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Knowledge Hiding in Guangxi Province's Academia: Unethical Leadership and Empowerment

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Abstract

Knowledge concealment in the Chinese province of Guangxi has been studied in relation to the influence of unethical leadership and employee empowerment. Researchers from universities in Guangxi Province, China, provided the data used to validate the correlations. There are a total of 100 responses from academics. Smart PLS has verified the validity and reliability of the constructs. Validating hypotheses via bootstrapping. It has been discovered that unethical leadership, employee empowerment, and knowledge hiding behaviour are all significantly and positively related to one another. Knowledge concealment is a natural consequence of employee empowerment in the absence of ethical leadership. Sharing of information is facilitated by ethical leadership and the empowerment of others. In contrast, when leaders lack integrity and give their employees more autonomy, secrets are kept under wraps. The current research establishes a theoretical link between unethical leadership and the concealment of information. This pioneering research examines the effect of ethical leadership and Empowerment on knowledge concealment in the academic community in the setting of Guangxi Province, China. Additional variables can be explored and added by future researchers. The findings can be used by professionals to enhance initiatives aimed at developing ethical leadership and fostering a less secretive culture among employees.

Keywords: *knowledge management, knowledge hiding, employee empowerment, unethical leadership, Guangxi Province, China.*

Introduction

In the 21st century, knowledge management is a relatively new notion for businesses (Butt, Shah, and Ahmad, 2021). Knowledge management is the process of organising data through its creation, application, dissemination, and evaluation. Knowledge-sharing cultures are associated with increased productivity, innovation, and employee satisfaction (Ali, 2021; Rezwan and Takahashi, 2021; Syed et al., 2021). However, knowledge concealment is the most significant challenge facing businesses today. The performance of both the individual and the company will suffer as a result of the information being hidden. As a result, departments and employees become isolated from one another. The company's output suffers as a direct result. Factors influencing knowledge concealment have received less attention in the literature (Bernatovi, Slavec Gomezel, and erne, 2021; Butt, Shah, and Ahmad, 2021). In this respect, numerous factors have been emphasised in the literature over the years. Knowledge concealment has been linked to emotional and mental health problems among workers. It's also been connected to problems with worker safety. The most important facet of leadership in information concealment, however, has been overlooked. Knowledge-hiding attitudes at the top can trickle down through an organisation and stifle progress. The worst possible outcome of immoral leadership is for

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employees to accept it as the norm. Leaders, for better or worse, have the power to influence their teams. When leaders act unethically, employees become more tolerant of unethical behaviour. Ethical leadership, employee empowerment, and knowledge-hiding behaviour are the three constructs chosen for validation in this study.

Academics have divided information concealment into two broad classes: first, knowledge concealment at the organisational level; second, knowledge concealment at the individual level. The first is private information that is kept secret from friends and colleagues (Demirkasimoglu, 2015). Ethical difficulties are the root of nontrivial problems. The second reason people hide information is so they can maintain an advantage over their competitors. It develops in settings where workers don't feel as though their contributions matter (Harmeling et al., 2017; Ali, 2021). Thus, the purpose of this research is to establish a connection between ethical behaviour and employee empowerment and knowledge concealment. This research revealed a connection between unethical leadership and the concealment of information, which can be seen as a significant theoretical advance.

Literature Review

Knowledge Hiding

Knowledge concealing is "an intentional attempt by an employee to keep knowledge to himself and not share it with others," as defined by Connelly and Zweig (2015). In contrast to the idea of sharing one's expertise, this is something entirely new. Knowledge concealment is unethical behaviour, regardless of whether it is due to an unwilling recipient or the employee's lack of communication skills. There are two types of knowledge concealment. The first is the deliberate dissemination of false or confusing information. In the second case, one may deliberately choose to remain silent and play the part of a knowledge concealer. The performance of the organisation suffers as a result of this type of behaviour. A person's potential to learn, develop, and advance is stunted when he or she is unwilling to share what they know with others (Arain et al., 2020, 2021).

A sense of ownership over both material and immaterial assets in an organisation has been documented psychologically over time. The results of this feeling of ownership can be good or bad. The business thrives when an entrepreneur imparts both his knowledge and his vision for the company's future. The negative person, on the other hand, keeps this information secret so that they can utilise it to maintain and expand their position of authority. Such actions in the twenty-first century have been linked to larger organisational silos, which in turn have stifled creativity (Dyne & Jon, 2004). Due to a lack of innovation to satisfy market and consumer expectations, several large organisations fell short in providing superior service (Farooq and Raju, 2019a, 2019b). As a result, it is crucial to investigate the phenomenon of information concealment in the workplace.

Lack of Integrity in Leadership and Hiding of Information

Each worker in a company must overcome two obstacles. Both are morally upright, but the latter is the manager with the highest moral standards. An honest and trustworthy individual is more likely to rise through the ranks to management positions (Men et al., 2020). As Pradhan and Amir (2016) point out, social learning theory can shed light on the topic of ethical leadership. Since a person's ethical character is revealed through his actions, the primary hypothesis of this research is to establish a connection between ethical leadership and the practise of keeping certain facts secret from subordinates.

H1: *Knowledge-hiding behaviour is significantly linked to unethical leadership.*

Ethical leadership theory further lends credence to this tenet. Leaders' decisions to reprimand or reward

employees shape how those workers feel about sharing or hoarding information. According to this research, unethical leadership is a key factor in the emergence of such positions. In any company, workers will always look to their superiors as a guide. Managers are role-played and modelled after successful leaders. Multiple studies have also confirmed the strong connection between ethical leadership and a willingness to share information and expertise (Fu and Deshpande, 2014; Lim and Lau, 2017; Belschak, Den Hartog, and De Hoogh, 2018; Abdullah et al., 2019; Zhao and Xia, 2019; He, Morrison, and Zhang 2019; Ketrapakorn and Kantabutra 2019; Men et al., 2020; Tuan et al.

Delegation of Authority and the Suppression of Information

When a company gives workers a say in how they do their jobs, they are said to empower those workers. Task selection and prioritisation of key performance metrics are two examples (Lee, 2008; Iftikhar and Khan, 2019). The following table lists the top 15 studies that make reference to employee empowerment, unethical leadership, and information concealment behaviour, either directly or indirectly. When workers believe that what they know belongs to them, they are more likely to keep it to themselves. Table 1 depicts the studies on knowledge hiding. This follows from the idea that the second hypothesis of the investigation is that:

H2: *Employee Empowerment has a significant relationship the knowledge hiding behavior.*

Table 1 Important studies on knowledge Hiding

Paper reference	Area of survey- conclusions and observations
(Demirkasimoglu, 2015)	Because of personality behaviors knowledge hiding. Attitude can be enhanced due to knowledge behaviour.
(Hernaus et al, 2019)	Only collaboration happens due to academic activities, competition is yet to be a portion.
(Garg et al, 2021)	Three components often reach to hiding knowledge. The initially correlates the secondary knowledge territoriality and the secondary performance inspiration.
(Kang, 2016)	Sharing knowledge is part for innovation. Hiding knowledge deploys innovations.

In Table 1, we established the gap and described the limitations of previous studies. Knowledge masking relationships involving positive variables have been the primary focus of development. The researcher has chosen the unethical behaviour of employees since knowledge concealment is a negative attitude.

Data Collection and Analysis

Sample and Procedures

Public universities in Guangxi Province, China, provided the data for this investigation. Institutions and individuals in the field of knowledge management were the primary subjects of study.

Measures

Collecting data on constructs, in addition to demographics, is crucial to any research endeavour. The researcher has employed a Likert scale because that is the standard method of data collection in the social sciences. Respondents are given a 5-point Likert scale on which they are asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with each statement or question. A. B. Ahmad, T. Straatmann, et al. (2020) served as a model for the current study; the questionnaire was subsequently translated into Chinese. Locke (2003), Dyne and Jon (2004), and Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) provided the items for the independent variables. Knowledge hiding elements have been taken from (Hernaus et al., 2019) to use as the dependent variable. (Brown et al., 2005) is the source for the examples of unethical leadership. Other

factors, including but not limited to education, experience, and gender, have been treated as control variables. The following statements were chosen as examples of unethical leadership at my university: leaders don't keep promises, leaders don't sincerely apologise, leaders don't act honestly, leadership doesn't solve problems, leadership has contradictory actions, and leaders don't take responsibility for and clean up after mistakes. Employee Empowerment was determined by asking respondents whether or not they felt their opinions were considered when decisions were made, whether or not they were allowed to set their own goals, whether or not their immediate supervisor took their suggestions into consideration, and whether or not their leadership prioritised their professional growth. Knowledge Hide items also include things like "at my university, I tell my friends I'll help, but I don't really mean it," Among my college peers, I have a reputation for agreeing to help but then providing information that runs counter to what is requested. When I'm done with my assignments at college, I lend a hand to my fellow students and act as though I know everything by saying things like, "I don't know what you're talking about," "I'm not very knowledgeable," "my best does not allow me to share the information," and "I will not answer your questions." Table 3 contains the same data.

Results

From April 2021 through July 2021, a total of 120 surveys were sent out to faculty members using a convenience sample strategy. The list of the entire population was unavailable, so convenience sampling was used instead. While it's true that just a minority of schools have posted their teaching staff online, in those cases where such details were missing, this approach was favoured. Respondents have also asked that their schools' names be withheld for fear of negative professional repercussions. The paper does not include statistics based on data collected from all universities. Only 101 people responded out of a total of 120. After additional screening and validation, 100 surveys were selected for this study's final analysis. In the table below, we provide a more in-depth look at the respondent's demographics. Table 2 illustrates the demographic location of study, the Gender, marital status, race, amount of education, and years of experience were all transformed as part of the research.

Table 2 Demographic details of the Study

Information of demographic study	Size of sample	Percentage
Gender (Male or Female)	(29/35)	(51%/48%)
Status of marriage	(Single/Married)	14/75
Community	(Chinese/Others)	(96/4)
Education Qualification	Bachelors/Masters	(2/20)

Both men and women are included in the data set. There are 51 women and 49 men who filled out the survey. Eighty-seven percent of the total sample is made up of married people. The vast majority of those who answered are Chinese. Respondents have ties to the academic community, which indicates that the theory has a high level of education. The presenters of the study have a wide range of professional backgrounds. Only 13% of responders have more than five years of experience, while 57% have one to five years under their belts. Validity and reliability of constructs have been assessed using structural equation modelling in Smart PLS, which has been utilised to obtain inferential data from the study.

The validity and trustworthiness of the data are displayed in the construct and loyalty table. All out loadings in the table are below the minimum value. Well-established research have indicated that exterior loadings should be more than 6.0 or 6.5. In investigations on relatively novel topics, however, out loadings of up to 4.0 are generally considered to be within acceptable ranges. The idea of keeping certain information secret is not novel. However, goods for the various variables have been sourced from various locations, hence the study has rejected any out loadings below 6.0. Every single item has an out loading greater than 6.0. The Cronbach Alpha is the second measure displayed in the table. It will be the

standard by which all other indicators of dependability are measured. All of the variables' dependability has met or exceeded the minimum standard. Standard Deviation Measures of validity and reliability of the construct, such as Cronbach's alpha, are also extracted. It has a cutoff of 5.0. It's fine to have an AVA over 5.0. The purpose of the check is to guarantee accurate and trustworthy information prior to doing any kind of hypothesis testing. The regression coefficient is third on the list of critical factors. It's a way of gauging how much attention has been paid to the dependent construct by the unrelated elements. To be deemed credible in the academic community, a study must measure more than half of a phenomenon, even though there is no standard parameter for the regression coefficients. The R2 value for this investigation is 54%. This suggests that unethical leadership and the empowerment of employees are to blame for the concealment of knowledge in academic institutions. According to the table's final statistics, which show how each independent variable affects the dependent value, unethical leadership has a greater effect on knowledge than does employee empowerment.

Different tests are used to determine construct validity and reliability. Maintaining uniformity in data is what reliability is all about. The uniformity of the design demonstrates that all the components are simultaneously identical and distinct. They are comparable since they are all attempting to quantify the same thing, but dissimilar because each variable is being measured in a slightly different way. Therefore, a reliability coefficient above 0.90 is excellent, as it indicates that the research is assessing the same item using different questions. A score of 0.70, however, is regarded satisfactory. On the other hand, validity is concerned with the verification of instruments. The HTMT score is the most recent and cutting-edge method of validating a test's reliability and accuracy. This score ensures that there is variety among objects both within and between the various structures. Current study validity statistics meet the minimum standard. For HTMT to work, the maximum allowed value for a correlation coefficient is 9.0. This study presents the HTMT because reliable data collection requires a reliable tool. This was found to be the case (Farooq et al., 2019). Table 3 depicts the Ratio of correlations.

Table 3 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

	Unprincipled Leadership	Employee Authorization	Hiding of resources
Unprincipled Leadership	0.70		
Authorization of employees	0.75	0.80	
Hiding Resources	0.80	0.82	0.85

There are two stages of analysis in structural equation modelling. The first is a period of measurement, while the second is an evaluation. The Sem's broader applicability led to its rise to prominence in the social sciences. These days, once clearly defined divisions often overlap. Knowledge concealment, unethical leadership behaviour, and employee empowerment are three constructs in the present literature. Each of these ideas belongs to a unique subfield of HRM. No one has ever before studied these three factors together in one study. This meant that objects for the various studies were chosen independently. Sem increases the validity and reliability and makes the study acceptable in cases where conceptual items are not from a single study. Since the survey itself, not just the questionnaire, was adapted from studies that took place outside of China, its validity and reliability were very important. Bootstrapping follows concept validity and reliability. The findings of the hypothesis are displayed using bootstrapping, and an optimal sample is provided.

Research Findings- Bootstrapping Results

The outside loadings of the study's individual items have all been verified to be above the minimum requirement. Cronbach's alpha, average reliability, and other reliability indicators all meet or exceed the

minimum standard. After doing discriminatory validation over all items in the study, the next step is to conduct bootstrapping. It presents results from the investigation and confirms the idea. Complete findings from the study are included in the table 4 below.

Table.4 Bootstrapping Summaries

	Standard Eccentricity	T analysis	P range	Reinforced
Unprincipled Leadership	0.061	5.330	0.00*	Yes
Employee authorization	0.032	7.422	0.00*	Yes

The results of the study show that there is a positive correlation between unethical leadership and a willingness to withhold information in academic institutions. Additionally, when employees are given more agency in these settings, they are more likely to conceal information.

A t-value of 5.440 indicates unethical leadership. The hypothesis is tested using the T value. It has a cutoff of 1.96. while the t value for employee empowerment is significantly higher than that for unethical leadership. The significance of the link is shown by the P-value. There are tiers of P-value acceptability. With a 10% margin of error and a 90% confidence interval, a p-value of 0.10 is considered to be satisfactory. However, academics do not recommend it. Similarly, if you use a 95% confidence interval, a P value of 0.05 will be seen as statistically significant. With a 99% confidence interval, the current study's correlation is extremely strong. The study's findings and analysis have been given. After explaining the findings of the smart PLs Analysis, the study's conclusion and discussion chapter offers advice.

Conclusion and Discussion

The research found that both unethical management and excessive employee autonomy contributed to the phenomenon of knowledge concealment. When leaders lack ethics, they offer excuses for misconduct. Leaders are obeyed because they are seen as infallible. In a company when the leadership is unethical, even the workers don't see it as unethical behaviour. It has been found, for example, that some academics do not consider knowledge concealment to be unethical in some contexts. The participants in the study agreed to aid their coworkers even if they did not intend to do so. It is unethical to share knowledge with those who don't require it but have access to it. Some folks think they're doing themselves a favour by keeping some details to themselves. They need to avoid losing their position and their lives. Knowledge concealment persists even when workers are given greater agency due to a pervasive undercurrent of anxiety. When they are trying to conceal information, some people will act ignorant. To cheat in school is unethical. This is the case even if very few workers actually know the facts in question and only pretend they don't. There are also unpleasant people who aren't afraid to come right out and say things like, "I don't want to give the knowledge.

Untrustworthy management encourages employees to conceal information. When workers don't have faith in the leadership, they will do whatever it takes to keep their jobs. Few staff members are unanimous in their belief that university administrators routinely fail to deliver on their promises. The academic system does not base its rewards and punishments on merit. Academic consensus is also declining that leadership is dishonest in carrying out their duties. All of these things contribute to a decline in employees' trust in management. Workers believe they are singled out as scapegoats whenever difficulties arise. The correlation between employee empowerment and the concealment of information was peculiar. But when the researcher looks at the item-level data, they see that workers will go to great lengths to protect themselves from an unethical management team, even if it's outside of their job description. Workers don't discuss their work publicly.

All successful businesses recognise the value of knowledge. The growth of startups into larger corporations is knowledge-based. Academics have a responsibility to the world to provide accurate

information and knowledge. A knowledge-hiding mentality, however, could diminish the role of academia. Companies have established universities and research centres in a number of different fields. University investment and money are lost as a result of the widespread knowledge among academics. Knowledge concealment is detrimental to both the university and the employee. If you don't tell someone about what you know, it might as well not exist. An employee who believes, on his or her own initiative, that he or she possesses information that would benefit his or her coworkers if shared would be mistaken. What a worker thinks is useful knowledge is actually useless. Employee development is also stunted by the concealment of information. Knowledge is increased when it is shared. If you keep information to yourself, you risk becoming irrelevant as time passes. The timely communication of information can open doors for businesses and their staff. Organisations and individuals alike suffer when they adopt a mentality of information concealment.

Recommendations

Organisational performance suffers, and so does employee performance, when knowledge is hidden. Unethical leadership is hiding behind the curtain of knowledge. When unethical management fosters a culture of fear, staff members attempt to protect themselves by keeping the truth from the public. The report provides suggestions for academics and university decision-makers to prevent information hiding across organisations.

The first stage is to establish clear policies and procedures for rewarding and disciplining workers. Auditing the incentive and punishment systems is important. Second, the researchers' duties should be simplified. Employee morale can be raised by reducing their workload and the number of KPIs they must meet. Better productivity in the workplace is the ultimate goal of the organisation. It is suggested that future researchers verify this model in a variety of settings.

Limitations

The present study has its own caveats, as do all others. To begin, this study has a small sample size and covers a small geographical region. You can only understand it in relation to China. In the future, scientists will be able to conduct investigations spanning multiple countries and cultures. The second caveat regards the study's methodology: the current investigation relied solely on quantitative data. Using both qualitative and quantitative data can help future researchers get more accurate conclusions.

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