How Does Narcissism Promote Knowledge Hiding? The Contingent Role of Anger and Caring Climate in Higher Education Institutes

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Abstract

This research aims at examining the relationship of narcissism and knowledge hiding behavior of employees accompanied by the intervening role of anger. The study also elucidated the moderating impact of caring climate on the association between anger and knowledge hiding behavior. Data were gathered from 244 employees working in higher education sector of Pakistan using convenient sampling technique. The results show that narcissism is positively associated to employees' knowledge hiding behavior and anger mediates this relationship. Moreover, the boundary level effect of caring climate is also established. The findings of this research will broaden the scope through which the influence of narcissism on employee knowledge hiding behaviors can be studied.

Keywords: Narcissism, knowledge hiding, anger, caring climate

Introduction

Higher education institutes (HEI's) of Pakistan are an epitome of immense competition and enhanced pressure to ensure continuous learning in education sector (Hoodbhoy, 2009). According to Fullwood et al. (2013), research conducted by universities leads to knowledge-building that is later distributed through knowledge-based activities. HEI's play a significant role in driving education and learning centered on management of business and communication (Omar, 2018). Sohail and Daud (2009) specified that HEI's are rich in knowledge and these institutions enable distribution and growth of knowledge. Knowledge sharing leads to performance enhancement and progression of HEIs. However, limited studies have been conducted on the subject regarding reluctance depicted by employees to share knowledge or even hide knowledge that is inquired by others in higher education sector (Ghani et al., 2020). Although, knowledge hiding deserves research in education sector, however, the reason it's not given due importance may be credited to the modest supposition that growth of knowledge sharing will inhibit knowledge hiding (Ghani et al., 2020). As Peng (2013) explained that knowledge hiding and knowledge sharing are not mutually exclusive, they may occur concurrently. Hence, it is indispensable to comprehend the process of knowledge withholding among individuals working at HEIs of Pakistan

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(Demirkasimoglu, 2016). Moreover, it is the recent concern of knowledge management research to examine the antecedents, underlying factors and boundary conditions of knowledge hiding behaviors of employees working in academia (Hernaus et al., 2019). Since knowledge hiding behavior is considered as an undesirable counterproductive behavior (Serenko & Bontis, 2016) so it is quite possible that it is also invoked by individual personality dispositions such as narcissism. Concerning triggers of knowledge concealment, scarce studies have highlighted personality traits as determinants of knowledge hiding at workplace (see Pan et al., 2018; Khalid et al., 2019). Research literature envisages that the role of employees' personality and emotions in explaining knowledge withholding at workplace has been largely ignored by current knowledge management literature (Hart et al., 2017).

Current study fills in these gaps and focus upon the underlying mechanism and boundary condition that might explain how narcissism influences knowledge hiding behavior. This study posits that employees' emotions i.e. anger and organizational factors i.e. caring climate might influence the process through which narcissism leads to knowledge hiding behaviors. This study adds to the past research literature in three ways: First, it highlights the factors contributing to knowledge hiding in HEIs of Pakistan. Second, it envisages emotion i.e. anger as a mediating mechanism through which narcissism translates into knowledge hiding and last, it examines the role of caring climate on the relationship between anger and knowledge hiding behavior.

Literature Review

Narcissism and Knowledge hiding behavior

Knowledge is deemed a valuable personal attribute and narcissists may withhold knowledge from colleagues only to fulfill their own self-seeking benefits and gratify their pride and secure their organizational role (Brunell et al., 2011). When such workers struggle to meet their high standards, they interpret a lack of justice and experience negative emotions that could force them into knowledge hiding activities as retribution (Pan et al., 2018). Social exchange theory is a prevalent reference framework which explains the attitude of people involved in systems of exchange in a social structure (Blau, 1964). Perceived unjust treatment at work is responded by negative behavioral reactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Narcissists have high degree of self-worth and they deem themselves to be extremely competent thus expecting maximum rewards and recognition. When narcissists fail to fulfill their unrealistic

expectations regarding position, recognition and value at workplace, they tend to indulge in deviant behaviors as revenge in order to correct the perceived imbalance. Furthermore, the non-fulfillment of their overoptimistic desires on behalf of organization and its members threaten their self-established ego that might involve them in negative behaviors towards others as retaliation (Baumeister et al., 1996). Since, knowledge is considered as a crucial employee resource (Kim et al., 2015), so it's probable that narcissists start concealing their knowledge and experiences from others.

H1: Narcissism has a positive relationship with knowledge hiding behavior.

Mediating Role of Anger

The role of negative emotions in exhibiting counterproductive work behavior (CWB) became area of interest for researchers (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Spector & Fox, 2005). Anger is by far the most prevailing emotion in anticipating negative behaviors in the job (Rosenwein, 2020; Geddes et al., 2020; Chen & Spector, 1992; Fitness, 2000). Models that discuss anger usually associate such emotional actions with aggressiveness and deviant workplace behaviors, insisting solely on its adverse consequences (Fox & Spector, 1999; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Knowledge hiding as a kind of undesirable knowledge behavior reflects a specific aspect of counterproductive work behavior, which is a much more common, greater-level conception (Serenko & Bontis, 2016). Individuals who appear to feel negative emotions are much more likely to show counterproductive work behaviors (Spector Fox, & Domagalski, 2006). Skarlicki and Folger (1997) observed how the emotions expressed in reaction to injustice are anger and resentment. Rightly so when self-seeking individual's expectations for supremacy and rewards are not fulfilled, they resort to negative emotions exhibiting anger and retaliation. Pertaining to these explanations negative emotions are supposed to associate positively with counterproductive work behaviors (Fox and Spector, 1999).

H2: Anger mediates the relationship between narcissism and knowledge hiding behavior.

Caring Climate as Moderator

Employees operate in organizations, within a system of rules, laws, processes and chain of command (Wood & Bandura, 1989). The

ethical content of an organizational environment will affect the morale of employee and they can learn acceptable behavior through insights pertaining to climate in organization (Liu et al., 2019; McCorvey, 2020). Any person's moral choice is influenced by organizational climate which is an organizational attribute (Rusaw, 2001). Differentiation concerning the good and bad can be resolved by employee through organization's climate.

Fu and Deshpande (2014) proposed that amid the moral climates, the caring climate had the utmost ethical connection. The emphasis of this research is on caring climate. It is necessary to resolve how organizations should cope with narcissism and ultimately employees' counterproductive and unethical behaviors like knowledge withholding (Liu et al. 2019). Henceforth, the moderating influence of caring climate is the motivation of this study. We suggest that climate of care will counteract the positive impact of anger on knowledge hiding. In a caring climate; the primary concern of employees is the influence of effective decisions on others rather than their self-centeredness (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994). Employees in a supportive and caring climate are often more likely to make choices that favor the bulk of people associated with those choices (Cullen et al., 2003).

H3: Caring climate moderates the relationship between anger and knowledge hiding behavior such that it weakens this relationship.

Model

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework
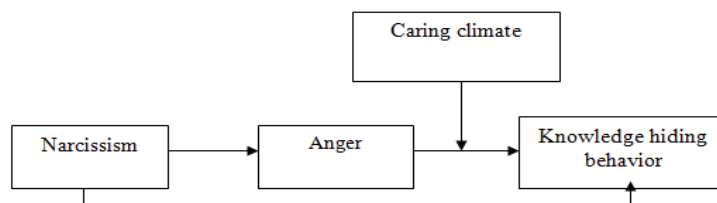
Materials and Methods

This study opts for a quantitative research design and incorporates the collection of data through questionnaires followed by empirical analysis. The population of the current study is higher education sector of Pakistan. Non-probability convenience sampling was employed to gather information from a representative sample of faculty and staff working in higher education sector in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. In Pakistan, a researcher confronts several difficulties throughout data collection as respondents demonstrate little interest for the research making the data collection process uncertain (Taskeen et al., 2014). For this reason, convenience sampling technique is perhaps the most appropriate and favored technique for primary data collection in Pakistan (Attiq et al., 2017). This research was conducted using the sample of 244 respondents. Most of the respondents were faculty. A total of 350 questionnaires were floated among the participants and 244 complete questionnaires were received establishing the response rate of 70%.53.3 % (130) of participants were male and 46.7% (114) were female out of 244 participants. The age bracket of 26-35 comprised of majority of participants having a percentage of 43% (105) followed by 27% (66) having ages between 36-45. Younger participants having ages between 20-25 had a percentage of 23.8% (58) whereas participants were least for age group of more than 45 at only 6.1% (15). Highest number of the participants had qualification of MS having a percentage of 46.3%. 34.8% had completed their masters whereas 14.3% were PhDs. The least percentage was of undergraduate's participants comprising only 4.5%.Likewise, 141 participants had tenure of 1-5 years and 82 had completed tenure of 6-10 years. There were 11 participants having tenure of more than 10 years and only 10 participants with tenure of less than 1 year.

Instruments

Narcissism was measured by using four items of the scale developed by Jonason et al. (2009). Eight items extracted from Connelly et al. (2012) measure was used to assess knowledge hiding behavior of employees. The ten-item Spielberger Trait Anger Scale (TAS) from the State-Anger Expression Inventory (Spielberger, 1998) was used to anger. Seven item caring climate scale devised by Victor and Cullen (1988) was utilized to measure employees' perceptions regarding workplace climate.

Reliability and Validity

In order to assess reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha of all scales was calculated and was established above the cut off value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Furthermore, the content validity of the instrument included in this research was assessed by the detailed analysis of the instrument by three subject matter experts who examined all the scales for readability, thoroughness and accuracy. The experts found the scales appropriate for measurement of the constructs thus ensuring the constructs' content validity.

Moreover, face validity assesses the questionnaire's presentation with respect to viability, readability, consistency of design and layout, and the clarity of words utilized. Face validity is mostly judged by non-experts and is more subjective type of validity (Holden, 2010). For this research respondents were asked in the pilot study to determine the face validity of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis encompassed usage of certain statistical methods to resolve the proposed research questions and find the association between narcissism and knowledge hiding along with mediation and moderation processes. The mediation process was carried out using the Hayes Process 4 Macros bootstrapping.

Table I

Reliability and Correlations

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Gender								
2	Age	0.11							
3	Education	0.09	0.17^{**}						
4	Tenure	0.06	0.37^{**}	0.10					
5	NARC	0.01	0.01	0.07	-0.03	(0.82)			
6	KH	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.49^{**}	(0.83)		
7	Anger	0.00	-0.03	0.11	-0.00	0.56^{**}	0.57^{**}	(0.88)	
8	Caring climate	0.05	-0.07	-0.05	-0.02	-0.54^{**}	-0.58^{**}	-0.65^{**}	(0.90)

Notes: n=244; **Correlation is considerable at the 0.01 level (2- tailed);

Cronbach alpha reliabilities are displayed in the diagonal

Testing of Hypotheses: Regression Results

Table II depicts the results of direct relationship between narcissism and knowledge hiding behavior. The value of R^2 indicates that 24 percent variance in knowledge hiding behavior is elucidated by narcissism. Moreover, the results depict that narcissism has a positive and significant effect on knowledge hiding behavior (β =0.49, t= 8.70, p<0.01).

Table II

Effect of Predictor on Dependent Variable

	Dependent variable: Knowledge Hiding			
Predictor	R^2	β	t-statistic	p-value
Narcissism	0.24	0.49	8.70	0.001

p<0.01

Mediation analysis is performed in accordance with the guidelines of Baron & Kenny (1986) using the Hayes Process 4 macros Bootstrapping (Hayes, 2013). This technique necessitates that mediator has a relationship between predictor and the dependent variable. Complete mediation prevails if upon controlling mediator, the relationship between independent and dependent variable (path c') no longer holds. However, partial mediation occurs if upon controlling mediator, the influence of independent on dependent variable (path c') is decreased.

Table III

Testing Mediation

Variable Paths	β	SE	t-statistic	p	R^2
NARC[1] – Anger (path a)	0.56	0.03	10.68	0.001	.12
Anger –KH[2] (path b)	0.57	0.06	10.90	0.001	.06
NARC[1] –KH[2] (path c)	0.49	0.05	8.70	0.001	.35
NARC[1] (path c') incorporating the effect of mediator	0.24	0.04	3.87	0.001	

p<0.01; [1]Narcissism, [2]Knowledge hiding behavior

The results show that there exist a significant association between independent (narcissism) and mediator variable (anger) (β=0.56, p<0.01). Likewise, mediator (anger) is also significantly associated with dependent variable (knowledge hiding behavior) (β=-0.57, p<0.01). Furthermore, independent variable (narcissism) is also significantly linked with dependent variable (knowledge hiding behavior) (β=0.49, p<0.01). Upon addition of the mediator, the effect of independent variable on dependent variable diminished from β=0.49; p<0.01 to β =0.24; p<0.01. This shows that anger partially mediates the association between narcissism and knowledge hiding behavior.

Moreover, the value of the bootstrap LLCI (Confidence Interval) is found to be 0.039> 0, and any value greater than 0 confirms mediation (Hayes, 2013). Also, the different coefficient values of direct impact of anger on knowledge hiding behavior is shown through the z score that is 6.09, and p= 0.000, which confirms mediation by anger between narcissism and knowledge hiding behavior.

Hypothesis 3 Results: Moderation

Table IV

Moderating Impact of Caring Climate

	Knowledge hiding behavior	
Predictors	β	ΔR^2
Step 1		
Anger	0.34**	
Caring climate	-0.36**	
Step 2		
(Anger× Caring Climate)	-0.56**	0.02**

 p<0.05

Caring climate was studied as a moderator on the association among anger and knowledge hiding behavior. Anger and caring climate were added in the first step while interaction term (Anger × Caring climate) was added in the second step. Significance of the moderation term (β=-0.56, p<0.01) established that caring climate moderates the

association between anger and employees' knowledge hiding. For understating the characteristic of moderating term, the dependent variable was plotted at one standard deviation above and below the mean (Aiken & West, 1991). Figure 2 envisages the slope. The results of this analysis provided additional support to the moderation effect in a way that influence was stronger at low level of caring climate ($\beta= 0.58$, p=<0.01) as compared to when it was high ($\beta= 0.35$, p=<0.01)
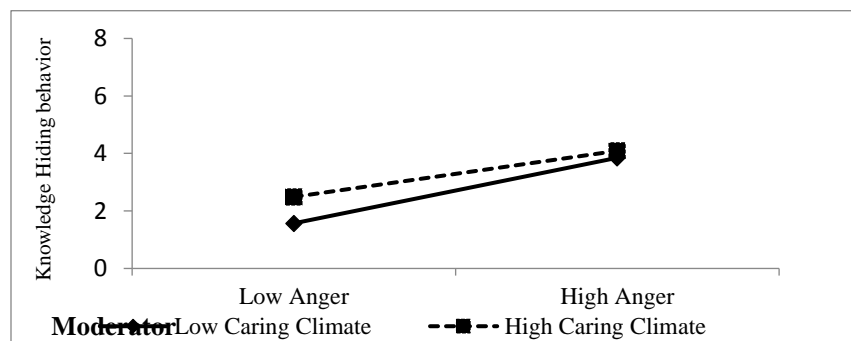

Figure 2: Plot of Interaction between Anger and Caring Climate on Knowledge Hiding Behavior

Discussion and Conclusion

This research highlighted the influence of narcissism on HEI's employees' knowledge hiding behavior accompanied with one mediating and moderating mechanism. The results showed that narcissism leads to knowledge hiding behavior (Hypothesis 1). These results added to existing literature focusing upon the association between negative personality dispositions and employee counterproductive behavioral reactions (Harrison et al., 2016; Pan et al., 2018; Khalid et al., 2019). The results envisage that narcissists see themselves as more capable than their counterparts and they think that organizational and its actors are unjust when they fail to accomplish their high expectations and indulge in knowledge hiding actions as retaliation. This research upholds the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964) that highlights that employee's perceived thinking of unfair treatment leads them to negative responses. So when narcissists feel that they are not treated with fairness, they tend to withhold their knowledge as a technique to balance the exchange process in organization (Blau, 1964; Baumeister et al., 1996; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In addition, the present study also found out that anger mediates the relationship between narcissism and knowledge hiding behavior (Hypothesis 2). The results show agreement with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) because when impractical anticipations of reward and recognition of narcissist individuals are not met, they feel enraged and indulge in knowledge hiding. The perceived inequality leads narcissists to knowledge hiding inclinations. This study provides support to past researches envisaging the role of anger as a mediator between employee personality and behavioral reactions (Asberg, 2013; Oh & Connolly, 2019; Chang et al., 2020).

Finally, the findings of present research also revealed that caring climate buffers the positive association between anger and knowledge hiding in manner that it curbs this association (Hypothesis 3). Past researches reinforce these results because it has been highlighting in literature that that caring climate alleviates negative emotions and ultimately limit the counterproductive behaviors in response to such emotions (Cullen et al., 2003; Liu et al., 2019). So, employees are least likely to indulge in knowledge hiding behaviors because they find them unethical in an environment of caring climate.

Implications

There are several theoretical implications to this research. Firstly, this research adds to knowledge management literature by discussing the intervening mechanism i.e. anger through which negative personality dispositions may transform into knowledge hiding behavior. The boundary level effect of caring climate adds to the past literature that reveals that caring climate has a propensity to mitigate employees' negative behaviors and enhance employees' positive behavioral patterns (Cullen et al., 2003; Fu & Deshpande, 2014; Liu et al., 2019). The research model presented in the current study complements the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964) by positing that how negative personality disposition i.e. narcissism might instigate the feelings of imbalance social exchange and negative emotions. Resultantly these imbalanced social exchange perceptions indulge employees' in knowledge withholding as a revengeful mechanism. Moreover, the role of caring climate in mitigating negative exchange perceptions also adds to the social exchange theory literature.

This study is of significance to management as it shall help managers in understanding that why individuals with particular personality traits are more likely to withhold knowledge. So, proper employee selection and provision of job duties for such employees should

be designed accordingly. It is important to assess backgrounds of job applicants through getting viewpoints from their previous coworkers and employers regarding their personality. It is difficult for managers to fully assess the narcissistic tendency of employees at recruitment stage so it is suggested to keep a close eye on employee while the probation period to gauge any personality or behavior related issue and suggest solutions for mitigating the narcissistic behavior by providing a conducive environment that may aid in the ultimate goal of reducing the knowledge hiding behavior.

Limitations and Future Directions

Firstly, this study is quantitative, upcoming researches must focus upon qualitative research along with quantitative analysis that is a triangulation approach encompassing interviews, observations etc. as well. Secondly, this research focused upon education sector of Pakistan, future research must replicate the same in diverse sectors such as hospitality, manufacturing, banking sector etc. Thirdly, this study is cross sectional, future researchers must do longitudinal studies to get detailed and in-depth findings. Fourth, this research used anger as a mediating mechanism; future studies must focus upon other mediators i.e. justice perceptions etc.

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