The Importance of Uncovering Hidden Knowledge in Organizations
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Summary

In our introduction to this special issue on understanding knowledge hiding in organi-zations, we provide some context to how and why this phenomenon should be studied. We then describe the five articles that comprise the special issue, and we note somecommon themes and divergences in this collection. Our introduction concludes withsome suggestions for future research on knowledge hiding in organizations.

1 | INTRODUCTION

In order to improve productivity inside a company, many managers encourage staff members to openly share their expertise. However, companies do not "own" their employees' intellectual property (Kelloway & Barling, 2000), and many workers would rather retain their expertise to themselves. There are repercussions to the hasty choice to keep information secret, thus it's in our best interest to learn more about this phenomena.

Connelly, Zweig, Webster, and Trougakos (2012) describe knowledge hiding as "an intentional attempt by an individual to withhold or conceal knowledge that has been requested by another person" (p. 65). Many studies have looked at the causes and effects of knowledge concealing since the concept was first introduced in 2012. The effects of knowledge concealment on businesses, friendships, and families are far-reaching. Results like decreased creativity (Bogilovi, erne, & kerlavaj, 2017; erne, Nerstad, Dysvik, & kerlavaj, 2014; Rhee & Choi, 2017) and innovative work behavior (erne, Hernaus, Dysvik, & kerlavaj, 2017) as well as decreased individual performance (Wang, Han, Xiang, & Hampson, 2018) have been associated with it. Connelly et al. (2012) and Connelly and Zweig (2015) both found that when people withheld information from others, it led to increased mistrust and a breakdown in relationships. Furthermore, Arain, Bhatti, Ashraf, and Fang (2018) provide evidence that information concealing may transfer from superiors to subordinates.

Knowledge hiding's origins have also been studied in recent years. High levels of mistrust and competition have been demonstrated to enhance knowledge concealing (Hernaus, erne, connelly, poloki voki, & kerlavaj, 2018; Malik, et al., 2019). When people have high levels of proving goal orientation (Rhee & Choi, 2017) or prosocial motivation (kerlavaj, Connelly, erne, & Dysvik, 2018), they are less likely to hide information from one another in social situations or work environments (erne et al., 2014). Pan, Zhang, Teo, & Lim (2018) speculate that members of the "dark triad" personality types may be more likely to engage in knowledge concealment. It has also been shown that job/work environment context, as well as individual traits, play significant roles. Knowledge hiding has been shown to have a negative effect on a team's creativity; however, research suggests that job-based psychological ownership can predict knowledge hiding, even when avoidance motivation is high (Fong, Men, Luo, & Jia, 2018; Wang, Law, Zhang, Li, & Liang, 2019). information hiding may be modified by subjective norms surrounding cooperation (Xiong, Chang, Scuotto, Shi, & Paoloni, in press); there is evidence that prosocial motivation and cultural values interact to predict information concealing (Babi, erne, kerlavaj, & Zhang, 2018). Those with higher social position within an organization tend to be more vulnerable to the negative consequences of information concealment (i.e., on creativity) (Rhee & Choi, 2017).

Despite these advances, it is clear that additional empirical research on knowledge hiding is necessary, for several reasons. First, although knowledge hiding has sometimes been described as a unitary construct, it is best understood as consisting of three different facets,as we describe below. These facets, when examined in conjunction with one another, help to explain some of the phenomenon's crucial nuances. Second, little is known about the characteristics of the tar- gets or perpetrators of knowledge hiding. Third, the full range of the outcomes of knowledge hiding (above and beyond interpersonal rela-tionship characteristics and extrarole behaviors) has yet to be exam-ined. Fourth, the context in which knowledge hiding at work takes place also requires further scrutiny.

Knowledge hiding is a multidimensional construct, composed of three facets. According to Connelly et al. (2012), *rationalized knowledge*hiding is the least deceptive and refers to when a hider provides an explanation as to why the information will not be forthcoming; *evasive hiding* occurs when the hider provides incorrect or partial informationor a misleading promise of a more complete answer in the future; and*playing dumb* refers to instances where the hider feigns ignorance inorder to avoid providing any information to the requestor. Depending on the research question, knowledge hiding may be assessed in threedifferent ways. For example, if the underlying theory suggests that only one facet of knowledge hiding is of interest, then this facet can be stud- ied individually. Likewise,

if the underlying theory suggests that there may be an interesting interplay between the different dimensions, these can be studied in conjunction with one another. Finally, there will be instances where the overall construct is of interest; in these cases, the entire measure should be used. Because knowledge hiding is sometimes deceptive, a self-report measure is appropriate; others may underesti-mate or overestimate how frequently knowledge is hidden from them.

2 | ARTICLES

Given the important research questions about knowledge hiding that remain to be examined, we are especially pleased to introduce the papers that comprise our special issue on understanding knowledge hid-ing in organizations. Each of the five papers is described below. We then explain some future directions for knowledge hiding research.

The paper by Gagné et al. (2019) examines the motivation of employees to share and hide knowledge. The authors use self-deter-mination theory to explain why knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding might have different motivations and to explore how work design characteristics might affect how employees respond to their colleagues' requests for information. The authors conducted two studies, each applying a time-lagged research design: a panel survey ($n = 394$) and a field survey ($n = 195$). The results, obtained with structural equation modeling, suggest that cognitive job demands and job autonomy were related to knowledge sharing frequency and usefulness via autonomous motivation to share knowledge. The results also suggest that task interdependence is related to all three forms of knowledge hiding (i.e., evasive hiding, rationalized hiding, and playing dumb) via external regulation to share knowl- edge. This study extends existing knowledge hiding research by examining the reasons why employees hide knowledge, and it explores how these motivations are shaped by job characteristics. Not only is this the first study to address job design in relation to knowledge hiding, but it also makes contributions that go beyond these linkages. By examining both knowledge hiding and sharing simultaneously, the authors challenge our understanding of the dif- ferences between the two constructs and of what drives them.

Jiang, Hu, Wang, and Jiang (2019) contribute to our understanding of the implications of knowledge hiding for the person who hides. Specifi- cally, they use self-perception theory and the socially embedded model of thriving to explain the roles of psychological safety and organizational cynicism in the relationship between an employee's knowledge hiding and his or her thriving as an employee. Based on a series of studies (Study 1a, $n = 214$; Study 1b, $n = 392$; Study 2, $n = 273$) conducted in China, this research explains some of the consequences of knowledge hiding for the individual who engages in it. Although the impact of knowledge hiding on those who do not receive the information that they requested is impor- tant, the full effects of knowledge hiding on knowledge hiders have yet to be fully elucidated. This paper is therefore a useful step in fleshing out this literature. The authors focus on the mechanisms through which knowl-edge hiding affects the hider. In keeping with self-perception theory, their research also considers the context in which employees decide to hide their knowledge. They find that organizational cynicism strengthens the negative relationship between knowledge hiding and psychological safety. Offergelt, Spörrle, Moser, and Shaw (2019) explain subordinate knowledge hiding by introducing and measuring the concept of leader-signaled knowledge hiding. On the basis of social learning theory and role modeling, they define leader-signaled knowledge hiding as the extent to which subordinates perceive their leader to practice, tolerate, and expect knowledge hiding. Furthermore, they examine the associa- tion between leader-signaled knowledge hiding and several employee outcomes, mediated by subordinate knowledge hiding (distinctly for playing dumb, evasive hiding, and rationalized hiding). With two studies (crossed-lagged Study 1, $n = 1,162$; replication Study 2, $n = 1,169$), the authors first introduce and validate a new scale for leader-signaled knowledge hiding. Using this measure, they find that evasive hiding and playing dumb are associated with reduced job satisfaction, increased turnover intentions, and diminished psychological empower-ment. Interestingly, rationalized hiding was not associated with job sat-isfaction or turnover intentions, and it actually increases employees' psychological empowerment. The explanation for this finding may stem from conceptual differences between the three facets of knowledge hiding; whereas evasive hiding and playing dumb involve deception, rationalized hiding does not. By introducing a novel construct and exam-ining new consequences of knowledge hiding, the authors extend our understanding of knowledge hiding in organizations.

Zhao, Liu, Li, and Yu (2019) consider how employees' relationships with their leaders (i.e., leader–member exchange [LMX]) may affect how much they hide knowledge from their colleagues. These authors draw on the group engagement model, which extends social identity theory to the group and organization context, and they examine each facet of knowledge hiding separately. Their model examines whether organizational identification mediates the relationship between LMX and knowledge hiding, and whether relative LMX moderates the rela-tionship between LMX and employees' organizational identification. The hypotheses were tested using two time-lagged studies (Study 1, n = 317; Study 2, $n = 248$). The results of the first study provided support for the proposed model, but only for two types of knowledge hiding: evasive hiding and playing dumb (but not rationalized hiding). Study 2 replicated and extended these findings and used a leader-reported mea-sure of LMX. This paper has implications for knowledge hiding research given its demonstration that the quality of the leader–subordinate rela- tionship affects employees' knowledge hiding. Like the preceding paper, it also contributes to the knowledge hiding literature by suggesting that

rationalized hiding, which involves less deception than playing dumb or evasive hiding, may have different antecedents.

Zhu, Chen, Wang, Jin, and Wang (2019) explain why and how per-formance-prove goal orientation predicts increased levels of knowl- edge hiding. These authors studied the extent to which this effect depends on whether performance feedback is focused on individuals versus groups, which may form a different competitive expression of performance-prove goal orientation. They conducted three comple- mentary studies to test their proposed model. The first study, with 128 part-time master of business administration students, suggested that performance-prove goal orientation was positively related to knowledge hiding when performance feedback focused on individual performance but showed the opposite pattern when it focused more on group performance. In the second study, the authors replicated these findings in an experiment with 210 undergraduate students. The third study replicated the findings of the first two studies, with multisource data from 317 employees and their supervisors. This research contributes to our understanding of the antecedents of knowledge hiding, and it offers useful practical implications for man- agers who seek to discourage this behavior.

3 | FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This collection of five innovative papers addresses several key themes that extend our understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of knowledge hiding in organizations. These papers use a variety of theo- retical lenses to guide their hypotheses, including social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977), self-perception the-ory (Bem, 1972), and the socially embedded model of thriving (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). Using these theories, the papers in this special issue take very different approaches to extend the nomological net of knowledge hiding. For example, some studies (e.g., Jiang et al., 2019) examine knowledge hiding as a holistic construct, whereas others consider the roles of each facet separately (e.g., Zhu et al., 2019). Likewise, two studies (i.e., Offergelt et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2019) explore the role of leaders and leadership in predicting knowledge hiding, whereas the other articles focus primarily on interemployee dyadic interactions. Whereas one study examines knowledge sharing as well as knowledge hiding (i.e., Gagné et al., 2019), the other studies consider knowledge hiding exclusively.

Despite the clear contributions of each paper in this special issue, additional research to extend these findings is needed. An examination of the theoretical antecedents and consequences of knowledge hiding in organizations described in Connelly et al. (2012) and extended from Wang and Noe's (2010) model of knowledge sharing is instructive in this regard. Additional research is needed on the factors that contribute to an individual's decision to hide knowledge, such as interpersonal justice and power differentials as well as organizational factors such as the con- text in which the request takes place. It would also be interesting to con- sider circumstances where the knowledge hider has positive or prosocial intentions. Further research is also needed on the positive and negative consequences of knowledge hiding, for both the requestor and the hider, as well as the work unit or organization. The literature on knowledge hiding would also benefit from a more thorough understand- ing of the boundary conditions of this phenomenon, that is, under what conditions (e.g., individual characteristics such as self-monitoring, self- efficacy, professional commitment, and social norms) knowledge hiding is less likely to take place. Given the complicated nature of knowledge hiding and its significant consequences for organizations, additional research with a variety of methods is needed (e.g., qualitative research, social network analysis, experience sampling or diary studies, and latent profile analysis). Longitudinal research designs that examine how knowledge hiding unfolds over time would also be useful.

4 | CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding continual innovations in communication technologies that have the potential to increase knowledge sharing among col- leagues, knowledge hiding remains pervasive in organizations. The arti- cles included in this special issue make vital contributions in terms of deepening our understanding of why and when knowledge hiding occurs and what this means for individuals who experience it. We are therefore delighted to share these articles with you.

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