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Impact of knowledge hiding behavior on project performance

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Abstract

Knowledge hiding is a common problem in many organizations but its predictors and outcomes are not fully understood. The understanding of knowledge-hiding behavior is further less in the project context. Keeping in view the research gap, the focus of this study was to investigate the impact of three predictors of knowledge-hiding behaviors on project performance. Data from 84 respondents were collected from the telecom sector using a survey and data is analyzed quantitatively. The key findings of the study are that all three predictors (Evasive, Playing Dumb, and Rationalized) knowledge-hiding behaviors have different effects on project performance. Accordingly, evasive hiding has an insignificant impact on project performance; playing dumb has a negative impact on project performance; and rationalized hiding behavior has positive effects on project performance. The finding suggests that negative playing dumb behavior can be monitored while rationalized hiding can be promoted.

Keywords: Knowledge Hiding Behavior, Evasive Hiding Behavior, Playing Dumb, Rationalized Hiding, Project Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Project Performance has been a buzzing topic for researchers around the globe. Projects are vital for the stability and growth of business for which organizations execute projects for which project management is crucial. Amaral and Araujo's (2009) study showed that projects and project management are the primary capabilities of an organization to respond to external challenges and maintain a competitive edge. Project success can be viewed through different

lenses (Davis, 2014; Unterkalmsteiner, Gorschek, Islam, Cheng, Permadi, & Feldt, 2012). Project success and performance vary from person to person as multiple stakeholders have different perceptions of project success and there is no agreement on a universal definition. (Jugdev & Müller, 2005). Furthermore, project management and project performance are two different phenomena. Some researchers link it with the iron triangle. i.e. the project is performing well if it is on schedule, within the budget, and within scope; while some associated it with the fulfillment of quality. Thus, project performance is a holistic phenomenon and can gauge the objectives in totality (Cooke-Davies, 2002). The traditional definition of project performance become obsolete and the focus shifted from a narrow focus to a wider side where in addition to the iron triangle, stakeholders' requirements satisfaction is also important (Jugdev & Müller 2005). Human resources are also important in the end as project performance depends on human and their skills and effective knowledge-sharing ability which lead the project to success.

The knowledge-based theory explained that knowledge is an asset for an organization to perform better (Grant, 1996). Human intellect is not the property of firms and they cannot pressurize their employees to share that with other team members if they don't motivate the same. (Kelloway & Barling, 2000). Despite the efforts of organizations to enhance knowledge-sharing behaviors, the results are still low (Hislop, 2002). While Knowledge hiding (KH) and knowledge sharing are not opposite in meaning but rather two dissimilar occurrences (Kang 2016). Knowledge-hiding behavior has negative consequences and diminishes employee creativity (Bogilović, Černe, & Škerlavaj, 2017). Individual creativity and firm performance decrease with knowledge hiding (Gong, Zhou, & Chang, 2013). Knowledge hiding harms team performance and the positive effects of knowledge sharing cannot be capitalized on if the issue of knowledge hiding remains intact (Zhang & Min, 2019). Knowledge hiding destroys employee social behavior due to its non-cooperative nature and this leads to performance degradation. In the current study, knowledge hiding is investigated in the project performance context.

Problem Statement

The nature of projects is distinctive and time-bound with specified goals and the project activities required to be completed within the defined time frame (Project Management Institute, 2017). Project performance can lead to success which is the ultimate goal of any project and all the efforts are done to complete the project. Project team members may exhibit knowledge-hiding behavior that implies counterproductive results to individual and team performance resulting in low project performance (Zhang & Min, 2019). However, not all the hidings are bad as some researchers are of the view that excessive sharing may lead to leakage. Knowledge-hiding behavior kills innovation and creativity which leads to poor performance. Due to the unavailability of the required information, the requester is exerting his energy to get the required knowledge despite its availability. Furthermore, the project is a time-bound activity, and non-sharing of the required knowledge can affect performance. Therefore, the knowledge-hiding behavior is a challenge for project performance and needs further investigation.

Significance of the Study

This study is focused to the find out the effects of three dimensions of knowledge-hiding behaviors i.e. (Evasive hiding, Playing dumb, and Rationalized Hiding) on project performance. Knowledge-hiding behavior (KHB) is a common human phenomenon and can affect project performance however, most of the studies tilted toward knowledge sharing. Research on

knowledge-hiding behavior is less popular and less investigated in the project management literature. Keeping in view this gap, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and investigate this issue in a project performance context.

Research Questions

RQ1: What is the influence of knowledge evasive knowledge hiding behavior on project performance?

RQ2: what is the influence of playing dumb knowledge-hiding behavior on project performance?

RQ3: What is the influence of rationalized knowledge-hiding behavior on project performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge Hiding Behaviors

Knowledge-hiding behavior leads to employee silence (Bari. Ghaffar, & Ahmad, 2020). Organizations feel the pressure for effectiveness and efficiency in their work that pushes them for knowledge management (Prusak, 2001). Researcher tilts their attention toward knowledge management, and knowledge membership advance organization outcomes (Andreeva & Kianto, 2012; Kianto, Andreeva, and Pavlov, 2013). Connelly, Zweig, Webster, and Trougakos, (2012) study revealed that the conception of information non-revelation reports the deliberate weakness of knowledge holders to hide their knowledge. Whereas incomplete/half-cooked information sharing involves objective behaviors that will be caused by unpredictable things and communication channels. Data hiding emphasizes things during which hidden knowledge is requested by alternative persons. The data signboard principally focuses on whether or not people hoard their knowledge and doesn't clarify whether the hoarded knowledge is required by others (Serenko & Bontis, 2016). People may hide their knowledge to avoid awkward situations, reminiscent of withholding information regarding the mistakes and flaws of others. However, other counterproductive work behaviors could undermine colleagues' confidence and step up team conflicts, expressing disdain for others' concepts, and refuting their opinions in improper ways (Huo, Cai, Luo, Men, & Jia, 2016).

Knowledge sharing is considered fruitful knowledge behavior, while knowledge-hiding behaviors are harmful and decrease the advancement of the organization to achieve its ultimate goals of success. The deliberate concealment of known information, knowledge, and concealing the fact that the person possesses (Hislop, 2003). Even the known fact that the information is valuable and will benefit the company, keeping the information and knowledge secret from teammates. Deliberately keeping the knowledge secret and do not share with others even knowing the fact that this information will be helpful for information seekers and others (Haas & Park, 2010; Steinel, Utz & Koning, 2010)

Evasive Knowledge hiding behavior is a behavior where an individual team member acts as a supportive gentleman and shows that he wants to help others but in actuality is not provide any valuable information to others who request the required information. This is the deliberate concealment of information from the information seeker. This purposeful concealment implicates the intentional endeavor where an information holder deceives the information seeker with some distorted or partial information with the assurance that the complete information will be provided later while he is not supposed to provide it (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). Individuals who are nonsocial exhibit evasive hiding behaviors (Connelly, Ford, Turel, Gallupe, & Zweig, 2014).

Webster, Brown, Zweig, Connelly, Brodt, and Sitkin, (2008) studied three aspects of knowledge hiding playing dumb, evasive, and rationalizing knowledge hiding. Playing dumb when someone requests information the information holder conceals the information and pretends that he does not know. Evasive when the information holders evade and don't provide the information on time and think that even if he does not provide the information will be reached to the requester. In rationalized hiding the information can be is not provided having a justification that there is the threat of leakage. Rationalized hiding is mostly found in managers who hide valuable information from employees, which brings reputation damage, less creativity, and decreases productivity for employees (Butt, 2020).

Impact of Knowledge-Hiding Behaviors on Project Performance

Knowledge-hiding behavior exhibition is predominantly true in the project environment, where the distribution of knowledge among teams is the account of the indispensable difference between positive and negative project results. Due to the prominence of common accountability, "interdependence", and reliance among project team members are common (Zhang & Cheng, 2015). But team members Individuals occasionally conceal or suppress information from each other, even within a team (Babič, Černe, Connelly, Dysvik, & Škerlavaj, 2019). Further some previous is evidence that this can create potential losses for the organization (Connelly & Zweig, 2015; Zhao, Xia, He, Sheard, & Wang, 2016). Thus, the study of various knowledge-hiding behavior among team members is vital to investigate and elaborate on the various antecedents of knowledge hiding of team members (Connelly, Černe, Dysvik, & Škerlavaj, 2019; Peng, 2013).

Knowledge hiding has a negative impact on creativity and organizational performance (Černe Nerstad, Dysvik, & Škerlavaj, 2014). In previous studies, scholars identified various harmful knowledge behaviors, such as knowledge hiding, "knowledge hoarding, and incomplete knowledge provision" (Ford & Staples, 2010). Babcock (2004) studied 500 companies with fortune and the study reveal that most of the firms are losing their revenue, a loss of $31.5 bn is associated with general knowledge hiding. Still, project team members may not recognize this and involve in knowledge hiding (Connelly et al., 2014). Knowledge-hiding behavior has three dimensions i.e. "evasive, playing dumb, and rationalized" (Connelly et al., 2012). Knowledge hiding may impact project performance negatively in terms of reduced project team performance (Zhang & Min, 2019).

Theoretical Model

Organizational learning theory is utilized to explore the mechanism affecting the link between knowledge hiding and project performance. Building on the angle of organizational learning theory, organizational learning is conceptualized because of the continuous processes of improving organizational knowledge and skills (Aminbeidokhti, Jamshidi, & Hoseini, 2016). "Knowledge transfer behavior offers opportunities for organizational members to make and retain new knowledge, and apply that new knowledge for innovation, employee creativity may be enhanced" (Lai, Lui, & Tang, 2016). When the project team members are aware of the correct information regarding the project it leads to a sense of responsibility and the new knowledge and skills they learn are fruitful Executing the experience is productive for project completion and hence better performance can be achieved. Based on the previous literature and supporting theory, we propose the following theoretical framework.

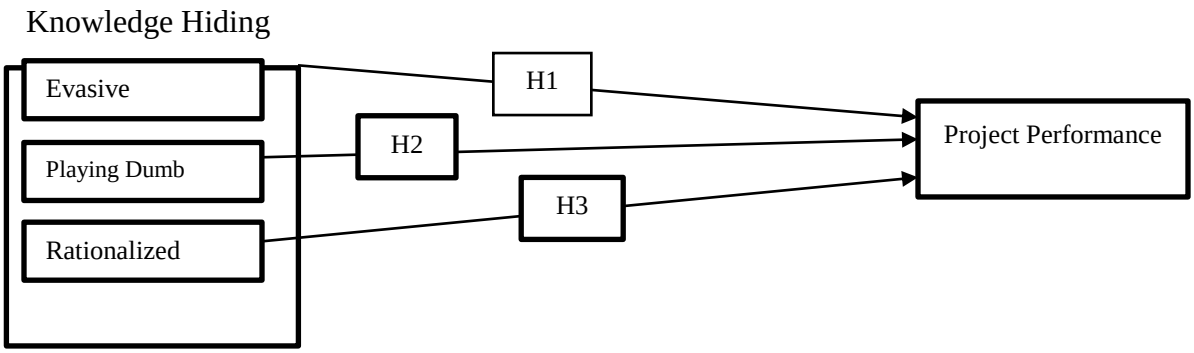

Figure 1: Theoretical Model of the Study

Hypotheses

Based on the above arguments, and literature which enable us to develop the following hypothesis.

H_1: Evasive Knowledge hiding behavior has a significant negative impact on project performance.

H_2: Playing dumb behavior has a significant negative impact on project performance.

H_3: Rationalized hiding behavior has a significant impact positive impact on project performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design is a quantitative cross-sectional correlational study in nature. The design is chosen since it matches the nature of the study.

Population & Sampling

The population for our research is telecom sector employees in Pakistan who recently performed projects. We used random sampling techniques for the generation of data. We get a response from 84 individuals. This number has been selected because it is an adequate sample size that can effectively represent our population for which we followed authors Barclay, Higgins, and Thompson (1995), which state that if the sample size is as large as n > 5*10, the results can be inferred.

Data Collection

For the study, data is collected from telecom sector employees. Google form was created with a 5 Likert scale Questionnaire, which contained closed-ended questions for predictor and target variables, the link was shared with individuals through emails and WhatsApp. The responses were collected to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives. In this study data for all four variables including evasive hiding behavior, playing dumb, rationalized hiding behavior, and Project Performance was collected from individuals of telecom companies who are working on projects in their respective organizations. The scale for project performance is adopted from Gu, Hoffman, Cao, and Schniederjans (2014) consisting of 8 items. The measure for knowledge hiding is adapted from Connelly et al., (2012) and consists of 12 items. The measure is based on 4 items for each dimension of knowledge hiding including evasive hiding, playing dumb, and rationalized hiding behavior.

Data Analysis

After collection, the data is checked for missing values, and consistency and further analyzed through statistical regression using SPSS 22.

RESULTS

Table 1

Gender Distribution

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	68	81
Female	16	19

Table 1 states the frequency of gender for who participated and respond to the survey, a total of 84 respondents were recorded of which 16 (19%) are female and 68(81%) are male participants. The result shows that males are dominated in the project management of the telecom sector of Pakistan.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	Cronbach Alpha	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Evasive	.925	1.00	5.00	2.4226	1.258
Playing dumb	.937	1.00	5.00	2.3601	1.234
Rationalized Knowledge hiding	.831	1.00	5.00	2.6667	1.081
Project Performance	.925	1.13	5.00	3.9449	.988

The result in table 2 shows that the respondents show a low level of knowledge-hiding behavior including evasive behavior (M=2.42, SD=1.25); Playing dumb (M=2.36, SD=1.23); and rationalized knowledge-hiding (M=2.66, SD=1.08). Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha for all variables is above 0.60 so it indicates satisfactory reliability.

Regression Analysis

Regression Analysis describes the rate of change that an independent variable brings to a dependent variable..

Table 3

Regression Analysis

Model	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Beta		
(Constant)		15.523	.000
Evasive behavior	-.141	-.908	.366
Playing dumb	-.467	-3.150	.002
Rationalized knowledge hiding	.387	3.129	.002

R= .477
Rsquare=.228
Fstat= 3.80 (.000)
a. Dependent Variable: PP

Mean values of items of each variable taken for regression and multi-regression are performed and the results in the below table showed the value of R which indicates the strength of the relation (R = .477) describes that our model of knowledge-hiding behaviors is a good predictor of project performance the change in project performance can be predicted from the independent variables i.e. evasive, playing dumb and rationalized hiding.

Rsquare indicates that 22.8 % of the variance in project performance can be explained by predictor variables. The result also shows a good model fit based on F statistics (F=3.80, p < .000)

The model rejected the first hypothesis i.e. evasive behavior has no significant impact on project performance (β=-.141, t =-.908, p=.336). while verifying Playing dumb has a significant negative impact on project performance H2 (β=-.467, t=-3.150, p=.002) and rationalized hiding has a significant positive impact on project performance H3 (β=.387, t= 3.129, p=.002).

Table 4

Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Statement	Status
H1	Evasive Knowledge hiding behavior has a significant negative impact on project performance.	**Rejected**
H2	Playing dumb behavior has a significant negative impact on project performance.	**Accepted**
H3	Rationalized hiding behavior has a significant impact on project performance.	**Accepted**

Discussion & Conclusion

The focus of the study was to test the effect of three knowledge-hiding behaviors on project performance. Evasive knowledge-hiding behavior is negatively associated with project performance". The results of our analysis indicate that evasive hiding has no significant impact on project performance. To find out the answer to the second question posed in the current study our hypothesis is that "Playing dumb knowledge-hiding behavior is negatively associated with project performance". The results show that playing dumb behavior has a significant negative impact on project performance. To find out the answer to the third question in the current study it was the hypothesis that "Rationalized knowledge hiding behavior is positively associated with project performance". The results from the analysis predict that rationalized hiding behavior has a significant positive impact on project performance. Based on the findings, we can conclude that knowledge hiding is determinantal to the performance of the project due to its very nature and thus need to be avoided up to a possible extent.

Theoretical Implications

This study enhances the available literature on project performance. Previous studies in the literature were mainly focusing on knowledge sharing and project performance and also some recent studies on knowledge hiding were conducted that established an association of knowledge-hiding behavior to team performance as the impact of knowledge hiding on organization performance (Černe et al., 2014). Impact of knowledge hiding behavior on project team performance (Zhang & Min, 2019). Also, in the previous literature on project management researchers were focused to find the negative impacts of knowledge distribution (Ding et al., 2014; Park & Lee, 2014). These studies were missing the direct impact of knowledge-hiding behaviors on project performance. In current studies, three predictors of knowledge-hiding

behaviors EH, PD, and RH are considered independent variables to predict project performance that is the limitation proposed in the study of (Connelly et al., 2012) who suggested that the effect of various knowledge-hiding behaviors i.e (EH, PD, & RH) can check with organizational performance aligned with our study.

Our study identified that evasive and playing dumb behavior has consequences and may lead to project failure. We infer that the risk of evasive as well as playing dumb behavior is required to be mitigated in the project organization. This study contributes to the knowledge-hiding literature by addressing the prediction of various types of knowledge-hiding behaviors and their impact on project performance. Serenko and Bontis (2016).

We built on organizational learning theory and identify the direct relationship of various knowledge-hiding predictors (EH, PD, RH). It was found that EH and PD have negative consequences on project performance. Further, this study identified that various behaviors of knowledge hiding in individuals influence project performance. While rationalized hiding behavior exhibits positive relations and that requires more research in a different environment or culture. Our study is aligned with various previous studies that show that being Evasive and playing dumb are deceiving behaviors and negatively affect performance

Practical Implications

Project managers keep an eye on their team members for evasive as well as playing dumb knowledge hiding behaviors this can lead to negative consequences for project performance. Based on these results we suggest that managers can examine team members and try to avoid these behaviors. The employee will not feel like aliens and will not get nor provide incorrect information and will reduce knowledge-hiding behaviors. Further, project management organizations should create supportive, non-competitive working environments where employees feel better to support their colleagues and provide the necessary information on time and don't Evade or play dumb. Further rationalized hiding shows some positive impact on project performance hence teams should avoid sharing such information which is vital, and sharing can lead to leakage.

Limitations of the Research

Every study has some limitations and the same is the case with the current study and that can be acknowledged, in our study following are the limitations. First data was collected from limited telecom companies working in Pakistan and based on this, results cannot be generalized. The second limitation of our research is that our study cross-sectional data, where data through a survey was collected. This is not possible to determine conclusive causal relationships, and the risk of common method variance cannot be overruled, it is suggested that future studies undertake the collecting of longitudinal data and do the necessary analysis to avoid common method variance. Future studies on various types of information and knowledge-hiding behaviors could be informed by theories other than OLT, like the theory of planned behavior, equity theory, and neutralization theory.

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