



Research Paper

The Dark Side of Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Hiding

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Abstract: Knowledge sharing can be an advantage to organizational success as it propels innovation, collaboration, and growth. However, knowledge hiding-a phenomenon when individuals hide or distort information intentionally-leads a very critical challenge for organizations. The paper discusses the dual dynamics of knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding within organizations. It examines the reasons for each practice, their influence on organizational culture and effectiveness, and how organizations can intervene to foster an even more open and knowledge-sharing environment. Intervention to counter and curtail this dark side of knowledge hiding may contribute to bettering the competitive advantage of organizations while stimulating a more sustainable and collaborative workplace culture.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing, knowledge hiding, organizational behavior, knowledge management, organizational culture

Received 14 Oct., 2024; Revised 24 Oct., 2024; Accepted 27 Oct., 2024 © The author(s) 2024.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

The modern business environment primarily relies on knowledge assets in an organization. Thus, the sharing of knowledge among employees is regarded as a key driver of innovation, efficiency, and even competitive advantage. However, the good news of knowledge sharing is accompanied by an equally prevalent problem that confronts organizations: knowledge hiding. Rarely noticed, this practice can hinder progress, create inefficiencies, and damage trust within teams.

Therefore, an attempt at exploring knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding-the dual nature of knowledge management within organizations and the impact it has on organizational outcomes-will be set out to identify how these behaviors affect the balancing of organizational outcomes in this paper.

II. Literature Review

Knowledge sharing is essential for organizational innovation and collaboration, as noted by Ipe (2003) and Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995). However, knowledge hiding, as outlined by Connelly et al. (2012), poses a challenge, manifesting in evasive, rationalized, or deliberate behaviors. Serenko and Bontis (2016) emphasize the negative impacts of knowledge hiding on performance, driven by distrust and competition. Leadership and organizational culture significantly influence these behaviors (Wang & Noe, 2010; Lee & Lee, 2015). Promoting transparency, trust, and effective knowledge management can mitigate these risks (Riege, 2005).

III. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore the dual dynamics of knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding within organizations. Data is collected through a review of existing literature, case studies, and interviews with employees across various sectors. Secondary data, including peer-reviewed journal articles, reports, and case studies, will be analyzed to understand the organizational behaviors tied to knowledge management. The primary data from interviews will provide insights into individual motivations for knowledge sharing and hiding, as well as the impact of organizational culture, leadership, and reward systems. Content analysis will be applied to categorize responses into themes related to knowledge sharing, hiding, and organizational interventions. The findings will be synthesized to understand how these dynamics influence

innovation, trust, and overall organizational performance. Limitations include potential biases in self-reported behaviors and a focus on specific industries that may not represent all organizational environments.

IV. Theoretical Framework: Knowledge Sharing vs. Knowledge Hiding

4.1 Knowledge Share

It is an exchange of ideas, skills, and expertise among employees voluntarily and has become very essential as it increases collaboration and innovation, thereby boosting the overall intellectual capital of an organization. It can take many forms—from formal mechanisms like databases or meetings, collaborative software, to informal ones like mentoring or casual conversations.

4.2 Knowledge Hiding

By contrast, knowledge hiding means intentionally withholding information by refusal, rationalized withholding, or even evasion. Much to the contrary of what most of us assume, selfishness is not the cause for knowledge hiding, but other bases include fear of losing power, insecurity of employment, and feelings of injustice about reward distribution. There are three major forms of knowledge hiding:

Evasive hiding – Providing vague or incomplete information.

Playing dumb – Pretending not to know the information.

Rationalized hiding – Justifying the withholding of information based on external factors.

V. Motivation for Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Hiding

5.1 Individual factors

Individual motivations are the main drivers of share or hide knowledge behavior from employees. Knowledge sharing is positively related with trust, commitment toward the organization, and job satisfaction. On the other hand, competition with colleagues, the fear of being exploited, and insecurity provoke the knowledge hiding behavior.

5.2 Organisational Culture

An organization's culture largely influences its knowledge management behavior. An open, trust-oriented, and goal-oriented culture will encourage knowledge sharing, but by being competitive or bureaucratic, cultures indirectly create an environment in which people tend to hide knowledge because they would need to retain more knowledge and personal leverage.

5.3 Leadership and Management Practices

Leadership is an important aspect of knowledge behaviors. While transparent communication from leaders, acknowledgment of efforts regarding sharing knowledge, and a safe psychological environment discourage employees from knowledge hiding, top-down leadership that inflicts a competitive atmosphere or does not acknowledge relevant efforts toward teamwork may implicitly encourage knowledge hiding.

VI. The Impact of Knowledge Hiding on Organizations

6.1 Reduced Interactions and Innovation

This implicit knowledge threatens to undermine the possibility of collaboration and fosters less innovation. It also denies teams from solving problems effectively by means of refusing some key information, causing redundancies, and missed opportunities. It further constrains the organization from learning and adapting, which is one of the most critical factors in today's fast-changing business environment.

6.2 Erosion of Trust and Workplace Relations

If knowledge is being hidden, trust levels will likely break down, first among the team members. Trust happens to be an essential component of a high-performing team, and if it involves hiding knowledge, the collaboration weakens and overall morale suffers. This eventually morphs into a toxic workplace culture and higher employee dissatisfaction and turnover rates.

6.3 Negative Organizational Performance Impacts

Hence, research findings have indicated that organizations with high knowledge hiding tend to fail in terms of output delivery. Inefficiency, mistakes, and delay in decision-making processes are some of the results of improper knowledge flow, further killing the productivity and profitability of the organization.

VII. Addressing Knowledge Hiding: Organizational Interventions

7.1 Cultivating Knowledge Sharing Culture

Organizations must, therefore, be characterized by a culture of knowledge sharing and ideally reward it. This can be achieved through the following

Reward Systems: Incentivizing the sharing of knowledge through recognition programs, promotions, or even financial rewards.

Transparency and Communication: Leaders must encourage open communication and demonstrate knowledge sharing behaviors themselves.

Psychological Safety: The creation of an environment where employees can safely share ideas without fear of judgment or even reprisal.

7.2 Development of Knowledge Management Systems

Buying knowledge management systems would help organizations acquire knowledge in a better way with proper dissemination. The KMS ensures easy sharing of knowledge among all departments and can avoid hoarding. Also, it delivers all the required resources of everyone involved to their access easily.

7.3 Leadership Training and Development

Knowledge behavior by the leaders determines their personality to knowledge. The training session can minimize knowledge hiding by holding cooperation, communication, and consideration sessions. The leaders are also expected to identify knowledge hiding as well as act according to the situation at hand.

VIII. Conclusion

Knowledge hiding threatens to tarnish collaboration and innovation and general performance while being an essential aspect in organizational success. Behaviourists believe that in fact, there are causes behind behavior, and therefore, knowing what drives such behavior and the effects of those behaviours on organizations could minimize knowledge hiding. A cultural atmosphere of transparency-forged trust and investment in effective knowledge management systems fight against this dark side of knowledge hiding and unlock potential within an organization.

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