowledge hiding. We tested for the moderating effects of self monitoring on the relationship between all three types of injustice and knowledge hiding. We received support for the conditional effect of self-monitoring and all three types of injustice on knowledge hiding. People who are high self-monitors are more concerned about managing their impressions so when they face injustice they may reduce knowledge hiding as a consequence of their desire for impression management.

In this study there are a number of practical implications. Every individual understands the strategic importance of his/her personal asset i.e. knowledge. In addition to this, in the kind of ambiguous environments in which these organizations operate, creative ideas from their employees are necessary for growth (George, 2007). We studied an important predictor of injustice, which is thought to produce counterwork behaviors in organizations. In case of injustice, it is imperative that organizations introduce mechanisms through which individuals can socialize with each other so that an environment of trust is built and individuals do not indulge in knowledge hiding. Though we do not suggest that self-monitors should be promoted in organizations, however top management in schools should identify certain personality traits of their individual employees which can hinder knowledge hiding in organizations.

A number of limitations are also worth mentioning, like the data was collected in one shot. Finally though we accounted for common method variance but a longitudinal study would have provided valuable insights. Future studies can investigate any psychological mechanisms that link injustice and knowledge hiding like work stress etc. Our study tested for the moderation of self monitors, in future researchers can include all the five dimensions of the trait theory (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and check for direct and moderating effects of these personality types.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities

	Mean	SDV	Age	Gender	Experience	Procedural Injustice	Distributive Injustice	Interactional Injustice	Self-Monitoring	Knowledge Hiding
Age	32.09	6.34	–							
Gender ¹	1.23	.421	-.281**	–						
Experience	5.40	1.7	.759**	-.215**	–					
Procedural Injustice	3.91	0.63	.380**	-0.126	.362**	(0.93)				
Distributive Injustice	3.61	0.61	-0.132	0.12	-0.145	-0.083	(0.92)			
Interactional Injustice	3.56	0.70	-.200**	-0.132	-.161*	-0.123	-.242**	(0.91)		
Self-Monitoring	3.82	0.69	-.278**	0.017	-.280**	0.412*	0.321*	.405**	(0.79)	
Knowledge Hiding	4.76	0.85	-0.096	-0.028	-0.097	0.325*	.378**	.356**	-0.087	(0.84)

Note: N=294; Gender 1=female, 2=male; Alpha reliabilities in parentheses. *p<.05; **p<.01

Table 2: Moderation Analysis

Variables	Knowledge Hiding	
Step 1β	ΔR^2	
Controls		
Education		.022
Experience		
Step 2		.071*
Procedural Injustice	.25**	
Distributive Injustice	.15*	
Interactional Injustice	.18	
Self-Monitoring	.02	
Step 3		
Procedural Injustice		
X		.082*
Self-Monitoring	-.16*	
Distributive Injustice		
X		
Self-Monitoring	-.14*	
Interactional injustice		
X		
Self-Monitoring	-.17*	
N=294. *p<.05;**p<.01		

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