Unveiling the Hidden Pathways: The Mediating Role of Knowledge Hiding between Role Conflict, Job Insecurity, Cynicism, and Collective Efficacy

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Abstract: ***Purpose:*** **This research aims to explain the role of knowledge-hiding as a mediator within the complex relationship of role conflict, job insecurity, cynicism, and collective efficacy in textile industry of Pakistan within stable organizational contexts. In organizations, when employees experience a lack of resources, they are inclined towards knowledge-hiding behavior to have a competitive advantage over accompanying employees. The purpose of these preemptive measures is three-fold: To avoid the role conflict among employees, to assure job security, and/or out of cynicism for the organization.** ***Design:*** **Employing a robust methodology, a structured questionnaire was developed employing a 5-point Likert scale. The survey gathered primary data from 231 groups, predominantly employees across textile organizations of Pakistan. Utilizing Smart Partial Least Squares (PLS) and covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the collected data underwent rigorous analysis.** ***Findings:*** **The findings of this study underscore the affirmative relationship between knowledge-hiding and its antecedents. Notably, knowledge hiding emerges as a significant mediator, influencing the dynamic association between these constructs and collective efficacy. It became evident that knowledge hiding behavior decreases groups' collective efficacy in organizations, and it negatively impacts the performance indicators of organizations.**

Keywords: **collective efficacy, role conflict, cynicism, job insecurity, knowledge-hiding.**

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, organizational dynamics have significantly influenced employee attitudes and conduct (Budhwar & Cumming, 2020; Collings et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2019). Transformative events like restructurings and mergers have triggered shifts in the organizational landscape, garnering scholarly attention (Malik, 2013, 2018; Ozili & Arun, 2020). These shifts may lead to role ambiguities, wavering job assurances, and skepticism, fostering an environment conducive to knowledge-hiding (Konig et al., 2020). Employees tasked with roles beyond their proficiencies may engage in knowledge-hiding, seen as a strategic choice within a competitive domain (Aarabi et al., 2013). This can engender cynicism and fuel the inclination toward knowledge-hiding (Huo et al., 2016; Jiang et al., 2019).

Noteworthy shifts during stable economic conditions, distinct from crises, motivate knowledge-hiding behaviors, despite social exchange dynamics (Malik & Sanders, 2021). Understanding knowledge-hiding's antecedents and outcomes is essential, but research in non-crisis, stable settings is limited. Enhanced comprehension of knowledge-hiding forces and repercussions is crucial.

This inquiry explores knowledge-hiding among employees within stable, non-crisis organizational domains facing challenges like role conflict, cynicism, and job insecurity. The study aims to reveal the ripple effects of these challenges on collective efficacy, with knowledge-hiding mediating. Knowledge-hiding is linked to missed prospects, lack of collaboration, and flouting regulations (Kwahk & Park, 2016; Hickland et al., 2020), and can lead to financial losses (Panopto, 2018). Despite efforts to champion knowledge dissemination, some opt for deliberate information veiling (Prouska & Kapsale, 2021). Understanding causative mechanisms and outcomes is vital to formulate strategies.

Research on knowledge-hiding remains limited, particularly in stable economic settings. Illuminating variables that drive knowledge-hiding in non-crisis conditions helps organizations nurture a culture of knowledge dissemination, enhancing resilience.

The extant body of research has shed a spotlight on the pervasive nature and detrimental implications intrinsic to knowledge-hiding behaviors within workplace environs. A litany of contributing elements, including the likes of role conflict, the specter of job insecurity, and the shroud of cynicism, have emerged as discernible catalysts for the manifestation of knowledge-hiding (Konig et al., 2020). In addition, inquiries into the ramifications of knowledge-hiding on the landscape of job performance during organizational crisis have been subjects of rigorous investigation (Tuyet-Mai Nguye et al., 2022).

Amidst the organizational tapestry, an area remains conspicuously underexplored within the annals of scholarship: the nuanced dynamics underpinning knowledge-hiding and its intricate ramifications vis-à-vis employee conduct, particularly

the facet of collective efficacy during stable economic conditions. While extant research has ostensibly embraced the overarching phenomenon of knowledge-hiding, a profound comprehension of the intricate causality and far-reaching consequences of knowledge-hiding tendencies in the crucible of non-crisis and stable economic conditions is requisite.

Gaining a nuanced understanding of knowledge-hiding's subtle mechanisms within organizational operations is vital. Unraveling determinants influencing knowledge-hiding in stable, non-crisis contexts paves the way for targeted interventions, mitigating its adverse effects (Konig et al., 2020). This exploration also highlights potential scarcity caused by knowledge-hiding, emphasizing the need for preventive measures (Huo et al., 2016; Jiang et al., 2019). Scrutinizing organizational milieus, even in stability, unveils causal underpinnings and outcomes tied to knowledge-hiding (Malik & Sanders, 2021). Such research bridges gaps in understanding and aids navigating knowledge sharing amidst predictability (Collings et al., 2021).

This pursuit strengthens comprehension of organizational dynamics and facilitates a collaborative, knowledge-driven environment in serene conditions (Malik, 2018). It empowers entities to navigate equanimity while fostering employee conduct (Aarabi et al., 2013). In conclusion, this exploration enhances understanding of knowledge-hiding within stable organizational contexts, enriching our insight into collaborative environments (Panopto, 2018).

2. Literature Review

In the dynamic and competitive realm of modern organizations, a nuanced understanding of the factors shaping employee behavior and attitudes is crucial for enhancing performance and fostering a productive work environment. Among the intricate dynamics of organizational behavior, the interplay of role conflict, job insecurity, cynicism, and collective efficacy has emerged as a captivating focus, drawing significant scholarly attention. An intriguing recent development within this context is the recognition of "knowledge-hiding" as a potential intermediary mechanism, shedding light on the latent processes influencing employee conduct and perceptions (Tuyet-Mai et al., 2021; Chenghao Men et al., 2018; Alexander et al., 2016).

Role Conflict: Role conflict refers to situations where individuals encounter conflicting expectations or demands stemming from their multiple roles. This dissonance arises when the demands of one role contradict those of another, leading to strain and challenges in managing these conflicting responsibilities. Role theory, pioneered by Robert K. Merton, explains that individuals inhabit multiple roles concurrently, with role conflict arising from incongruous expectations. For instance, a professional might experience role conflict when work-related duties clash with personal commitments. Numerous studies have explored the aftermath of role conflict within organizational settings, revealing links to various outcomes. Role conflict has been associated with decreased job satisfaction, commitment, and increased job-related stress (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Singh et al., 2015). Its repercussions

extend to job performance, organizational functioning, and absenteeism (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Schleicher et al., 2014).

Cynicism: Cynicism is characterized by a negative disposition and skepticism towards organizational intentions, policies, and decisions. It manifests as sarcasm, disillusionment, and critical attitudes towards organizational practices. Cynicism's origins lie in perceived organizational injustice, politics, adverse experiences, and transparency gaps. Research indicates that cynicism leads to reduced engagement, burnout, lower job satisfaction, and impedes cooperation and trust (Bolino et al., 2002; Vecchio et al., 2010). It also affects organizational citizenship behavior (Dalal et al., 2012).

Job Insecurity: Job insecurity reflects the perceived threat of job loss or instability due to economic fluctuations, organizational changes, or technological advancements. It triggers stress, anxiety, and impacts well-being, job satisfaction, and commitment (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Vander Elst et al., 2014). Job insecurity's consequences extend to decreased job performance and innovation (De Witte, 2005; Probst, 2002).

Collective Efficacy: Collective efficacy represents a shared belief in a team's ability to accomplish tasks and achieve goals. It influences team performance, cohesion, and decision-making. Teams with higher collective efficacy tend to set higher objectives, exhibit greater effort, and outperform those with lower collective efficacy (Stajkovic et al., 2017; Gully et al., 2002).

Knowledge-Hiding: Knowledge-hiding involves intentionally withholding or concealing knowledge, information, or skills from colleagues or the organization. It manifests as evading inquiries, providing ambiguous responses, or feigning indifference. Motivations behind knowledge-hiding include self-interest, competition, and power dynamics. Knowledge-hiding has adverse effects on teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving (Connelly et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2019). It erodes trust, fuels tensions, and diminishes job satisfaction (Li et al., 2019).
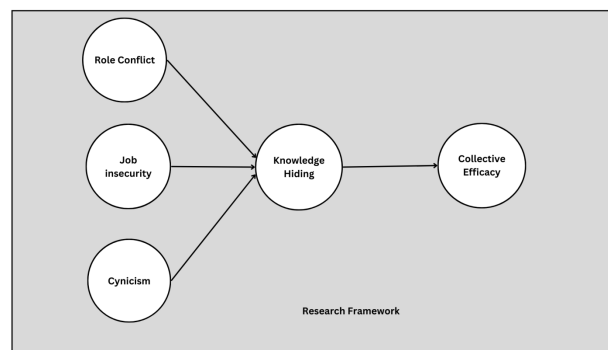

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

Recent studies investigate knowledge-hiding as a mediator between these variables. Role conflict triggers knowledge-hiding, leading to reduced collective efficacy (Tuyet-Mai et al., 2021). Job insecurity induces knowledge-hiding, resulting in cynicism and eroding trust (Chenghao Men et al., 2018). Cynicism negatively impacts collective efficacy, with knowledge-hiding as an intermediary (Alexander et al., 2016).

This integrated framework underscores the critical role of knowledge-hiding, revealing its intricate connections with organizational crises, role conflict, job insecurity, cynicism, and transformative leadership. It offers valuable insights for scholars and practitioners aiming to understand and manage employee behaviors, foster positive attitudes, and enhance organizational outcomes.

A. Hypothesis Development

1) Role conflict and knowledge-hiding

In the intricate organizational landscape, role conflicts often arise, particularly during stable periods (De Dreu et al., 2004). This study delves into a non-crisis context, presenting a theoretical contribution. Role conflict's complexity influences workplace behaviors, including knowledge-hiding. Conservation of Resources (COR) theory suggests that employees may resort to knowledge-hiding when facing role conflict. As role conflict leads to negative interactions and retaliation tendencies (Schulz-Hardt et al., 2002), a relationship with knowledge-hiding emerges. This interplay obstructs information exchange, fostering discord and hindering competitive advantage (Chen et al., 2011; Moore, 2000). Thus, a new hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Role conflict among employees in a stable organizational context is positively associated with knowledge-hiding.

2) Job insecurity and knowledge-hiding

In today's rapidly evolving economy, job insecurity looms due to technology advancements (Bartol et al., 2009; Coupe, 2019). This research extends beyond crises to a stable context. Job insecurity entices employees to hoard knowledge for competitive advantage (Ali et al., 2020; Isaac et al., 2020). Crisis amplifies this tendency, as fear drives information concealment (Isaac & Baral, 2018). Job insecurity links to reduced knowledge-sharing (Ali et al., 2020), affecting cooperation, information exchange, and performance (Domenighetti et al., 2000; Senol, 2011). The study adds that job insecurity diminishes employee engagement, camaraderie, and knowledge dissemination (Senol, 2011; Aarabi et al., 2013), offering a new insight:

H2: Employee perception of job insecurity in a stable organizational context is positively associated with knowledge-hiding.

3) Cynicism and knowledge-hiding

Amidst organizational dynamics, cynicism's influence on employee responses and knowledge-hiding gains prominence (Stanley et al., 2005). While prior research relates cynicism to change resistance during crises (Jiang et al., 2019), its multifaceted role unveils in stable contexts. Cynical employees hesitate to contribute knowledge due to perceived lack of resources, paradoxically driving knowledge-hiding for competitive advantage (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Bergstrom et al., 2014). Cynicism, a shield against challenges, deters cooperation and ethical sharing (Aljawarneh & Atan, 2018; Bedeian, 2007). Cynics feel detached, affecting job satisfaction and knowledge-sharing (Cole et al., 2006; Stanley et al., 2005). Cynicism's mistrust extends beyond individuals, stifling knowledge-sharing (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Bergstrom et al., 2014), leading to the hypothesis:

H3: Employee cynicism in a stable organizational context is positively associated with knowledge-hiding.

4) Knowledge-hiding and collective efficacy

Amid evolving organizational landscapes, the uncharted interplay of knowledge-hiding and collective efficacy emerges as a novel research focal point. Collective efficacy, a cornerstone of team dynamics and performance, intertwines with knowledge-sharing attitudes. As employees resort to knowledge-hiding, a paradox arises, potentially dampening collective efficacy. The Conservation of Resources theory underscores this dynamic, elucidating how knowledge-hiding depletes the resource pool vital for collective efficacy (Hobfoll, 1989). Knowledge-hiding's negative influence on collective efficacy finds resonance in employees' shared beliefs, altering team dynamics, and affecting performance outcomes. This nascent relationship forms the basis for the fourth hypothesis:

H4: Knowledge-hiding among employees in an organization is negatively associated with collective efficacy.

5) Knowledge-Hiding as a mediator

Amid organizational dynamics, heightened role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism plague employees (Debus & Unger, 2017), inducing a state akin to resource exhaustion (Debus & Unger, 2017). This intensifies role conflict's impact (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006) and amplifies job loss anxiety during crises (James et al., 2011), fostering cynicism (Cole et al., 2012). Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) resonates, as these stressors compel resource hoarding, culminating in knowledge-hiding. This discord hampers collective efficacy, impeding harmony (Wang & Noe, 2010). Within this tumult, knowledge-hiding emerges as a self-preserving response, inadvertently muting collective knowledge exchange. Thus, crisis-born role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism necessitate countervailing efforts that facilitate resource abundance through collaborative knowledge sharing.

H5: Knowledge-hiding mediates the impact of a) role conflict, b) job insecurity, and c) cynicism on collective efficacy.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to look into the connections between knowledge-hiding, cynicism, job insecurity, and collective efficacy and role conflict in a stable organizational context. A quantitative cross-sectional survey is the research method used. A convenience sample strategy has been used to gather data from the target population, which comprises of 231 employees from different organizations in Pakistani city Karachi.

Sample: Participants have been chosen from a variety of industries and employment categories to provide a broad and representative sample. According to the standards for structural equation modelling (SEM) investigations, the sample size was calculated by taking into account the number of observed variables and expected effect sizes (Hair et al., 2017).

Data Collection: A self-administered online survey

questionnaire was used to gather the data. Validated scales measuring the target constructs make up the questionnaire. The items were modified from research conducted in the past that showed satisfactory validity and reliability (Alexander et al., 2016; Chenghao Men et al., 2018; Tuyet-Mai et al., 2021).

A. Measures

Role Conflict: We used a set of five questions taken from Moore (2000) to understand role conflict. One of these questions is "My work responsibilities interferet my personal life." Answers are given on a scale of one to five, where one means strongly disagree and five means strongly agree. The alpha coefficient for role conflict was 0.914.

1) Job Insecurity

Employed herein is the seven-item gauge, formulated by Vander Elst and colleagues (2014), tailored to quantify job insecurity. An illustrative instance from this inventory involves the statement, "I feel that my job is not secure." The gradation of responses adheres to a five-point Likert scale, traversing the spectrum from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The alpha coefficient, attaining a commendable magnitude of 0.964.

2) Cynicism

The cynicism component derives its essence from the Maslach Burnout Inventory–General Survey, subject to adaptation. An illustrative item within this component is "I feel very little loyalty to this organization." The assessment transpires through a five-point Likert-type scale, encompassing a continuum extending from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The internal consistency and reliability of this evaluation are attested by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which achieves a robust value of 0.923.

3) Knowledge-hiding

The knowledge-hiding scale, encompassing four items, originates from the work of Peng (2012). A representative item within this scale reads as follows: "I withhold some knowledge and information from others in my work unit." Participants offer their responses using a five-point Likert-type scale, spanning from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability of this evaluation is supported by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.917 in the context of role conflict.

4) Collective efficacy

The Collective Efficacy Scale, developed by Gully et al. (2002), is employed: A representative item reads, "Our team has the ability to cope with unexpected situations." This assessment employs a five-point Likert-type scale, encompassing values from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability of this measurement is underscored by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.966 pertaining to role conflict.

The online survey questionnaire was disseminated to potential participants through email or commonly used online research platforms. Voluntary participation was emphasized, and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to promote candid responses. A clear explanation of the research objectives and instructions for completing the questionnaire was provided. Data analysis was conducted using Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM)

software SmartPLS. Descriptive statistics were computed to examine sample characteristics and relevant variables. Covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to explore the relationships between the independent variables (role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism) and the mediating variable (knowledge-hiding). Mediation analysis with bootstrapping involving 5000 samples was employed to ascertain whether knowledge-hiding serves as a mediator between the independent variables and the dependent variable (collective efficacy).

The primary goal of this study is to explore the interconnections among role conflict, job insecurity, cynicism, knowledge-hiding, and collective efficacy. Age, gender, and education were considered as control variables in alignment with the study's objectives to account for potential confounding variables. Ethical approval from the relevant authorities was obtained before data collection commenced. Participants were provided with informed consent, highlighting their voluntary involvement, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

4. Results

Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) was adopted as the analytical framework, executed using SmartPLS4 software. This methodological choice was rooted in the pursuit of robust analysis, especially relevant given the study's theoretical foundation. CB-SEM, chosen over Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), offers a stricter approach suitable for inquiries grounded in theoretical depth.

CB-SEM's relative rigor compared to PLS-SEM is evident in its requirement for predefining the measurement and structural models before analysis (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). This aligns with the study's emphasis on the Conservation of Resources Theory, self-perception theory, and social learning theory, reinforcing methodological coherence.

Additionally, CB-SEM serves as a tool to assess the alignment between theoretical constructs and empirical data. It provides fit statistics, gauging how well the theoretical model captures the covariance matrix within the sample dataset (Hair et al., 2010). In essence, CB-SEM offers insights into the concurrence – or divergence – between empirical observations and the theoretical framework (Hair et al., 2010). This analytical tool, therefore, facilitates the exploration of the intricate relationship between empirical realities and theoretical constructs.

A. Structural Model

In order to evaluate the robustness and soundness of the proposed model in this study, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was executed, employing the maximum likelihood estimation method. we adhered to Hair et al.'s (2018) MVA textbook suggestions. In alignment with the approach outlined by Tarcan et al. (2017), gender, age, and education were integrated as control variables. Subsequent assessments encompassed model fit, factor loadings, cross-loadings,

average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability, collectively culminating in indices indicative of a satisfactory fit: $\chi2$ =713.33, df =289, $\chi2$/df =2.46, p <0.001; CFI =0.94; TLI =0.93; SRMR=0.035; RMSEA =0.080 (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Hu & Bentler, 1999; West et al., 2012)). Factor loadings, composite reliabilities, and average variance extracted (AVE) are presented in Table 1, while Picture 1 offers a visual depiction. Remarkably, all composite reliabilities effortlessly surpassed the established threshold of 0.70, as propounded by Nunnally (1994). Furthermore, each construct exhibited AVE values surpassing the 0.5 benchmark stipulated by Hair et al. (2010).

The alignment between constructs extended into the range of discriminant validity. Each AVE value, by outstripping the squared correlations between every pair of constructs, as presented in Table 2, substantiates the presence of adequate discriminant validity, as enunciated by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

1) Hypothesis testing

To scrutinize the proposed hypotheses, a structural equation modeling approach was engaged, as detailed in Table 3 and Figure 3. Notably, an acceptable model fit was achieved, with notable indicators: $\chi2$ = 1128.81, df = 248, $\chi2$/df = 4.552, p < 0.001; CFI = 0.89; TLI = 0.88; RMSEA = 0.10.

Hypothesis H1 postulated a positive correlation between role conflict and knowledge hiding. The findings underscore the anticipated link, revealing a constructive impact of role conflict on knowledge hiding (β = 0.369, p < 0.01), thereby corroborating H1. Similarly, Hypothesis H2 envisaged a positive relationship between job insecurity and knowledge hiding. This postulate finds validation, as job insecurity exerts a favorable influence on knowledge hiding (β = 0.337, p < 0.001), lending credence to H2. Furthermore, H3 theorized a positive connection between cynicism and knowledge hiding.

The study's outcomes echo this hypothesis, elucidating a salient positive effect of cynicism on knowledge hiding (β = 0.435, p < 0.001), thus bolstering H3.

The trajectory of Hypothesis H4 deviated, suggesting a negative link between knowledge hiding and collective efficacy. Empirical findings bear testimony to this conjecture, showcasing a deleterious impact of knowledge hiding on collective efficacy (β = -0.765, p < 0.01), thus ratifying H4.

To delve into the mediating dynamics, knowledge hiding's role in the nexus between role conflict, job insecurity, cynicism, and collective efficacy was subjected to a bias-corrected bootstrapping analysis. This procedure, predicated on a 5000-sample bootstrap at a 95% confidence level, substantiates the mediating role ascribed in Hypothesis 5. Significantly robust mediating effects were uncovered: role conflict (β = -0.127, p < 0.05), job insecurity (β = -0.246, p < 0.01), and cynicism (β = -0.227, p < 0.01), manifesting their influence on collective efficacy (See Table 4).
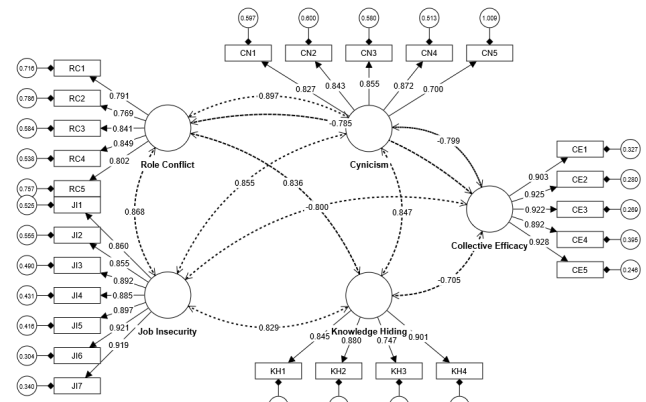

Fig. 2. Factor loadings (CFA)

Table 1
Reliability and validity of variables

Variable	Source	Items	Factor Loadings	α	CR	AVE
Role Conflict	Moore (2000)	RC1	0.801	0.914	0.915	0.682
		RC2	0.793			
		RC3	0.848			
		RC4	0.864			
		RC5	0.820			
Job Insecurity	Vander Elst et al. (2014)	JI1	0.865	0.964	0.964	0.793
		JI2	0.861			
		JI3	0.896			
		JI4	0.880			
		JI5	0.893			
		JI6	0.918			
		JI7	0.918			
Cynicism	Maslach et al. (1996)	CN1	0.848	0.923	0.925	0.712
		CN2	0.864			
		CN3	0.875			
		CN4	0.880			
		CN5	0.746			
Knowledge Hiding	Peng (2012)	KH1	0.857	0.917	0.920	0.741
		KH2	0.896			
		KH3	0.774			
		KH4	0.909			
Collective Efficacy	Gully et al. (2002)	CE1	0.917	0.966	0.967	0.853
		CE2	0.928			
		CE3	0.936			
		CE4	0.906			
		CE5	0.933			

Note: α =Cronbach's alpha, CR =composite reliability, AVE =average variance extracted

Table 2
Correlation Matrix
Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

	Role Conflict	Job Insecurity	Cynicism	Knowledge Hiding	Collective Efficacy
Role Conflict	0.826				
Job Insecurity	0.000	0.890			
Cynicism	0.000	0.000	0.890		
Knowledge Hiding	0.375	0.502	0.535	0.750	
Collective Efficacy	-0.244	-0.327	-0.349	-0.670	0.892

The bold numbers in the diagonal row are the square roots of AVE

Table 3
Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
Path Coefficients (Direct Effect)

	Knowledge Hiding	Collective Efficacy
Role Conflict	0.375	
Job Insecurity	0.502	
Cynicism	0.535	
Knowledge Hiding		
Mediating effect of Knowledge Hiding		-0.652

Table 4
Total indirect effect

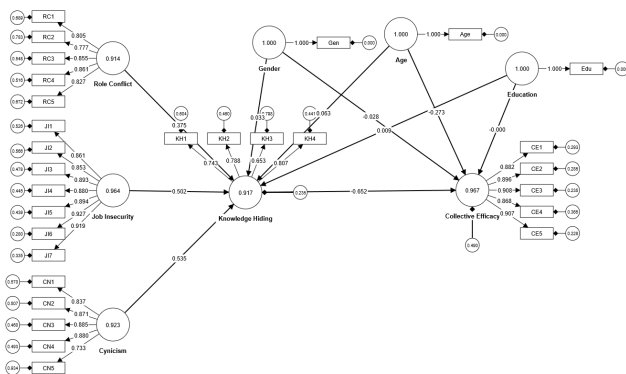|		Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values
Cynicism -> Collective Efficacy	-0.227	0.061	3.706	0.000
Job Insecurity -> Collective Efficacy	-0.246	0.061	4.039	0.000
Role Conflict -> Collective Efficacy	-0.127	0.059	2.143	0.032

Fig. 3. The results of measurement and structural model

5. Discussion

This empirical inquiry delved into the intricate interplay between role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism concerning knowledge hiding behavior, and its subsequent ramifications for collective efficacy within contexts of organizational stability. An illuminating facet emerged, wherein the phenomenon of knowledge hiding assumed a pivotal mediating role. This investigation not only reaffirmed the constructivist tenets of role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism as harboring positive links with knowledge hiding behavior, as postulated by antecedent studies, but astutely expanded this discourse to encompass organizational terrains bereft of acute crises, as elucidated by the scholarly discourse of Tuyet-Mai et al. (2021).

Immersing ourselves within the chasm of role conflict, a condition characterized by the confluent emergence of incongruous work imperatives or a paucity of requisite resources, unveils itself as a formidable precursor to the cultivation of knowledge hiding tendencies (Boz Semerci, 2019). Anchoring this empirical tenet within the overarching edifice of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, one discerns a strategic rationale for knowledge hoarding, wherein

employees are impelled by a primal urge to forestall the depletion of their professional reservoir vis-à-vis their colleagues.

The portent of job insecurity, encapsulating the apprehension of impending vocational dislodgment and the concomitant angst of premature professional exit, accentuates a rather perceptive phenomenon. This poignant perception of vocational impermanence precipitates a climate of existential vulnerability, engendering a proclivity toward the art of knowledge concealment, a conscious endeavor to insulate one's competitive edge and ontological prominence in the organizational fabric (Vander Elst et al., 2014).

A parallel thematic trajectory unfolds as we traverse the labyrinthine corridors of cynicism, a cognitive disposition wherein the individual's fealty to their own interests invariably eclipses the broader purview of organizational allegiance. This narrative bespeaks the volition to withhold knowledge, often rationalized by the skepticism surrounding its utility to others or its latent significance in the service of personal progression (Hobfoll, 1989). Herein, the sinews of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory find congruence, as the encroachment of impending resource attrition, emblemized by role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism, foments a crucible of psychological strain, thus triggering the imperative of resource preservation, epitomized by the act of knowledge hiding (Hobfoll, 1989; Guo et al., 2020).

The study's unfolding narrative enriches the contours of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, divulging a riveting exposition of the organizational terrain fraught with the crucibles of role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism. These formative crucibles, in a synchronous choreography, actuate the phenomenon of knowledge hiding, thus expanding the frontiers of the theory. Concomitantly, the investigation traverses the relatively dimly lit corridors of collective efficacy, an arena less frequented by scholarly inquiry (Bandura, 1997). The study

unravels the variegated tapestry of collective efficacy's manifestations across divergent group typologies (Campion et al., 1993). Moreover, its profound nexus with job satisfaction, commitment, and task performance, as meticulously chronicled by Parker (1994) and Prussia and Kinicki (1996), casts an incandescent light on the interplay.

The study's fecund tapestry is further enlivened by the haunting cadence of the inverse relationship between collective efficacy and the subterranean art of knowledge hiding, as underscored by the sagacious pronouncements of Jex and Gudanowski (1992). Knowledge concealed begets a dearth of collective belief in the group's potency to surmount challenges, setting forth a domino effect wherein the incipient seeds of cynicism sprout, retarding the fecund interplay of collaborative knowledge exchange and problem-solving, thus stymieing the march toward collective efficacy.

A. Implications
1) Theoretical implications

Our research makes notable contributions in three key aspects. Firstly, it adds to the current body of knowledge on knowledge hiding and enhances the scope of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by delving into the dynamics of knowledge hiding, its origins, and its consequences within organizational settings. Secondly, this study validates the role of role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism as underlying factors driving knowledge hiding behavior, aligning with the findings of previous work by Nguyen and Malik (2020, 2022). Lastly, our study highlights the common occurrence of role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism among employees, particularly during challenging economic periods, fostering an environment conducive to increased instances of knowledge hiding behavior. Although previous research, such as that of Nguyen and Malik (2020, 2022), indicates the impact of these factors on knowledge hiding behavior, their impact on collective efficacy with the mediation of knowledge hiding has not been investigated.

Moreover, this study stands as one of the inaugural inquiries into the intricate interplay of knowledge-hiding conduct as an intermediary conduit amidst the realms of role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism, and the overarching construct of collective efficacy. In addition, this scholarly endeavor propels our comprehension of the intricate dynamics that underscore the phenomenon of knowledge hiding, encompassing its genesis, manifestations, and repercussions. It is notable that Khalid et al. (2018) and Singh (2019) have undertaken explorations into the direct ramifications of precursor factors on the act of knowledge hiding and its subsequent impact on job performance. Paradoxically, the scrutiny cast upon the mediation role of knowledge hiding remains relatively scarce, as does the exploration into the nuanced mechanisms that forge a linkage between its causes and reverberating effects. By invoking the tenets of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, knowledge hiding is envisaged as a tactical response aimed at forestalling the further depletion of resources, in the face of mounting perceptions of role conflict, job insecurity, and cynicism. Consequently, the adoption of knowledge hiding

behavior engenders a perceptible attenuation in the shared potency of collective efficacy among the organizational workforce. In light of these contemplations, future research endeavors should ardently delve into the precincts of knowledge hiding's mediating function, thereby illuminating the intricate psychological tapestry that interconnects the antecedents and consequences of such behavior.

2) Practical implications

Numerous pragmatic ramifications emerge from the revelations derived from the present study. Principally, it comes to light that the emergence of knowledge-hiding tendencies can be sparked by the presence of role conflict within the organizational milieu. Thus, it becomes imperative for institutions to ardently endeavor towards the minimization of role conflict within their operational domains. One prudent avenue to navigate this realm is for managerial cadres to acquire a nuanced understanding of their employees' proficiencies, aspirations, and the intricate fabric of group dynamics, thereby enabling a judicious allocation of responsibilities. Furthermore, when new roles or tasks are entrusted to collective ensembles, the infusion of training regimens or mentorship initiatives stands as a potential reservoir of amelioration.

The study further unfurls a pivotal revelation, elucidating that the amelioration of job insecurity and the abatement of cynicism within the organizational tapestry can act in concert to mitigate the proclivity for knowledge-concealment within work-groups, thereby exerting an indirect yet palpable influence on the collective efficacy of the employee cohort. In this vein, organizational stewards are enjoined to deliberate upon the reconfiguration of roles, endowing them with attributes of enrichment and empowerment. Simultaneously, the architecture of remuneration policies assumes a significant mantle in this orchestration, and here, the prescripts laid forth by Pee and Lee (2015) may proffer sagacious counsel.

In tandem with these measures, the figureheads of leadership bear a considerable responsibility. It is incumbent upon them to bestow encouragement, requisite aid, and supportive bedrock, effectively cultivating an environment that stokes the fires of motivation for the unhindered dissemination of knowledge. This is succinctly exemplified in the scholarship of Le and Lei (2019), a source that underscores the tenet of leadership's pivotal role in galvanizing knowledge-sharing endeavors.

Furthermore, the custodians of managerial reins must diligently propagate the notion among employee cadres that their personal trajectories of triumph and the overarching vision of the corporate edifice are inextricably intertwined with the practice of knowledge sharing. This duality underscores the pernicious toll exacted by knowledge hiding on the organizational voyage of ascension. The realm of perception, too, warrants cultivation, whereby employees are imbued with a profound cognizance that the tapestry of the establishment's fortunes converges seamlessly with their own.

Inculcating a collective ethos where the company's interests amalgamate harmoniously with individual aspirations becomes the lodestar. This calculus, in turn, bespeaks that the harboring of a cynical disposition stands antithetical to the trajectories that culminate in triumph. Rather, the embrace of knowledge

exchange emerges as the venerated avenue. When these skeins of thought weave a tapestry, the outcome is an environment wherein the impetus to partake in knowledge-sharing is invigorated, and the propensity for knowledge hiding, conversely, dissipates into the peripheries of obsolescence.

B. Limitation and Future Research

Our study, while offering valuable insights, also reveals certain limitations that open avenues for future research endeavors. The inception of this study germinated within the confines of a specific nation, Pakistan. Subsequent investigations might contemplate the extension of this model to disparate nations or contexts, thereby enriching the generalizability of its tenets. A corollary limitation resides in the modality of data collection, which encompassed a self-reported survey administered at a singular temporal juncture. The augmentation of this exploratory endeavor through longitudinal investigations or experimental designs could unveil the dynamic temporal dimensions underlying behavioral changes.

To deepen the wellspring of knowledge, it is judicious to advocate for a cross-national data gathering stratagem, thereby facilitating comparative analyses or the meticulous control for cultural nuances. An alternative vantage point for data collection is also a prospective trajectory; for instance, the inclusion of supervisor-employee dyads could furnish an enriched perspective.

A further constraint lies in the omission of personality trait variables within the analytical purview. A prudent trajectory for forthcoming investigations could encompass the integration of personality trait variables to illuminate the intricate interplay between knowledge hiding behavior and these latent traits.

The ambit of this study, while delineating the mediating role of knowledge hiding between its antecedents and the construct of collective efficacy, beckons for exploration into the moderating mantle assumed by diverse leadership styles. The incursion into this terrain could unravel the nuanced modulatory impact of leadership styles upon knowledge hiding and its causal determinants. While this study's focal point lay on the emergence of collective efficacy consequent to knowledge hiding, the future vista could potentially encompass an appraisal of an expanded repertoire of outcomes, encompassing dimensions such as innovation and productivity.

Amidst these outlined limitations, it remains incontrovertible that this paper effectively addresses and substantiates the contours of our research objectives.

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