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ABSTRACT

Knowledge can be a strategic resource in higher education, but employees can be conscious on withholding of requested knowledge from colleagues. This behavior of knowledge hiding can affect cooperation, learning in the organization, innovation and effectiveness of the institution. Workplace envy is a potentially important emotional antecedent as colleagues at the university tend to compare themselves with one another with regard to research publications, promotions, recognition, leadership roles, workload, and professional status and access to organizational resources. As noted in the current literature, there is a difference between benign envy, which is said to stimulate personal development, and malicious envy, which is likely to elicit defensive or antagonistic responses. The current study seeks to explore how workplace envy is related to employee knowledge hiding in private universities of Sindh, Pakistan. It includes psychological safety as the mediator and perceived organizational support as the moderator. The study will also differentiate between benign and malicious envy and assess whether there are distinct behavioral implications for the two types of envy. The theoretical model is based on the Conservation of Resources Theory as the predominant explanatory lens, complemented by Social Exchange Theory and Psychological Contract Theory as theoretical lenses. Based on the proposed model, it is assumed that workplace envy can trigger perceived interpersonal and resource threats, which in turn decreases psychological safety and leads to defensive knowledge protection, and that perceived organizational support can mitigate the relationship between workplace envy and psychological safety. A quantitative explanatory research design will be followed. A multistage stratified sampling will be used for employees of the selected private universities/degree awarding institutions of major geographic clusters of Sindh. The desired target is around 500 useable responses (and 600-650 questionnaires are sent out to allow for the non-response and incomplete questionnaires). A two-wave time-lagged design is recommended where access permits. Established validated scales will be used for workplace envy, psychological safety, perceived organizational support and knowledge hiding. Data will be analyzed through SPSS and Smart PLS using measurement-model assessment, structural modeling, bootstrapping, mediation, moderation and moderated-mediation analysis.

The study is expected to contribute theoretically by integrating emotional, interpersonal and organizational-resource explanations of knowledge hiding; contextually by providing evidence from private higher education in Sindh; and practically by identifying HR interventions capable of reducing destructive social comparison and defensive knowledge behavior. The findings may assist

university HR departments and leadership in designing fair recognition, promotion, supportive leadership, psychological-safety and knowledge-sharing systems.

Keywords: workplace envy; benign envy; malicious envy; knowledge hiding; psychological safety; perceived organizational support; human resource management; organizational behavior; private universities; Sindh; Pakistan; PLS-SEM.

PROPOSED SYNOPSIS STRUCTURE

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1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Universities are knowledge-intensive organizations in which the creation, acquisition, exchange and application of knowledge are central to teaching, research, administration and innovation. In such settings, the willingness of employees to exchange knowledge with colleagues is a critical organizational resource. Nevertheless, knowledge does not always flow freely. In general, when someone asks for information, employees can intentionally withhold it, which is known as knowledge hiding.

Conceptually, knowledge hiding is different from the regular non-sharing. It is deliberate and is a response to a knowledge question. The literature makes a distinction between three types: evasive hiding, playing dumb, and rationalized hiding. However, recent systematic reviews and analyses indicate that knowledge hiding has become a sizeable research stream within organizational behaviour, and that its antecedents range from HR practices, leadership, personality, relationships, working context, to individual motivations. Arain et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 104 studies with a total of 31,822 employees, and Shen et al. conducted a subsequent meta-analysis of 267 independent samples from 248 primary studies. All these syntheses illustrate the scope of the phenomenon and the need for more context-sensitive explanations.

Especially in the context of higher education. There is a fierce competition for promotions, research recognition, grants, administrative positions, publications, teaching positions, new students, resources, and professional status. The paradox of knowledge hiding in higher education institutions is thus accentuated in the literature. Zutshi et al. created a conceptual map particular for knowledge hiding in academic jobs, which consists of teaching, research and leadership/administration.

In the context of this problem, workplace envy is relevant, as social comparison is part of the life in the workplace. Workers compare their own performance with others, and feel jealous when another worker has something they want. Envy is recently considered as multidimensional in organizational research. Benign envy is an envy without hostile motivation and a desire to diminish the target's advantage, while malicious envy is an envy that involves hostility and a desire to diminish the target's advantage.

The difference is have value for this proposal. In 2023, Su and Chen directly explored workplace envy and knowledge-hiding behavior among 402 enterprise employees and discovered that benign and malicious envy can be on different paths. Thus, a doctoral work must not take it as an axiom that all envy is bad. Rather, it should look into the relationship between various kinds of envy and psychological safety and knowledge hiding.

The present study focuses on private universities in Sindh. The regional context is relevant and applicable in theory and practice because organizational practices, hierarchy, social relationships, scarcity of resources, promotion systems and cultural expectations can influence the interpretation of comparison and response to interpersonal threat. Recent Pakistan-based research has already demonstrated the relevance of knowledge hiding in organizational and higher-education settings. For example, research on perceived organizational politics, workplace gossip, cronyism and knowledge hiding in Pakistan has shown that relational and organizational conditions can influence knowledge-hiding behavior.

The central mediator, psychological safety, is proposed. A safe environment for taking interpersonal risks, asking questions, admitting mistakes and communicating openly, can help reduce the likelihood of employees guarding knowledge. Conversely, the interpersonal threat and the decrease in psychological safety due to envy and competitive social comparison can make knowledge hiding more possible.

The moderator is proposed to be perceived organizational support. Those employees who perceive that their organization cares about them and values their contribution may have more resources, both relational and psychological, to cope with situations that create envy. Thus, strong organizational support might mitigate the negative relationship between workplace envy and psychological safety.

This study therefore proposes a moderated mediation model where, in addition to the direct link between workplace envy and knowledge hiding, workplace envy is also hypothesized to affect knowledge hiding through psychological safety, and perceived organizational support is hypothesized to moderate the indirect effect of workplace envy on psychological safety and thus on knowledge hiding.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Private universities in Sindh operate in an environment in which academic and administrative employees are frequently evaluated against colleagues on visible and scarce outcomes such as promotion, research productivity, recognition, leadership appointments, student performance, workload allocation and access to resources. Such comparison may be constructive, but it may also generate workplace envy.

The organizational problem arises when envy becomes associated with defensive interpersonal behavior. If an employee perceives a colleague as a competitor for scarce resources or status, the

employee may become less willing to provide information, experience or expertise that could improve the colleague's performance. In a knowledge-intensive university, this can produce a hidden cost: the organization may possess knowledge that is not available to the people who need it.

Existing studies establish that knowledge hiding is related to negative workplace experiences, leadership, politics, conflict, ostracism, resource threats and individual characteristics. Pakistan-based research has also examined organizational politics, workplace conflict, gossip and cronyism as antecedents or correlates of knowledge hiding. However, the emotional mechanism linking workplace envy to knowledge hiding in private higher education in Sindh remains insufficiently developed.

The problem is therefore not only whether workplace envy predicts knowledge hiding, but how and under what organizational conditions that relationship operates. A simple direct-effect model would provide limited explanatory power. The proposed study addresses this problem by examining psychological safety as the mediating mechanism and perceived organizational support as a buffering condition, while also distinguishing benign and malicious envy.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Gap	Explanation
Contextual gap	Direct envy–knowledge-hiding evidence exists internationally, but there is limited evidence from Pakistan and particularly from private universities in Sindh.
Sectoral gap	Higher-education research on knowledge hiding exists, including Pakistan-based studies, but the specific private-university context of Sindh and the emotional antecedent of workplace envy require further investigation.
Mechanism gap	The direct relationship between workplace envy and knowledge hiding does not explain the psychological process through which envy may translate into defensive knowledge behavior. Psychological safety provides a theoretically meaningful mechanism.
Boundary-condition gap	There is a need to identify organizational resources that can buffer the negative effect of envy. Perceived organizational support is proposed as a boundary condition.
Construct-level gap	Recent research demonstrates that benign and malicious envy can have different consequences. Treating workplace envy as a single undifferentiated construct can obscure these differences.
Theoretical integration gap	Knowledge-hiding research uses multiple theories. The present study integrates COR Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Psychological Contract Theory into a focused HRM/organizational-behavior model.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does workplace envy significantly influence knowledge-hiding behavior among employees of private universities in Sindh?
2. Does workplace envy significantly influence employees' psychological safety?
3. Does psychological safety significantly influence knowledge-hiding behavior?
4. Does psychological safety mediate the relationship between workplace envy and knowledge-hiding behavior?
5. Does perceived organizational support moderate the relationship between workplace envy and psychological safety?
6. Does perceived organizational support moderate the indirect relationship between workplace envy and knowledge hiding through psychological safety?
7. Do benign and malicious envy differ in their relationships with psychological safety and knowledge-hiding behavior?

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

General Objective

To investigate the relationship between workplace envy and knowledge-hiding behavior among employees of private universities in Sindh, Pakistan, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of psychological safety and the moderating role of perceived organizational support.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between workplace envy and knowledge-hiding behavior.
2. To determine the effect of workplace envy on psychological safety.
3. To investigate the effect of psychological safety on knowledge-hiding behavior.
4. To examine the mediating role of psychological safety in the relationship between workplace envy and knowledge-hiding behavior.
5. To investigate the moderating role of perceived organizational support between workplace envy and psychological safety.
6. To examine the conditional indirect effect of workplace envy on knowledge hiding through psychological safety.

7. To distinguish the effects of benign envy and malicious envy on psychological safety and knowledge-hiding behavior.
8. To develop a contextually relevant explanatory model of knowledge-hiding behavior in private universities of Sindh.

6. HYPOTHESES

- 1: Workplace envy has a significant positive relationship with knowledge-hiding behavior.
- 2: Workplace envy has a significant negative relationship with psychological safety.
- 3: Psychological safety has a significant negative relationship with knowledge-hiding behavior.
- 4: Psychological safety significantly mediates the relationship between workplace envy and knowledge-hiding behavior.
- 5: Perceived organizational support significantly moderates the relationship between workplace envy and psychological safety, such that the negative relationship is weaker when perceived organizational support is high.
- 6: Perceived organizational support moderates the indirect effect of workplace envy on knowledge-hiding behavior through psychological safety.
- 7a: Benign envy is negatively associated with knowledge-hiding behavior.
- 7b: Malicious envy is positively associated with knowledge-hiding behavior.
- 8a: Benign envy is positively associated with psychological safety.
- 8b: Malicious envy is negatively associated with psychological safety.

7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK / MODEL

The proposed model positions workplace envy as the independent construct, psychological safety as the mediator, knowledge-hiding behavior as the dependent construct, and perceived organizational support as the moderator. For greater construct validity and theoretical precision, workplace envy will also be analyzed through its benign and malicious dimensions.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

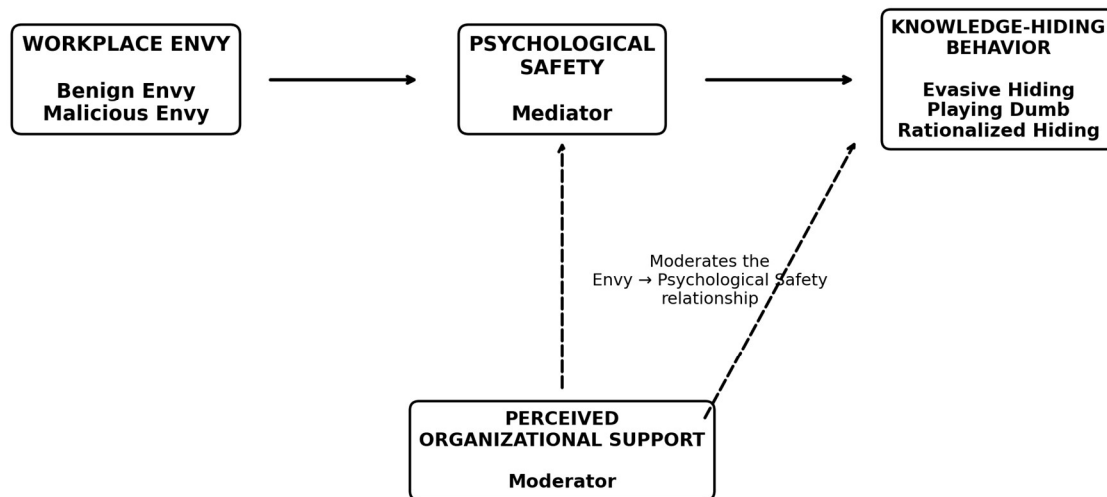


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework.

Primary pathway: Workplace Envy → Psychological Safety → Knowledge Hiding. Moderation pathway: Perceived Organizational Support moderates the Workplace Envy → Psychological Safety relationship. A second-stage analysis will be conducted to test whether there are significant differences in the values of the coefficients between benign and malicious envy.

8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is theoretically based on Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and substantiated by Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Psychological Contract Theory. The theories are not considered to be equivalent; each theory is applicable to a different aspect of the model.

8.1 Conservation of Resources Theory

COR Theory proposes that individuals strive to obtain, retain and protect valued resources and experience stress when resources are threatened or lost. In the university workplace, valued resources may include professional status, reputation, promotion opportunities, research recognition, access to information, social influence, job security and knowledge. Workplace envy can signal a relative resource gap or threat. Knowledge hiding can then function as a defensive strategy through which an employee protects knowledge and competitive advantage.

COR Theory therefore provides the principal explanation for the pathway from envy and interpersonal threat to defensive knowledge behavior. Psychological safety is treated as a psychosocial resource whose depletion can make defensive behavior more likely. Perceived organizational support is treated as a contextual resource that can help employees cope with threatening workplace experiences.

8.2 Social Exchange Theory

SET explains workplace relationships in terms of reciprocal exchanges. Employees who experience support and positive treatment are generally more willing to reciprocate with constructive attitudes and behaviors. When relationships become threatening or low in reciprocity, employees may reduce discretionary contributions. Knowledge sharing is a discretionary relational behavior; knowledge hiding can therefore emerge when employees perceive insufficient relational benefit or support.

Perceived organizational support is particularly consistent with SET because organizational support can create an obligation to reciprocate. In the proposed model, support is expected to reduce the harmful behavioral consequences of envy by strengthening the employee's relational bond with the organization.

8.3 Psychological Contract Theory

Psychological Contract Theory concerns employees' beliefs about reciprocal obligations between themselves and the organization. Employees may develop expectations regarding fairness, recognition, support, career opportunities and treatment. When these expectations are met, employees are more likely to maintain positive exchange relationships. Although not a measured variable in the final model, psychological contract breach offers a complementary explanation of how organizational support can impact employee reactions to negative interpersonal experiences.

8.4 Integrated Theoretical Logic

The integrated logic is that workplace envy may represent a threat to valued resources and interpersonal status, thus decreasing psychological safety, which in turn leads to greater defensive knowledge hiding, and that organizational support offers resources that can buffer the threat. Resource threat and conservation is explained by COR, reciprocity and support is explained by SET, and expectations of organizational treatment is explained by Psychological Contract Theory.

9. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Construct	Operational definition
Workplace Envy	An emotional response arising from workplace social comparison when an employee perceives another employee as possessing a desirable advantage. The study distinguishes benign envy and malicious envy.
Benign Envy	A form of envy characterized primarily by a desire to improve one's own position without hostile intent toward the comparison target.
Malicious Envy	A form of envy involving resentment and a stronger desire to reduce or remove the advantage of the comparison target.
Psychological Safety	The employee's perception that interpersonal risk-taking, such as asking questions, admitting mistakes or expressing ideas, is safe in the work environment.
Perceived Organizational Support	The degree to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being.
Knowledge-Hiding Behavior	An employee's intentional attempt to conceal or withhold knowledge requested by another employee, including evasive hiding, playing dumb and rationalized hiding.

10. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Employees of the recognized private universities and degree awarding institutions in Sindh, Pakistan, will be targeted. The population will consist of academic and relevant administrative staff members who come into contact with each other regularly, such as those who exchange or withhold or request information.

Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor, Academic Coordinator, Departmental Support Staff, Administrative Officers and other regular staff members will be the potential respondents. Short term or temporary employees, or employees who have been employed for a very short period may be excluded to maintain comparability.

The following criterion for inclusion is recommended: individuals who have served on an organization for at least six months. The intent of this period is to make sure that the respondents have been exposed to workplace relationships, comparison processes, organizational support and knowledge-exchange practices to a degree.

A multistage stratified sampling strategy is proposed. Stage 1 will group institutions into geographic clusters such as Karachi, Hyderabad/Jamshoro and other Sindh. Stage.2 will select institutions proportionately from the clusters. Stage. 3 will stratify respondents into academic and administrative categories. Stage. 4 will use proportionate/random selection within participating institutions where an employee list is available.

The sampling frame should be constructed from current HEC-recognized institutions and relevant Sindh higher-education listings, and the final list should be verified immediately before data collection because institutional recognition and campus status can change.

11. SAMPLE-SIZE DETERMINATION

The final sample should be determined after the eligible population and sampling frame are established. For PLS-SEM, the traditional ten-times rule should not be used as the sole justification because the proposed model contains mediation, moderation and a moderated indirect effect.

An a priori power analysis using G*Power should be conducted for the most demanding endogenous construct, with the smallest anticipated effect size, desired statistical power of at least .80 and an appropriate significance level. The resulting minimum should then be increased to permit non-response, incomplete questionnaires, subgroup analysis and robustness checks.

The study will aim for around 500 usable responses with 600-650 questionnaires sent out for planning purposes. If access to institutions is limited, at least about 400 useable cases should be considered as a minimum practically achievable goal. The assumptions made in G*Power and the obtained response rate should be transparently reported in the final dissertation.

12. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodological element	Proposed specification
Research philosophy	Positivism
Research approach	Deductive
Research design	Quantitative, explanatory, cross-sectional with a preferred two-wave time-lagged design
Unit of analysis	Individual employee
Study setting	Private universities/DAIs in Sindh, Pakistan
Sampling	Multistage stratified sampling; random/proportionate selection where lists are available
Preferred usable sample	Approximately 500
Data collection	Structured self-administered/online questionnaire; two waves where feasible
Main software	IBM SPSS Statistics and SmartPLS
SEM technique	PLS-SEM with bootstrapping
Significance	Typically $\alpha = .05$; confidence intervals reported

13. MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

Questionnaire should be based on known and validated measures. After checking permissions and adaptation requirements and psychometric evidence, the exact wording of the items and wording of the response anchors should be taken from the source/version that is finally selected. The proposal intentionally does not include complete copyrighted scales.

Construct	Dimensions	Measurement recommendation	Response
Workplace Envy	Benign envy and malicious envy	Established workplace envy measures; use a validated two-dimensional version	5- or 7-point Likert
Psychological Safety	General workplace/team psychological safety	Edmondson-based validated scale/adaptation	5- or 7-point Likert
Perceived Organizational Support	Global perceived organizational support	Survey of Perceived Organizational Support / validated short form	5- or 7-point Likert
Knowledge Hiding	Evasive hiding; playing dumb; rationalized hiding	Connelly et al. knowledge-hiding scale	5- or 7-point Likert

13.1 Questionnaire Structure

Section A: informed-Agreement statement and screening for eligibility.

Section B: Demographic and job characteristics.

Part C: Workplace envy (benign and malicious aspects).

Section D: Perceived organizational support.

Section E: Psychological safety.

Section F: Knowledge-hiding behaviour.

If a two-wave design is employed, predictor/moderator variables should be measured at Time 1, and mediator/outcome variables at Time 2.

13.2 Translation and Pilot Testing

A pilot test should be conducted for clarity amongst the Pakistani university employees if the questionnaire is conducted in English. If Urdu or Sindhi translation of versions is needed, then cross-cultural translation and back translation must be done via a documented procedure. It is recommended that a pilot of about 30-50 respondents from outside the final sample be conducted to evaluate wording and completion time, as well as initial item comprehension and reliability.

Pilot participants should not be combined into the main data set unless the study protocol and conditions of measurement are the same and the supervisor/committee approves the combination. What is removed and/or altered from the pilot should be recorded.

14. DATA ANALYSIS PLAN: SPSS + SMARTPLS

14.1 SPSS

Data entry/coding and screening.

Assessment and treatment of missing data.

Identification of careless/incomplete responses and outliers.

Descriptive analyses: frequencies, means and standard deviations.

Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Internal consistency diagnostics. Correlation matrix of key constructs.

Preliminary common-method-bias diagnostics.

Group comparisons/robustness analyses where theoretically justified.

14.2 SmartPLS / PLS-SEM

Specify reflective/formative measurement model after confirming the nature of each construct.

Assess indicator reliability through outer loadings.

Assess internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability.

Assess convergent validity through AVE.

Assess discriminant validity using HTMT and supporting criteria where appropriate.

Assess collinearity using VIF.

Estimate structural paths and bootstrap confidence intervals.

Test direct effects, indirect mediation, interaction moderation and conditional indirect effects.

Report R^2 , effect sizes (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2) and relevant model-fit/predictive metrics consistent with current PLS-SEM guidance.

Conduct robustness checks and, where sample size permits, multi-group analysis by faculty/administrative status or geographic cluster.

14.3 Common Method Bias

Because several variables are self-reported, common-method bias is a methodological concern. Procedural remedies will include anonymity, confidentiality, neutral wording, separation of predictor and outcome measures, and preferably time separation. Statistical diagnostics will include appropriate collinearity-based checks and other tests consistent with current PLS-SEM guidance. A time-lagged design is strongly recommended because recent knowledge-hiding research in Pakistan and elsewhere has used multiple waves to reduce common-method and social-desirability concerns.

15. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution	Expected value
Theoretical	Develops an integrated explanation of knowledge hiding by combining resource conservation, social exchange and psychological-contract perspectives.
Construct-level	Distinguishes benign and malicious envy instead of treating workplace envy as uniformly negative.
Mechanism	Identifies psychological safety as a possible explanatory pathway from workplace envy to knowledge hiding.
Boundary condition	Tests perceived organizational support as a resource that may buffer the adverse pathway.
Contextual	Adds evidence from private universities in Sindh, Pakistan, a context underrepresented in the international literature.
HRM practice	Provides evidence for HR policies concerning promotion, recognition, organizational support, psychological safety and knowledge exchange.
Higher education	Highlights a hidden organizational cost of unhealthy social comparison in institutions whose core mission depends on knowledge exchange.

16. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

The study is delimited to private universities/DAIs in Sindh and therefore may not generalize to public universities, banks, NGOs or other industries.

A cross-sectional design would restrict strong causal inference; a two-wave design is therefore preferred.

Self-reported measures may be affected by social desirability, particularly for envy and knowledge hiding.

Non-response or institutional selection bias may result from access to private universities.

The culture and HR systems within an organization can differ significantly from one institution to another. Since malicious envy or knowledge hiding is socially undesirable behavior, employees may underreport it.

Other mechanisms, including organizational justice, trust, moral disengagement and competitive climate will not be primary variables in the model because the model is based on psychological safety and perceived organizational support; however, these may be explored in future studies.

17. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All participation will be voluntary and with informed consent.

The respondents will be told the academic purpose of the study.

Unless there is a compelling need and approval, no personally identifiable information should be collected.

Responses will be treated in a confidential manner and will be reported in aggregate.

There should be no penalties for participant withdrawal. Data will be collected with the permission of the University/institutions.

Their data will be kept safe and used solely for the research as they have indicated.

Since the issue is one that entails the sensitive aspects of emotions and behaviors in the workplace, wording of the questionnaires should be designed in such a way that respondents are not asked to specify a particular colleague, nor to reveal confidential information about the organization.

18. CHAPTER-WISE THESIS OUTLINE

Chapter	Proposed contents
Chapter 1: Introduction	Background; problem statement; research gap; questions; objectives; hypotheses; significance; scope; definitions; organization of the thesis.
Chapter 2: Literature Review	Workplace envy; benign and malicious envy; knowledge hiding; psychological safety; perceived organizational support; relevant empirical studies; theoretical perspectives; research gap; hypothesis development.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	Philosophy; approach; design; population; sampling frame; sample size; instruments; pilot study; validity; reliability; data collection; ethics; common-method-bias remedies; analysis procedures.
Chapter 4: Results and Analysis	Response profile; data screening; descriptive statistics; measurement model; reliability; validity; structural model; direct effects; mediation; moderation; moderated mediation; additional analysis.
Chapter 5: Discussion	Interpretation of findings; comparison with previous literature; theoretical implications; contextual implications.
Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations	Conclusions; HRM implications; practical recommendations; limitations; future research; final contribution.

19. PROPOSED WORK PLAN

Period	Activity
Months 1–2	Finalize synopsis; supervisor feedback; theoretical refinement.
Months 3–4	Detailed systematic literature search; instrument selection; questionnaire adaptation.
Month 5	Pilot testing; reliability and wording review.
Months 6–8	Institutional permissions; sampling-frame construction; main data collection Time 1.
Months 9–10	Time 2 data collection; data cleaning.
Months 11–13	SPSS analysis; measurement model; SmartPLS structural analysis.
Months 14–16	Interpretation; discussion; theoretical/practical implications.
Months 17–20	Drafting chapters; supervisor revisions.
Months 21–24	Final thesis preparation, formatting, pre-submission review and defense preparation.

20. RECENT LITERATURE MATRIX (2021–2026)

The following matrix highlights recent empirical/review literature which directly relates to workplace envy, knowledge hiding, psychological safety, organizational support, higher education, Pakistan and relevant theories. It is not a claim that every paper tests the exact proposed model.

Study	Focus	Method	Core contribution	Relevance to present study
Duffy, Lee, & Adair (2021)	Workplace Envy	Review	Workplace envy literature and future directions	Provides the broad conceptual foundation for envy as an organizational phenomenon.
Anand et al. (2022)	Knowledge hiding	Systematic review	Antecedents, consequences and future research	Establishes major research streams and gaps in KH.
Siachou et al. (2021)	Knowledge hiding	Systematic review	Antecedents, consequences and mitigation	Supports the intentional and relational nature of KH.
Zutshi et al. (2021)	Higher education/KH	Conceptual review	Knowledge hiding in academic roles	Directly supports the higher-education context.
Xiong et al. (2021)	Knowledge hiding	Inductive study	Social-psychological mechanisms in international R&D teams	Supports interpersonal/social explanations of KH.
Zhang & Min (2021)	Knowledge hiding	Empirical	Organizational rewards and task attributes	Shows contextual contingencies in KH.

Arain et al. (2022)	Knowledge hiding	Meta-analysis	104 studies; 31,822 employees	Major synthesis of KH antecedents/outcomes and dimensions.
Nguyen, Malik, & Budhwar (2022)	Knowledge hiding	Conceptual/empirical framework	Organizational crisis and leadership	Uses COR to explain resource-protection motives.
Duan et al. (2022)	Knowledge hiding	Empirical	Explicit/tacit KH and innovation quality	Shows that KH can have complex organizational consequences.
El-Kassar et al. (2022)	Knowledge hiding/HRM	Empirical	HR practices, support for creativity and KH	Links HR practices and organizational support to KH.
Batistič & Poell (2022)	Knowledge hiding/HRM	Experiment + multilevel field study	HR systems, relational climates and co-worker support	Supports relational climate and HR-system contingencies.
Tan, Zhang, & Zhang (2022)	Knowledge hiding	Empirical	Team-member exchange and psychological safety	Supports psychological safety as a relevant mechanism.
Koay & Lim (2022)	Knowledge hiding/leadership	Empirical	Ethical leadership and KH	Shows leadership can shape knowledge hiding through psychological mechanisms.
Kmieciak (2022)	Knowledge hiding/COR	PLS-SEM	Personality, affectivity and supervisor KH	Supports COR and individual/relational pathways.
Han et al. (2022)	Knowledge hiding	Empirical	Pride and knowledge hiding	Demonstrates differential effects of moral emotions.
Khelladi et al. (2022)	Knowledge hiding	Empirical	Customer knowledge hiding in service platforms	Extends KH into service relationships.
Su & Chen (2023)	Workplace envy + KH	Empirical	Benign/malicious envy and KH; 402 employees	Directly relevant; establishes need to distinguish envy dimensions.
Liao et al. (2024)	Knowledge hiding	Cross-level empirical	LMX differentiation, KH and creativity	Shows KH as a relational mechanism affecting outcomes.
Offergelt & Venz (2023)	Supervisor KH	Empirical	Supervisor KH, abusive	Supports vertical transmission of KH.

			supervision and employee KH	
Mao, Quan, Liu, & Zheng (2022)	Workplace envy	Daily experience-sampling	Daily envy, resource depletion and deviance	Supports envy as a resource-depleting workplace emotion.
Battle & Diab (2024)	Workplace envy	Empirical	Benign/malicious envy, engagement and turnover	Supports multidimensional envy and divergent outcomes.
Rasheed & Murtza (2023)	Workplace envy/Pakistan	Three-wave empirical	Competitive psychological climate, envy and outcomes	Provides Pakistan-specific evidence on envy.
Murtza & Rasheed (2022)	Workplace envy/Pakistan	Qualitative exploratory	Competitive psychological climate and envy	Shows relevance of envy in Pakistani workplaces.
Aftab, Islam, & Cheema (2024)	Knowledge hiding/Pakistan	Empirical	Humble leadership, self-efficacy and negative gossip	Provides recent Pakistan evidence and two-wave design.
Zhao et al. (2024)	Knowledge hiding/Pakistan	Three-wave empirical	Negative workplace gossip, ostracism and KH	Directly relevant to Pakistani higher education.
Fatima et al. (2024)	Knowledge hiding/Pakistan HEIs	Three-wave moderated mediation	Cronyism, moral disengagement and KH	Demonstrates KH in Pakistani higher education.
He et al. (2024)	Knowledge hiding/COR	Three-wave empirical	ICT demands and deceptive KH	Supports COR/resource-depletion logic.
Kmiecziak (2024)	Knowledge hiding	Two-wave empirical	Bullying knowledge hiding, stress and power values	Shows emerging KH forms and stress mechanisms.
Hu et al. (2024)	Knowledge hiding	Time-lagged empirical	Political skill, impression management and KH	Supports contextual/competitive antecedents.
Shujahat et al. (2025)	Knowledge hiding/HRM	Empirical	Job design, JD-R and rational choice	Directly relevant to HRM framing of KH.
Zhi & Lockett (2025)	Knowledge hiding	Empirical/qualitative-informed	Knowledge hiding in MNEs	Shows organizational practices and context matter.
Shen et al. (2025)	Knowledge hiding	Meta-analysis	267 independent samples; 248 studies	Major current synthesis of KH antecedents and consequences.

Zhang, Takahashi, & Rezwan (2025)	Knowledge hiding/SET	Systematic review + meta-analysis	66 studies; 20,603 participants	Strong support for SET as a KH framework.
Tokyzhanova & Durst (2025)	Knowledge hiding/theory	Systematic review	Theoretical landscape of KH research	Supports deliberate theoretical positioning.
Hina et al. (2025)	Knowledge hiding/theory	Integrated review	155 peer-reviewed articles and theoretical synthesis	Supports need for integrated theoretical models.
Nguyen et al. (2025/2026)	Knowledge hiding/POS	PLS-SEM	STARA awareness, POS and competitive climate	Directly supports POS as a KH boundary condition.
Hong & Wang (2026)	Knowledge hiding	Meta-analysis	KH outcomes and global cultural/economic contingencies	Supports context-sensitive KH research.
Bai & Xiao (2026)	Knowledge hiding/COR	Two-wave empirical	Ostracism, task complexity, perceived stress and KH	Recent COR/SET-based evidence for stress pathways.
Lin & Liu (2026)	Knowledge hiding/COR	Empirical	Technology threat, anxiety/work passion and KH	Shows contemporary resource-threat mechanisms.
Azeem et al. (2026)	Supervisor KH	Two-study empirical	Supervisor KH, psychological detachment and deadlines	Demonstrates current interest in vertical KH effects.
Bhattacharjee & Sarkar (2026)	Knowledge hiding/SET	Empirical	Inclusive leadership, positive affect, Machiavellianism and KH	Shows that even positive leadership contexts can have dark-side effects.

21. DETAILED LITERATURE REVIEW

21.1 Knowledge-Hiding Behavior

Knowledge hiding emerged as a distinct construct because knowledge sharing alone could not explain situations in which employees deliberately refuse a colleague's request. The construct is therefore relational and intentional: the employee is responding to a request and choosing to conceal, distort, delay or rationalize the response. The established three-dimensional structure—evasive hiding, playing dumb and rationalized hiding—has been repeatedly used in empirical studies.

Recent reviews demonstrate that the field has matured rapidly. The 2021 systematic review by Anand, Offergelt and Anand identified major research streams and future directions. Arain et al. later provided a meta-analysis of 104 studies and 31,822 employees, showing that knowledge hiding is connected with multiple antecedent and outcome categories.

Shen et al. (2025).further expanded the synthesis to 267 independent samples from 248 studies. These reviews establish that knowledge hiding is not a narrow knowledge-management problem; it is an organizational-behavior phenomenon with HR, leadership, relational and psychological antecedents.

The most relevant implication for this study is that knowledge hiding should be understood in context. Studies have examined leadership, HR systems, organizational politics, conflict, ostracism, pride, personality, work design, cultural values, technological threats and other conditions. This provides a strong foundation for investigating workplace envy as another emotional-social antecedent.

21.2 Knowledge Hiding in Higher Education

Higher education is a distinctive knowledge environment. Academic employees create and use knowledge through teaching, research, supervision, administration and collaboration. Zutshi et al. (2021) specifically argued that knowledge hiding in academic roles can occur across teaching, research and leadership/administrative functions. This means that the university context is not just another sample but it is also theoretically suitable because knowledge is an important part of the performance of organizations.

Pakistan-based evidence strengthens the case for further higher-education research. Recent studies have examined knowledge hiding in Pakistani organizations and universities through organizational politics, workplace gossip and cronyism. These studies indicate that relational and political

conditions can shape knowledge-hiding behavior and that multi-wave designs are feasible in the Pakistani setting.

21.3 Workplace Envy

Workplace envy is rooted in social comparison. Employees compare their performance, status, recognition and rewards with those of colleagues. Duffy, Lee and Adair's 2021 review provides an important contemporary foundation, emphasizing that envy can arise from workplace comparisons and can generate both constructive and destructive outcomes.

The dual nature of envy is essential for the present proposal. Benign envy can involve self-improvement motivation, while malicious envy can include hostility toward the comparison target. Battle and Diab's work further supports the multidimensional nature of workplace envy. Su and Chen's 2023 study provides the most direct evidence for this proposal because it tested workplace envy and knowledge hiding and reported divergent relationships for benign and malicious envy.

The methodological and theoretical implication is that the two envy dimensions should not be summarised into a single score in the questionnaire and statistical model. If there are reasons to believe in the discriminant validity and theoretical justification, a total envy score may be used as a secondary robustness analysis.

21.4 Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is the perception of safety of interpersonal risk-taking. A psychologically safe space is where people feel comfortable asking questions, making mistakes, asking for feedback and suggesting ideas without embarrassment or punishment. The construct was borrowed from team-learning research, but it is commonly used in organizational behavior and knowledge-management research. It has recently been included as a result of knowledge hiding research, which offers substantial grounds for its inclusion. In the study of abusive supervision by Agarwal, Avey and Wu, the mediators for knowledge hiding are psychological safety. Tan et al. (2022) correlated team-member exchange, perceived insider status and psychological safe with lower knowledge hiding. Recent scholarly work on paradoxical leadership similarly suggests that psychological safety plays a mediating role. All these studies provide evidence that psychological safety is not just an outcome variable, but a mechanism that can convert workplace conditions to knowledge behavior.

21.5 Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support is the employee's perception of the value of his/her contributions to the organization and how the organization cares for the employee's well-being. It is particularly

pertinent to the current model as workplace envy is an interpersonal emotional experience and organizational support is a contextual resource. Organizational support and HR systems have been the subjects of many recent studies on knowledge-hiding, as they are conditions that can affect employees' decisions to share or hide knowledge. Batistič and Poell found that co-worker support and relational climates can interact with HR systems to impact knowledge hiding. In more recent studies about STARA awareness, perceived organizational support was also specifically investigated as a moderator of knowledge hiding. These results support the buffering hypothesis: Organizational support.

21.6 Theoretical Synthesis

Unlike other studies that merely input a few variables in a statistical diagram, the proposed model has been developed. It has a sequential theoretical logic. COR Theory can help you understand the potential for a perceived threat to valued resources to arise from envy and the reasons why employees may want to protect knowledge. Psychological safety is a psychosocial resource, the absence of which can become a threat and trigger defensive coping behavior. The SET model can help to explain how organizational support can boost reciprocal and constructive behavior. That explanation is supplemented by the Psychological Contract Theory which emphasizes employee expectations of care, fairness and recognition from the organization. This theoretical integration is able to provide a better contribution to HRM in this study. The problem isn't just that employees feel envious, it's that systems in the workplace can make the difference between destructive and otherwise. HR policies which foster support, fairness, recognition and psychological safety can thus impact on the behavioural outcomes of social comparison.

21.7 Positioning the Novelty

The proposed study must clearly state its novelty. It should NOT say that no previous study has linked workplace envy and knowledge hiding. This would be challenged by Su and Chen (2023) and by more recent research on the connection between employee envy and knowledge hiding. Rather, the contribution of the study is a context specific, mechanism and boundary-condition model in the context of private HE in Sindh. The most compelling novelty claims are: (1) studying the model in private universities of Sindh; (2) testing psychological safety as a mediator; (3) testing perceived organizational support as a moderator; (4) distinguishing between benign and malicious envy; and (5) the use of a preferred time-lagged design.

22. SYNTHESIS OF EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Relationship	Current evidence	Position in proposed study
Workplace envy → KH	Supported in recent international evidence	Direct precedent exists; present study adds Sindh private HEIs and a mechanism/boundary-condition model.
Benign envy → KH	Potentially negative/constructive pathway	Must be tested separately rather than assumed to mirror malicious envy.
Malicious envy → KH	Positive/destructive pathway	Strong candidate for defensive knowledge protection.
Workplace envy → psychological safety	Theoretically plausible; less directly tested in KH literature	Represents a key mechanism gap.
Psychological safety → KH	Supported by recent empirical work	Provides a defensible mediator.
POS → KH / relational support	Supported as contextual resource	Present study tests POS as a moderator rather than merely a direct predictor.
Envy × POS → psychological safety	Underdeveloped	Central boundary-condition contribution.
Indirect envy → psychological safety → KH	Underdeveloped	Central moderated-mediation contribution.
Private universities of Sindh	Limited evidence	Primary contextual contribution.

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