Peers' knowledge Hiding and Helping Behaviors: The role of Perception of Politics and Core Self-Evaluation

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The purpose of this study is to examine the association between peers' knowledge hiding and helping behaviors of employees with the mediating role of perception of politics. The moderating role of core self-evaluation was also examined on the relationship between perception of politics and helping behaviors. The data were collected in two-time lags from employees working in IT sector of Pakistan with a sample size of 220 employees. Smart PLS software was used to evaluate the data. The results show that peers' knowledge hiding has a negative influence on the helping behaviors of employees and perception of politics mediates this relationship. Furthermore, the association between perception of politics and helping behaviors of employees was moderated by core self-evaluation as a personality trait.

1. Introduction

In current excessively turbulent business dynamics, the success of any organization is reliant upon the efficiency of utilizing the most valued intangible asset i.e. knowledge (Grant, 1996; Chaudhry et al., 2021). Organizations are in a state of constant pressure to foster exchange of knowledge and expertise among employees in order to gain sustainable competitive edge. However, despite persistent efforts in engaging employees to share knowledge and rewarding knowledge sharing initiatives, employees still engage in knowledge hiding at work (Connelly & Zweig, 2015; Saifi et al., 2016; Son et al., 2020). Knowledge hiding is an intentional attempt to withhold information that is needed by another individual (Connelly et al., 2012; Gerpott et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2018). Numerous studies have highlighted the phenomenon of knowledge hiding from perspective of hider encompassing its types (i.e. evasive hiding, playing dumb and rationalized knowledge hiding) (Connelly et al., 2012), antecedents and outcomes for both employees' and their respective organizations' (Burmeister et al., 2019; Cerne et al., 2014; Connelly & Zweig, 2015; Labafi et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2021 to name a few).

Regardless of having multiple grave consequences for both hider and the target, knowledge hiding has been primarily discussed in unilateral direction from the point of view of knowledge hider while how target reacts to perceived knowledge hiding is understudied (Wang et al., 2019). It is only few years back that researchers have started encouraging target perspective research comprising on consequences of knowledge hiding on target and his/her prospective behaviors (Connelly et al., 2019). Comparatively there is a less body of research that studies the impact of knowledge hiding on positive behaviors of employees specifically the underling mechanisms and boundary conditions (Ain et al., 2022).

This study also takes this research area forward and examine that how and when peers' knowledge hiding can impact targets' helping behaviors. Helping behaviors by employees are considered as the voluntary actions done to guide or assist colleagues to resolve issues pertaining to any task (Frazier& Tupper, 2018). Helping behaviors are immensely important for organizational growth and effectiveness and also for promoting innovativeness at work (Qasim et al., 2022). Voluntary efforts like helping behaviors consumes a substantial amount of energy of employees, so studying how the knowledge hiding behavior depletes energy of employees and keep them away from helping behaviors. Aligned with COR (Conservation of Resources Theory), we propose that when employees are subjected to knowledge hiding at workplace, they might deem existence of politics by their fellow colleagues (perception of politics) which in turn engages them in withholding their helping behaviors in order to conserve their resources and energy.

Furthermore, COR theory posits that person-related resources tend to shield the strain-instigating impact of work related demands and also has a crucial role in management of available pool of job resources (Hobfoll, 2002). So in this study we propose Core self evaluations(CSE) acts as a buffer on the association between perception of politics and helping behaviors. CSE is considered as a basic appraisal of an individual's worth, efficacy and competence (Judge et al., 2003) and is deemed as a main personal resource (Ten Brummelhuis

& Bakker, 2012). CSE might provide needed resources to deal with energy draining job demand (i.e. POP) thus, mitigating the negative impact of POP on helping behaviors of employees.

As a whole this research makes certain contributions to the existing research literature. First, as per our knowledge, this is the first attempt to examine association of peers' knowledge hiding with employees' helping behaviors. This study adds to the literature of both outcome of knowledge hiding and antecedents of helping behavior. Second, this study examines the underlying impact of POP in shaping the association between peers' knowledge hiding and employees' helping behavior. Lastly, this research investigates the moderating impact of CSE on the linkage between POP and employees' helping behaviors. By doing this, we are emphasizing the role of individual differences in mitigating the negative impact of POP on employees' discretionary behaviors i.e. helping behaviors.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Relationship of Peers' Knowledge Hiding and Helping Behavior

This behavior of intentionally not providing the requested knowledge to colleagues is referred as "knowledge hiding" (Connelly et al., 2012). Past research has documented many outcomes of knowledge hiding at work such as mitigated trust, reduced creativity, decreased business performance, decreased thriving at work and psychological safety to name a few (Connely et al., 2012; Serenko & Bontis, 2019; Cerne et al., 2014; Butt et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2019). We posit that peer's knowledge hiding at work tend to impact the helping behaviors of targets.

When employees' experience threatening situations at work (i.e. knowledge hiding) they tend to restore their own autonomy and resources as a reaction (Brehm, 1966). Aligned with COR theory, when peers' hide knowledge the target feels that he/she is being devoid of a crucial resource (i.e. knowledge) and that other employees are comparatively more resourceful. Thus, as a reaction target takes charge of the available resources and start conserving those resources which are in his/her control. Helping behavior being a voluntary behavior is totally in one's own control so the target employees' withhold their helping behaviors as a response.

From the perspective of reactions, individuals have the inclination towards attempting and restoring their own sovereignty by retreating from their efforts and engagement at work when they face threatening situations (Brehm 1966). Thus, employees perceived leaders' abusive treatments reduces their engagement related to helping behaviors in order to restore their own independence. An empirical study conducted by Peng et al. (2013) proposed that abusive leadership was negatively related to employees' helping behaviors through the mediating effect of Leader-member exchange and affect-based trust in co-workers. Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of peers' knowledge hiding on the helping behaviors of employees thus hypothesizing:

H₁: Peer's knowledge hiding has a negative impact on helping behavior of employees
2.2 Relationship of Peers' Knowledge Hiding and Perception of Politics

Perceptions of organizational politics is defined as an individual's idiosyncratic assessment of the degree to which their work environment is being compromised to be in favor

of some individuals and/or groups (Ferris et al., 2000). Knowledge hiding is researched and proved to have a significant role in creating high suspicion and competitiveness (Hernaus et al., 2019; Noor et al., 2021) or perceived organizational politics (Malik et al., 2018). Researchers have also explored the psychological disengagement of employees as a reaction to knowledge hiding, they have established that knowledge hiding decreases the psychological safety, job satisfaction and sense of prosperity of employees (Jiang et al., 2019; Arian et al., 2020a). It can also risk the organizational citizenship behavior of employees (Singh, 2019). The feeling of being deprived of a common resource of knowledge creates a distrust in the target's mind and this distrust then leads to sense of politics thus directly influencing and damaging the work environment. This research thus entails to examine if peers' knowledge hiding positively impacts the perception of politics:

H₂: Peers' knowledge hiding has a positive impact on the perception of politics

2.3 Relationship of Perception of Politics and Helping Behaviors

The perception of politics phenomenon has been a keen interest of scholars in the past few decades. The model establishes that a certain powerful group of employees maximizes personal interest by using authority and power. This feeling of privilege of powerful people creates a divide in employees and gives rise to negative emotions at the workplace which causes a communication gap (Robson et al., 2006). Many researchers have linked job stress, job anxiety, emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, work frustration and work effort as negative outcomes of perception of politics (Byrne et al., 2005; Robson et al., 2006; Chang et al., 2009; Mills et al., 2010; Malik et al., 2018; Noor et al., 2021). As mentioned earlier, politics perception can result in negative job outcomes, the link between perception of politics and helping behavior can be justified under the shadow of conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 2001). The theory further entails that individuals own several distinctive resources which they struggle to achieve, uphold, and secure to successfully achieve their targets (Hobfoll, 2001; Noor et al., 2021).

When the perception of politics is created the employees feel deprived and underprivileged, thus as a reaction they start to withhold the available resources or the resources that they feel in control of, helping behavior being a voluntary behavior is one of such resources. This study focuses on the cause and effect of perception of politics on resource depletion threat in the mind of employees and its impact that can take employees away from maintaining their voluntary behavior of helping peers at workplace. Thus, the hypothesis under discussion in the light of COR theory is:

H3: Perception of politics has a negative impact on the helping behaviors

2.4 Mediating Role of Perception of Politics

Perception of politics has been considered as a mediating variable by many scholars in the past studies (Ferris & Rowland, 1981; Kimura, 2012; Saleem, 2015a; Talat et al., 2013). Also, Noor et al. (2021) suggested in their study to include perception of politics as a mediator in context of knowledge hiding and voluntary behaviors. The psychological well-being of employees and the perception of politics of an organization plays a dynamic role in the

performance of an organization, where job stress is the inevitable outcome of perception of politics (Imis, 2013).

The perception of politics leads to uncertainty, this uncertainty leads to indistinctness and doubt in the employees that whatever they do at wok will not be valued and recognized, it decreases the expectancy and increases the distrust (Harris et al., 2011). This study takes leads on the available literature and focusses the mediating role of perception of politics between peers' knowledge hiding and helping behavior. The individuals facing knowledge hiding feel less connected to peers at personal level and also with the organization (Schaufeli, 2006). We intend to evaluate that when the peers' knowledge hiding creates a sense of insecurity in the target's mind and he/she is at the verge of conserving available resources, what influence can the mediator (as strong as, perception of politics), create in the relationship between knowledge hiding and helping behavior.

H4: Perception of politics mediates the relationship between knowledge hiding and helping behavior

2.5 Moderating Role of Core Self-Evaluation

Judge et al. (2003) anticipated measurement of personality traits including self-esteem, self- efficacy, neuroticism and self-control and core self-evaluation. Core self-evaluation is a comprehensive personality attribute which incorporates an individual's subliminal evaluation about themselves, their own capabilities and control. Research has focused to evaluate the extent to which these traits are beneficial or harmful to an individual (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Hence, it means that an individual with a negative self- perception will lose self confidence in any given situation. On the contrary, individuals whose self-evaluation is positive will have confidence in their success. Core self-evaluation is not only focused on individual's perception about themselves but also the perspective towards things in general and adaptation to their relevant environments (Robbins et al., 2013).

Individuals with high core self-evaluation levels are equipped with higher self-confidence, better problem-solving abilities and are emotionally stable. This strong set of personality trait needs to be explored as a moderator (Noor et al., 2021) and this research will evaluate if employees with high core self-evaluation can stay positive towards the helping peers at work despite the perception of politics. By doing this we tend to explore that to what extent can high core self-evaluation mellow down the negative effect of perception of politics on helping behavior. The hypothesis to study will be that, if target of peers' knowledge hiding with high core self-evaluation levels are less affected by perception of politics, maintaining their helping behavior towards peers.

H5: Core self-evaluations moderates the relationship between perception of politics and helping behavior such that this relationship is weaker when core self-evaluation is higher.

Figure No 1: Research Model
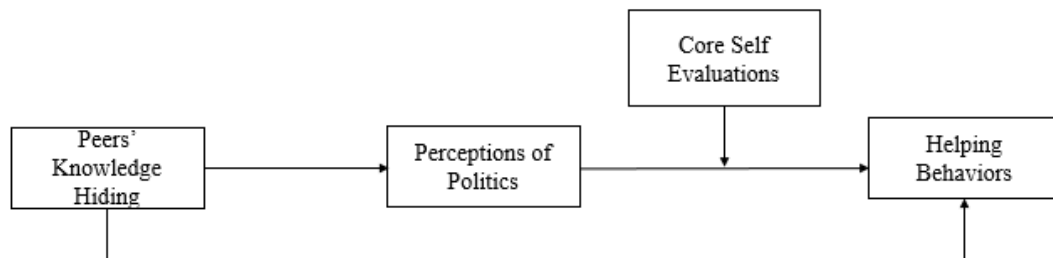
3. Methods
3.1 Data Collection and sample

The target group of population for this research is the IT sector of Pakistan. IT industry of Pakistan is in the growth phase from 2014 to 2020. In these 6 years 2431 new IT companies have registered with SECP. IT industry of Pakistan is also attracting many startups towards this industry. Knowledge is an asset for any organization but in IT sector where innovation and new idea generation is highly dependent on knowledge sharing, it becomes a competitive edge to grow at faster pace. Similarly, a hindrance in knowledge sharing can lead in a decline of the organization, therefore, IT industry is chosen for this study and the focus was kept in three main cities of Pakistan including Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Lahore, which comprises of 68% of the listed IT organizations in the country. In this research, convenient sampling technique is used to collect the data from the employees. There was a possibility that the selected organizations could be less demonstrative of entire industry, but the current study has dealt the issue by including multiple organizations and making sure to include a broad selection of participants with diversified demographics and work- related experiences. This has also increased external authenticity of research findings. Different researches, based in the setting of Pakistan have used similar approach (Abbas & Raja, 2015; Hamza, 2018; De Clercq et al., 2019; Noor et al., 2021).

Data were collected by time lagged approach with an interval of two weeks. There were two phases of data collection, T_1 and T_2. In first phase T_1, data regarding demographic factors and independent variable, i.e., knowledge hiding were gathered. Whereas, T_2 included questions related to dependent variable (helping behaviors), mediator (perception of politics) and moderator (core self-evaluation). At T_1, questionnaires were circulated to 550 employees and 432 responses were returned. These returned questionnaires were screened and the complete questionnaires, eligible to be part of the research were 409 out of 432. These respondents were contacted again for the second phase and T_2 was floated. Out of 409 respondents 300 returned the questionnaires. The questionnaires which were filled completely in both phases of T_1 and T_2 were 300. The questionnaires filled completely out of these 300

were 220 responses, which were considered in the study. Thus, the overall response rate was 51 percent.

3.2 Instruments
3.2.1 Knowledge Hiding

To measure knowledge hiding eight items from Connelly et al.'s (2012) scale were used. The sample item is, "Agreed to help him/her but gave different information than what was asked for". The responses were gathered on a 5-point Likert Scale where: 1 indicated "strongly agree" and 5 indicated "strongly disagree" (Cronbach's Alpha α= 0.912).

3.2.2 Perception of politics

Perception of politics is measured on a 15-item scale formulated by Kacmar & Carlson (1997) based on three items. The sample item is "there is always an influential group that no one crosses". The responses were gathered on a 5- point Likert Scale where: 1 indicated "strongly agree" and 5 represented "strongly disagree" (Cronbach's Alpha: α=0.771)

3.3.3 Helping behavior

This construct is measured on the 7-item scale of helping behavior (Williams & Anderson, 1991). For example, "I take out time to listen to the worries and problems of my co-workers". The responses were collected on a 5-point Likert Scale where: 1 indicated "strongly agree" and 5 represented "strongly disagree" (Cronbach's Alpha: α= 0.941)

3.3.4 Core self-evaluation

Core self- evaluation is measured on a 12-item scale (Judge & Bono, 2003). For example, "I am confident to get the success that I deserve in life". The responses were gathered on a 5-point Likert Scale where: 1 indicated "strongly agree" and 5 represented "strongly disagree" (Cronbach's Alpha: α= 0.726)

4.Results

The data collected in this research has been analyzed by using the statistical software name Smart Partial Least Squares (PLS), version 3.0. The variables were coded knowledge hiding (KH), perception of politics (POP), helping behavior (HB) and core self-evaluation (CSE). Each variable was then linked with its indicator, in Smart PLS indicators are the items of the approved scales and the reliability of the constructs was verified by Cronbach's Alpha values, which were above the benchmark of 0.70. Demographic distribution statistic was used to get to know the background of the respondents. The factors included in demographics were age, gender, education, overall work experience, job tenure with current employer, and department. The significance of all these demographic factors were checked against the independent variable (KH), dependent variable (HB), mediating variable (POP) and moderating variable (CSE) to ensure if they have any impact on any variable of this research model but they were not found significant in this respect.

This shows that the background of the employees does not have any impact on the perception of being target of knowledge hiding or the perception of politics neither it has any impact on the helping behaviors of employees and personality trait of core self-evaluation. The statistics of the demographics are mentioned in Table 1, which depicts that 69% of the respondents were male and 31% were female. The majority of the population was of the age group of 30-39 years with 36% and 35% belonged to the age group of 40-49 years. The education level of the majority of the population was masters, comprising of 66%. The overall job experience of maximum respondents was between the range of 1 to 5 years and the majority of respondents belonged to development department with percentage a high as 51.

Table No 1: Demographic Characteristics Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	152	69.09
	Female	68	30.90
Age	20-29	28	12.72
	30-39	79	35.90
	40-49	77	35
	50 and above	36	16.36
Education	Diploma	1	0.45
	Bachelors	68	30.90
	Masters	146	66.36
	Above Masters	5	2.27
Work Experience	<1 year	11	5
	1 – 5 years	93	42.27
	6 – 10 years	79	35.90
	>10 years	37	16.81
Job Experience (Current Employer)	<1 year	9	4.09
	1 – 5 years	71	32.27
	6 – 10 years	53	24.09
	>10 years	29	13.18
Job Title	Officer	17	7.27
	Executive	56	25.45
	Manager	83	37.27
	Director	64	29.09
Department	Sales	33	15
	Support	19	8.63
	Development	113	51.36
	Project Management	55	25

Note. n=220

The results of measurement model start with composite confirmatory analysis which is evaluated by factor loading of the indicators. Table 2 demonstrates the factor loading of each indicator under its construct. The threshold of factor loading value is greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2007), all the indicators of the constructs are above the threshold level of 0.50 (see Table

2). The consistency and reliability of the variables was established by evaluating Cronbach Alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CRs). The values of both these measures lie in between 0.7 and 1.0, indicating that the data collected for this study is reliable. Hence, the α values show internal consistency and scale reliability for all the latent variables as shown in the Table 2. The convergent validity of the constructs is measured using Average Variant Extracted (AVE) and as mentioned in the Table 2 all the constructs show AVE more than 0.50, establishing that the scales have converged together to validate the latent constructs.

Table No 2: Reliability of the variables

Construct/Items*	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite Reliability	AVE
CSE		0.726	0.922	0.764
HB		0.941	0.952	0.741
KH		0.912	0.951	0.708
POP		0.771	0.933	0.593

Note. HB= Helping behavior, KH= Knowledge hiding, POP= Perception of politics, CSE= Core self-evaluation.*The constructs are CSE, HB, KH and POP whereas others are the indicators exhibiting the factor loading values

Discriminant validity measures that the variables are not inter linked and are independent in their own nature of study. The medium used to calculate and study discriminant validity is Fornell-Larcker Criterion (1981) which is used to evaluate the extent of shared variance among the variables of study in any research. It is evident in the Table 3 that the Fornell-Larcker scores validate the discriminant validity of all the variables. As the correlation with other constructs is less than its own square root of average variant extract. The modern medium of measuring discriminant validity is HTMT ratio, it was introduced by Henseler et al, (2015) and it measures the similarity between variables. To establish that the constructs are discriminately valid the ratio shall be less than 0.85, as shown in Table 4 and Fig C (see appendix) all the values against the constructs are less than 0.85, thus it is evident that the constructs under study are discriminately valid.

Table No 3: Fornell- Larcker Criterion

	CSE	HB	KH	POP
CSE	0.874			
HB	0.274	0.861		
KH	0.045	-0.589	0.842	
POP	0.295	-0.501	0.572	0.748

Note. CSE= Core self-evaluation, HB= Helping behavior, KH=Knowledge hiding, POP=Perception of politics

Table No 4: Heterotrait- Monotrait Ratio of Correlations

	CSE	HB	KH	POP
CSE				
HB	0.284			
KH	0.079	0.62		
POP	0.306	0.522	0.59	

Note. CSE= Core self-evaluation, HB= Helping behavior, KH=Knowledge hiding, POP=Perception of politics

The second stage is to assess the structural model in SEM-PLS, once the measurement model is established. This step ensures the model's ability to predict outcomes as well as linking the constructs to each other. The structural model is a process to validate the model's prediction ability and correlation between the constructs. The assessment of structural model includes, a) assessing the variance inflation factor (VIF). b) assessing the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships (path coefficient values and direct hypothesis evaluations), c) assessing the coefficient of determination this includes level of R² values, the f^2 effect size and assessing Q^2 to check the predictive relevance.

This research has included all these three assessment models to evaluate the structural model assessment. The inner VIF report is used to evaluate the interpretation of the path coefficients (i-e, collinearity among the constructs of the model). The hypothesis acceptance and rejection decision were based on the path coefficients, significance, t-value, p-value and R^2. The predictive relevance was measured with Q^2 values and f² effect size. The inner VIF, the path coefficient statistics, R^2 values and f^2 effect size are evaluated via PLS algorithm, whereas, Q^2 values are determined by using blindfold analysis in Smart PLS. The assessment of structural model for a reflective model supports inner variance inflation factor to establish the collinearity among constructs. Each predictor constructs acceptance VIF value shall be less than 5.

Table No 5L Inner VIF Report

	HB	POP
CSE	1.170	
HB		
KH	1.548	1.000
POP	1.685	

Note. CSE= Core self-evaluation, HB= Helping behaviors, Moderating effect = POP->CSE->HB, KH= Knowledge hiding

Table No 6: Direct Effect Hypotheses Analysis

Relationship	B	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (t- stats)	p values
KH -> HB	-0.531	-0.535	0.047	5.330	0.000
KH -> POP	0.572	0.577	0.057	6.469	0.000

POP -> HB	-0.364	-0.365	0.065	3.889	0.000

Note. KH= Knowledge hiding, HB= Helping behavior, POP=Perception of politics

The first hypothesis is to establish if there is any impact of peers' knowledge hiding on the helping behaviors of employees. The results illustrate that H_1 stands valid and significant (β= -0.532; t=5.330; p=0.000). The t-value (quoted in Table 6) is greater than 1.96 and the p-value of this relationship is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 that means peers' knowledge hiding has a negative impact on helping behavior of employees, whereas the β value shows a negative impact of KH on HB. Hence all the three indicators establish that H_1 is supported.

The second hypothesis claims peers' knowledge hiding has a positive impact on the perception of politics. The results for this hypothesis (β= 0.572; t=6.469; p=0.000) support H_2 thus, the hypothesis is accepted. The results reveal that peers' knowledge hiding has a significant positive impact on HB, where β is positive and t-value is way greater than 1.96.

Third hypothesis of the direct relationship of perception of politics and helping behaviors entails that the perception of politics has a negative impact on the helping behaviors, the results reveal that POP has insignificant impact on HB (β= -0.364; t=3.889; p=0.000: see Table 6). Hence, H_3 is supported and the β value shows that these variables share a negative relationship whereas, the p-value is less than 0.05, thus the hypothesis is accepted and the negative relationship of POP and HB is established.

Table No 7: Mediating Effect Analysis

Direct Effect				Indirect Effect of KH on HB			
KH -> HB	β	p-value	**KH->POP->HB**	β	SD	t-value	p-value
	-0.531	0.000		-0.210	0.044	4.763	0.000

Direct effect shows relationship between knowledge hiding and helping behavior. Indirect effect shows the mediating effect of perception of politics between the relationship of knowledge hiding and helping behavior. $p<0.05$

To assess the mediation effect direct and indirect effect on the relationship of peers' knowledge hiding and helping behaviors was observed, as in Smart PLS mediation effect is established by evaluating the indirect effect (Hair et al., 2021). The indirect effect was checked for its significance and both p-value and t-value were checked for the significance. As shown in Table 7, it is evident that the p-value of mediation relationship is significant as it is less than 0.05 and t-value is also above 1.96, therefore, we can establish that the mediation of perception of politics is significant on the relationship of peers' knowledge hiding and helping behaviors.

The results (see Table 7) show that the direct effect of KH on HB is significant (β= -0.531, t= 5.330, p= 0.000). With inclusion of the mediating variable POP, the indirect effect

of KH on HB through POP was also found significant (β=-0.210, t= 4.763, p=0.000). Therefore, it is statistically significant that when peers' hide knowledge, it generates a perception of politics in the organization and this perception mediates the relationship between peers' knowledge hiding and helping behaviors of employees.

Table No 8: Moderating Effect of Core Self- Evaluation

Relationship	B	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	t-Statistics	p-value
POP ->CSE-> HB	0.361	0.431	0.049	1.979	0.039

Note. POP= Perception of politics, CSE= Core self-evaluation, HB= Helping behavior; p < 0.05

Figure No 2: Moderating Effect
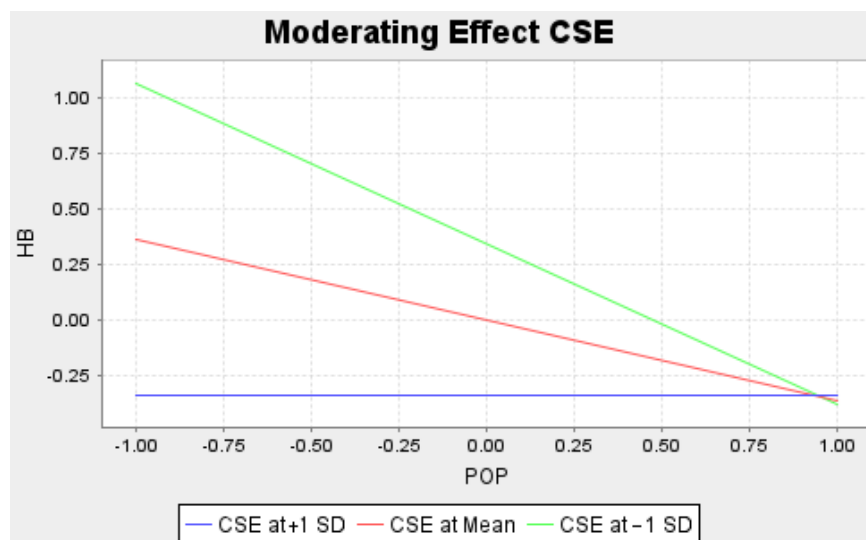
The analysis of moderation is well articulated using simple slope analysis, it is a well-established way to study the interaction of one variable on another variable in the presence of a moderator (Curran et al., 2004). Thus, to illustrate the moderating effect of CSE on the relationship of POP and HB we will be using the tool of simple slope analysis, as depicted in Figure 2 and testing the significance of the relationship by evaluating *p*-value and t-value.

The relationship of POP and HB is established negative in nature as reflected by negative β value in Table 6, the increase in POP will cause decrease in HB and decrease in perception of politics will increase the helping behaviors. Also, the direct relationship of POP and HB is significant with p-value < 0.05. The simple slope analysis depicts the same as shown in Figure 2.0, where we can see this negative relationship in the downward sloping middle line, at low perception of politics, helping behaviors are higher and at higher level of perception of politics the helping behaviors take a downward slope showing negative trend. This trend is observed when CSE is at mean level, meaning CSE is not impacting this relationship.

But when CSE levels are on lower side, we can see that the graph becomes steeper. Establishing an indirect relationship between POP and HB, when POP is at lower end HB is on higher side and as POP increases HB shows a decreasing trend. This trend interprets that when CSE is at mean level and at lower level the graph depicts the same relationship of POP and HB, it's just that the graph is much steeper at low CSE levels but the trend is the same, thus establishing that employees with low CSE levels tend to behave in the same way when it comes to the relationship between POP and HB as compared to the employees where CSE is considered at mean level.

Whereas, the graph depicts when CSE score is on higher side the relationship of POP and HB is more of a straight line. The graph of simple slope analysis (Figure 2) shows a clear role of CSE a moderator (between perception of politics and helping behaviors), perception of politics being on the lesser side or higher side helping behaviors remain unchanged. Thus, it is evident that employees with high core self- evaluation are not affected by the negativity of perception of politics and continue offering helping behaviors regardless of the perception of politics prevailing at high level or low level in their organization.

Table No 9: Model Fit Analysis

Variables	R^2	Q^2
HB	0.643	0.461
POP	0.327	0.178

Note. $R^2 > 0.2$, $Q^2 > 0$, HB= Helping behavior, POP= Perception of politics

Table No 10: f^2 Effect size

Relationship	f^2	Effect Size
KH-> HB	0.189	Medium
KH -> POP	0.486	High
POP -> HB	0.220	High

Note. KH= Knowledge hiding, HB=Helping behaviors, POP= Perception of politics

The goodness of the model is established by the forte of the structural path referred by R^2 value of the dependent variable (Briones Peñalver et al., 2018), the value of R^2 shall be equal to or above 0.1 (Falk & Miller, 1992). The results in Table 9 show that all R^2 values are over 0.1, therefore establishing the predictive competence. Moreover, Q^2 refer to the predictive variance of the constructs, it is calculated through blindfolding procedure. If Q^2 value is above 0 it shows that the model of research has predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2021). Table 9 shows the results in this regard and the Q^2 values of the endogenous constructs is above 0, establishing that this model has predictive relevance. In addition to examining the endogenous R^2 values, the f^2 size helps us to know that if a construct is removed from the model what impact it makes on the R^2 value of other constructs. The f^2 size is evaluated based on Cohen (1988) guideline for effect size i-e, 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 represent the small, medium and high effects of the exogenous variable. Table 10 demonstrates the f^2 size of the relationships, a value below 0.02 shows no effect but in our study f^2 size lies from medium to high between constructs.

4.1 Discussion

This research has extended the scope of knowledge hiding study from the perspective of the target. It has broadened the horizon of the literature available on knowledge hiding by examining the effect of peers' knowledge hiding on helping behaviors of the target employees through the mediating role of perception of politics and also probing the impact of core self-evaluation as a comprehensive personality trait on the relationship between perception of politics and voluntary behavior of helping employees. The application of COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001), also stands valid as the results illustrates that, as target employees feel deprived of a valuable resource of knowledge, they start conserving the available pool of resources by decreasing helping behaviors, where core self-evaluation then acts as a strong boost to the existing resource pool and diminishes the impact of perception of politics on the helping behaviors.

This study adds to the literature by establishing that there is a negative impact of knowledge hiding on the helping behaviors of employees towards their peers. Building up on COR theory, it is established that when employees feel rejected and deprived of a valuable resource of knowledge, it creates a negative impact, as a reaction, employee start conserving the available resources and helping behavior being a voluntary behavior is compromised and there is a significant decrease in the helping behaviors of target employees towards their peers. Furthermore, this research endorses the previous research that a loop of distrust and competitiveness is originated by experiencing knowledge hiding and further establishes that peers' knowledge hiding gives birth to perception of politics at workplace.

Extant research establishes that the relationship between the employee's trust in supervisor and offering helping behaviors at work is dependent on perception of politics, the less political conditions at work the more trust-in-supervisor was noticed and more helping behaviors were observed (Poon, 2006). Whereas, this research adds to the literature by studying direct relationship of perception of politics on helping behaviors and it is established that the hypothesis stands valid and perception of politics in an organization will lead to reduced helping behaviors of employees towards their peers at workplace.

Previous studies throw light on the concept that employees offer helping behaviors with the intention of receiving some benefit in return, whereas, perception of politics lessens the chances of any such benefit and employee feels that the investment of time and effort might not be worth it (Copanzano et al., 1997; Aryee et al., 2004; Cropanzano et al., 2005; Poon, 2006). This study is contributing to the existing literature on knowledge hiding by reconnoitering how perception of politics works as an interpersonal stressor between the hider and the target and links the impact of knowledge hiding as a reducer of voluntary behaviors at work. Also, the fact that peers' knowledge hiding impacts the overall work environment by directly creating the perception of politics at work and a sense of uncertainty for the target employees, as a reaction they tend to conserve the resources in hand.

At the same time, this study has highlighted core self-evaluation as an all-inclusive personality trait which acts as a resource booster for the target employees and gives them confidence to keep performing regardless of the perception of politics and does not let the negativity impact the helping behaviors at work. Core self- evaluation moderates the relationship between perception of politics and helping behavior; such as this relationship is weak when core self-evaluation is high. This research also enriches the literature on knowledge hiding by exploring knowledge hiding by peers from the target's perspective and analyzing the impact of knowledge hiding on the target's helping behaviors, under the umbrella of COR theory, thus extending the previous claim of COR theory from the perspective of knowledge hiding. Moreover, this study highlights the comprehensive personality trait of core self-evaluation as a rescuer to mellow down the impact of perception of politics on helping behaviors.

5. Conclusion

The research conducted with peers' knowledge hiding as independent variable has significantly proved that knowledge hiding has a direct and indirect influence on the helping behaviors. It is manifested in this research that peers' knowledge hiding has a negative impact on the helping behaviors, thus creating a bad taste in the work environment of an organization. Also, it has a direct impact in creating perception of politics in the organization thus creating a sense of threat in employees. Drawing on COR theory, its application is viable in this research and it is established that when there is a sense of threat in the employees they start conserving on the available resources to maintain the competitive edge at work. The sense of retaliation provokes the negativity of employees and they conserve the resources to maintain the sense of self control and competitiveness. The IT organizations face the challenge of knowledge hiding and the productivity of teams is compromised when they feel deprived of knowledge, this research will help the management to figure out the factors that can be controlled to reduce the negative effects of knowledge hiding.

Furthermore, the relationship of perception of politics and helping behaviors was found to be significant and the negativity of perception of politics was less affective on helping behaviors for individuals with higher core self-evaluation. Thus, we can safely propose the counter strategy to limit the negativity of perception of politics by inducting employees with higher core self-evaluation that gives them high self-esteem, higher self-confidence and positive approach to deal in pressure situations. The recruitment processes of IT companies can include evaluation of personal traits like CSE to hire a pool of people who are less affected by the negativity and stay focused towards their professional goals.

5.1 Practical Implications

This study gives an insight to management and employees both as to how knowledge hiding can affect the performance at work, thus managers can enhance the practices of knowledge sharing by motivating employees to engage in knowledge sharing practices and limiting the practices of knowledge hiding. Thus, the management can encourage the employees to engage in knowledge sharing among peers by encouraging interpersonal communications, combined lunch breaks, planning team building activities to have better team

interactions and support among employees, thereby, increasing the sense of belongingness, sense of responsibility and accountability as a team. The organizational rewards can be linked to knowledge sharing behaviors, the rewards can be in terms of bonuses, rewards or recognition.

Another very imperious implication practically, is the identification of a comprehensive personality trait of core self-evaluation. The HR can include the evaluation of this personality trait in their recruitment program of IT companies in Pakistan to ensure the hiring of candidates who have high core self-evaluation, thus, they will be less affected by factors as perception of politics and they have much better self-confidence and positive approach. Enhanced personal resources can boost up the performance of employees at work (Cole et al., 2010). This has been proven in this study that high core self-evaluation bridges the gap between perception of politics and helping behaviors. Thus, ensuring the damage control of the negativity of peers' knowledge hiding on the work performance.

It is not possible to completely rule out the possibility of incidents of knowledge hiding in any organization (Pan et al., 2018). Thus, engaging employees in constant learning programs, grooming the personal resource pool of the employees and sharing success stories of organizations or teams who have been in the habit of sharing knowledge can be conducted to uplift the morale of the employees (Cerne et al., 2014; Mills et al., 2010). It will encourage them to engage in knowledge sharing practices and will also give the sense of belongingness to the employees. As highlighted in this research that perception of politics created by peers' knowledge hiding takes the employees in a retaliation zone, where they start conserving the resources. Such practices can mellow down the impact of negativity and can make the employees feel that they also carry a worth for the organization as the organization is investing time and money.

5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

The limitations are always there in any research. This study also has its limitations, first of all, the study is led in IT sector of Pakistan. This distinctiveness can be a hindrance in claiming general claim for other industries, this might cause difficulty of exact imitation in some other context. Hence, the findings might not be true for other industries or countries as individuals are persuaded by the culture of their organizations and country. The research can be conducted at a cross- country level to give a generalized finding platform that incorporates various organizational and national cultures and gives more depth to this study.

The future researchers can use this theoretical model in other settings to give a more generalized opinion. Also, in Pakistan the service industry can be studied in the context of this theoretical model. Secondly, the sampling technique used in this study is the convenient sampling, it is considered to be restricted in its illustrative capability (Gravetter & Forzano, 2011). Other sampling techniques can be used other than convenient sampling to broaden the horizon of this study. Though convenient sampling is a widely used technique in organizational behavioral researches but it is considered to be bound in its demonstrative power. Hence, other sampling techniques can be used in future research and qualitative method can also be adopted.

Finally, this research has taken only one personality aspect under consideration, more personality traits and theories can be incorporated in this setting to get a more detailed perspective. Future studies can consider any other variable as a mediator along with the same independent and dependent variable. This will give a deeper insight of the model and can give a new dimension to the existing model.

6. **References**

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