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### MEDIATING ROLE OF DISTRUST IN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HYPOCRITICAL LEADERSHIP AND NURSES' KNOWLEDGE HIDING BEHAVIOR IN HEALTHCARE HOSPITALS OF PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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**Muhammad Asad Ullah, Khalid Rehman, Farhat Ullah, Adnan Khan, Fawad Khan, Mehboob Alam. Mediating Role of Distrust in Relationship Between Hypocritical Leadership and Nurses' Knowledge Hiding Behavior in Healthcare Hospitals of Punjab, Pakistan -- PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 19(3), 1014-1023. ISSN 1567-214x**

**Key Words: Hypocritical Leadership, Distrust, Knowledge Hiding, Healthcare Hospitals**

#### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** Extant literature examined the positive side of leadership and the so-called promising individual and organizational benefits associated with this type of leadership. However, the dark side of leadership and its individual and Organizational outcomes lacked the attention of the researchers. Based on the assumptions of behavioral integrity theory, the current study examined the mediating effect of distrust in leader's hypocrisy and an employee's knowledge hiding behavior relationship.

**Methodology:** By employing a cross-sectional design, a total of 324 nurses serving three private sector hospitals operating in Southern Punjab in Pakistan completed self-administered questionnaires.

**Findings:** A positive and significant relationship was found between leader's hypocrisy and employees' behavior to hide knowledge ( $r=.301^{**}$ ), leaders' hypocrisy and distrust ( $r=.239^{**}$ ), as well as distrust and employees' knowledge hiding behavior ( $r=.639^{**}$ ). Further, based on results of bootstrapping approach, mediation of distrust was proved in leaders' hypocrisy and employees' tendency to hide knowledge at confidence interval of 95%, excluding zero (CI.95 =0.0560, 0.1693).

**Originality:** The role of other dysfunctional leaderships such as hypocritical leadership in promoting knowledge hiding is neglected in business and management literature. This study bridges this gap by examining the mediating role of distrust in relationship of hypocritical leadership and knowledge hiding. Further, based on the assumptions of behavioral integrity theory, this study has answered the questions why and how employees hide knowledge in the organizations.

## INTRODUCTION

Extant literature has examined positive and normative leadership's individual and organizational outcomes, especially in the business and management domain (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). However, there is growing criticism over the exaggerated emphasis on so-called promising and positive organizational scholarship literature as it neglects the outcomes of destructive or counter-productive formats of leadership and management (Syed, Naseer, Akhtar, Husnain, & Kashif, 2021; Harris & Jones, 2018; Kipfelsberger & Kark, 2018). This destructive leadership is often regarded as dark leadership. One of the most detrimental dimensions of dark leadership is hypocritical leadership (Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Piccolo, 2012). Hypocritical leadership refers to the leadership that fails to "walk with the talk," exhibiting word-deed misaligned behaviors. Such misaligned behaviors may result in harsh interpersonal outcomes including moral condemnation as well as distrust that may adversely in turn may have adverse effects throughout organizations (Effron, O'Connor, Leroy, & Lucas, 2018; Boddy, 2006). These hypocritical leaders are self-focusing, lacking empathy (Effron et al., 2018), and creating a toxic environment by bullying and undermining their subordinates (Eissa, Chinchanchokchai, & Wyland, 2017; Boddy, 2006), thereby reducing their trust. Consequently, employees may exhibit counter-productive behavior such as burnout, workplace bullying, turnover intentions, and knowledge hiding behavior which may have detrimental individual and organizational outcomes (Syed et al., 2021; Connelly et al., 2012). However, literature suggests that employee outcomes are not directly translated by leadership; instead it requires certain mediating mechanisms (Eissa et al., 2017). Hypocritical supervisor behavior misaligned with their words results in employees distancing themselves from supervisors. This distrust results in negative individual and organizational outcomes, such as turnover intentions, decreased organization citizenship behavior, and learned knowledge hiding (Effron, O'Connor, Leroy, & Lucas, 2018).

Irrespective of such significant relevance of hypocritical leadership with the knowledge hiding behavior in terms of adverse outcomes, the relationship lacked the attention of researchers and organizational managers (Wagner,

2016). Limited studies that examined the impact of dark leadership, such as abusive supervision (Farooq & Sultana, 2021), narcissist leadership (Wagner, 2016), passive leadership (Mubarak, Osmadi, Khan, & Mahdiyar, 2021), and exploitative leadership (Syed et al., 2021). However, the role of other dysfunctional leaderships such as hypocritical leadership in promoting knowledge hiding is neglected in business and management literature. There is extant evidence from the recent literature that stresses examining this dysfunctional and darker side of leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Further, Connelly *et al.* (2019) and Connelly *et al.* (2012) suggested investigation of factors contributing to decision of an individual to conceal knowledge. As far as mediating mechanisms in the association of leaders' hypocrisy and subordinates' knowledge hiding is concerned, literature suggests that employees' outcomes are not directly translated by leadership; instead it requires certain mediating mechanisms (Eissa et al., 2017). In this case, distrust may be the most appropriate mechanism to mediate the relationship of leaders' hypocrisy and decision of employees to hide knowledge as it is the key predictor of individual's decision in hiding or sharing knowledge (Farooq et al., 2021). Based on this argument, the current study examined the mediating role of distrust in hypocritical leadership and employees' knowledge hiding behavior relationship.

This study may contributed to literature on knowledge management as well as leadership by (i) responding to the call for knowledge hiding behavior of Connelly et al. (2019) by investigating causes and consequences of knowledge hiding behaviors and (ii) adding new knowledge in the emerging domain of dark leadership by establishing and testing the relationship of hypocritical leadership and knowledge hiding behaviors (Syed, Naseer, Akhtar, Husnain, & Kashif, 2021; Thoroughgood, Sawyer, Padilla, & Lunsford, 2018)

### ***Theory and Hypotheses Development***

#### ***Hypocritical Leadership and Knowledge Hiding***

Hypocritical leadership is a form of dark/dysfunctional leadership characterized by saying something and doing another thing (Efron et al., 2018). It refers to form of leadership characterized by word-deed misalignment i.e. preaching values that they do not demonstrate by their actions or behaviors (Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000). It is simply failing to walk the talk (Greenbaum et al., 2012). Studies suggest that due to the hypocritical behavior of their supervisors, employees may respond unfavorably, such as turnover intentions (Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Piccolo, 2012), distrust (Hernaus, Cerne, Connelly, Poloski, & Skerlavaj, 2019), and knowledge hiding (Syed et al., 2021). The most adverse individual and organizational outcome of this dysfunctional leadership domain may be knowledge hiding. Knowledge hiding involves intentionally withholding or concealing requested knowledge in the organization (Connelly et al., 2019). It is different from knowledge hoarding because knowledge hoarding is concealing the knowledge that others have not asked. Recent Research has investigated factors that may lead employees to hide knowledge (Connelly et al., 2012). Results of such studies suggest that when employees are mistreated,

or their supervisors do not talk, they start distrusting them and, consequently, hide their knowledge. Thus, knowledge hiding is the retaliatory behavior of employees towards the hypocrisy of their supervisors (Farooq & Sultana, 2021). Following is hypothesized on the basis of these arguments;

***Hypothesis 1: Leader's hypocrisy is positively related to the knowledge hiding behavior of employees.***

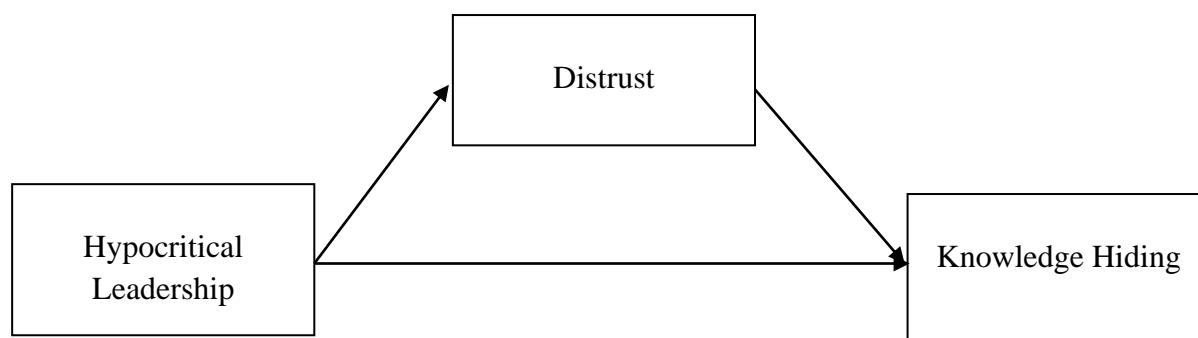
### ***Mediating Role of Distrust in Hypocritical Leadership and Knowledge Hiding***

A wise leader creates a climate of trust and knowledge-sharing behavior in the organization. However, when a leader says something and does something else, they fail to win the trust of their subordinate, thereby creating a climate of distrust (Mubarak, Osmadi, Khan, & Mahdiyar, 2021). Distrust refers to the measure of perceptions of trustor towards the negative response of trustee in a specific situation (Marsh & Dibben, 2005). Recent shreds of evidence suggest that distrust between the supervisor and subordinate ignites knowledge hiding behavior among the subordinates (Butt & Ahmad, 2020; Jha & Varkkey, 2018). Connelly et al. (2012) contend that due to specific reasons (mistreatment, fear of negative evaluation, fear of job insecurity, lack of recognition and career prospect at stake), distrust among colleagues and leadership trigger knowledge hiding in the organizations, which in turn adversely affects the overall wellbeing of the organization. Extant literature suggests that leadership develops a climate of trust or distrust that affects knowledge sharing or knowledge hiding decisions in the organization. However, literature also suggests that employees' outcomes are not directly translated by leadership; instead it requires certain mediating mechanisms (Eissa et al., 2017). When employees are mistreated, or their supervisors do not walk the talk, they start distrusting them, and consequently, they exhibit counter-productive behavior such as hiding knowledge from them.

Based on the assumptions of behavioral integrity theory, the researchers argue that hypocritical leadership at the workplace exacerbates employee's perceptions of distrust (Effron et al., 2018), which may result in counter-productive behaviors (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002) such as knowledge hiding behavior among the employees. Behavioral integrity theory proposed that as a result of word-deed misalignment of supervisors in the organizations during its operations, perceptions of lack of behavioral integrity among subordinates may develop (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Simons, 2002). This misaligned behavior increases employees' perceptions of distrust. Ultimately, they may feel uncertainty regarding their supervisor's future behavior and may start distancing themselves from the supervisor and the organization as well. Hence, the uncertainty inherent in leader hypocrisy may increase subordinate knowledge hiding behavior. Thus the following hypotheses have developed;

***Hypothesis 2: Distrust increases employees' knowledge hiding behavior.***

***Hypothesis 3: Distrust mediates relationship of hypocritical leadership and employees' knowledge hiding.***



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

## METHODS

### *Participants and Sample*

Participants of this study include 324 female nurses employed at three tertiary healthcare hospitals of Southern Punjab, Pakistan. The participants reported their perceptions about the hypocrisy of their supervisors and distrust in them as well as their decision to hide knowledge through a self-administered questionnaire.

### *Measures*

The current study used self-report measures to seek the responses of the participants. A five point rating scale was used to anchor the responses of participant that ranged from Strongly Disagree=1 to Strongly Agree=5.

***Knowledge Hiding:*** Employees' knowledge hiding was gauged through a scale of 12 items developed by Connelly et al. (2012). Sample item include "I pretended that I did not know the information". The reliability of this scale was measured as  $\alpha=0.95$ .

***Hypocritical Leadership:*** The study used a 4 items' scale developed by Dineen et al. (2006) to measure leaders' hypocrisy. Sample items include, "I wish my supervisor would practice what he/she preaches more often". The reliability of this scale was measured as  $\alpha=0.98$ .

***Distrust:*** A 5-items scale developed by McAllister, Lewicki & Bies (2000) was used to measure Distrust. Sample items include, "I am cautious about telling my supervisor my opinion". The reliability of this scale was measured as  $\alpha=0.91$ .

## RESULTS

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, including model measurement, correlation analysis, and mediation analysis through Preacher & Hayes (2008) Process.

**Table 1:** Factor Loading and Reliability

Constructs	Items	Loading	Cronbach's Reliability	CR	AVE			
Hypocritical Leadership (4×items)	HL1	0.823	0.95	0.95	0.84			
	HL2	0.888						
	HL3	0.821						
	HL4	0.930						
Knowledge Hiding (12×items)	KH1	0.815	0.98	0.97	0.72			
	KH2	0.797						
	KH3	0.908						
	KH4	0.787						
	KH5	0.812						
	KH6	0.811						
	KH7	0.905						
	KH8	0.787						
	KH9	0.723						
	KH10	0.708						
	KH11	0.902				0.91	0.89	0.63
	KH12	0.878						
Distrust (5×items)	Distrust1	0.734						
	Distrust2	0.724						
	Distrust3	0.788						
	Distrust4	0.727						
	Distrust5	0.777						

We evaluated the model in four phases. The first phase revealed that the outer loading of each corresponding item exceeded a threshold of 0.70. The second and third phases included the measurement of constructs' reliability through (i) Composite Reliability (CR) and (ii) Cronbach's Alpha Reliability. The constructs were found reliable as their  $\alpha$ -reliability and CR values exceeded 0.7. Convergence of variable on its indicators is determined by calculating Average Variance Extracted (AVE) from the item variance (Hair et al., 2016). Results at table 1 above depict that AVE values exceeding the threshold level of 0.60.

**Table 2:** Correlation Analysis

	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Hypocritical Leadership	2.68	1.383	1	-	
Knowledge Hiding	4.22	1.049	.301**	1	-
Distrust	4.18	0.677	.239**	.639**	1

Table 2 above shows a strong positive and significant relationship between hypocritical leadership and knowledge hiding ( $r=0.301^{**}$ ), hypocritical leadership and distrust ( $r=0.239^{**}$ ), and distrust and knowledge hiding ( $r=0.639^{**}$ ).

**Table 3:** Mediation Analysis

Variable's Relationship	B	T	P
HL to Mediator			
HL ->Distrust	0.117	4.337	0.000
Direct effect of mediator on KH			
Distrust-> KH	0.932	13.628	0.000
HL effect on KH			
HL->KH	0.119	3.550	0.000
	B	CI lower	CI upper
Indirect effect of HL on KH via mediator (bootstrap results)			
Distrust	0.1092	0.0560	0.1693

In support of hypothesis 1, leaders' hypocrisy was positively associated with employees' knowledge hiding such that employees' greater perceptions of leaders' hypocrisy led to more knowledge hiding among employees. Distrust in leaders due to their hypocrisy was also positively correlated with knowledge hiding supporting hypothesis 2.

H3 postulates that distrust mediates the influence of the HL on KH. To check the mediating effect, bootstrapping approach of Preacher & Hayes (2008) was followed. Table 3 demonstrates that the mediating impact of distrust on the relationship between HL and KH is significant at a confidence interval of 95% bootstrap, excluding zero (CI.95 =0.0560, 0.1693).

## DISCUSSION

Results of this study provide insight into relationship of hypocritical leadership, distrust and nurses' knowledge hiding in Pakistan. Dark leadership especially hypocritical leadership is highly important but understudied in management and leadership literature (Effron et al., 2018). Consistent with

previous findings that depicts strong positive relationship of dark leadership and decision of employees' to hide knowledge, leaders' hypocrisy was positively related to KH behavior in the organization. Studies such as Schmid, Pircher, & Peus, (2018) and Pradhan, Srivastava, & Mishra (2018) also examined the impact of dark leadership such as abusive supervision and exploitative supervision reported that dark leadership promotes adverse outcomes such as KH in the organizations.

However, study further confirms that employees' outcomes are not directly translated by leadership; instead it requires certain mediating mechanisms (Eissa et al., 2017). Studies such as Connelly et al., (2012) suggest that certain interpersonal processes such as distrust and hypocritical leadership may promote knowledge hiding behavior. These studies suggest that hostile behavior of leaders (hypocritical) might incite the followers to get even with their bosses via KH behaviors. In view of these findings, this study argues that when supervisors do not walk with their talk, employees feel distrust towards them and starts reciprocating this behavior by hiding knowledge. Based on the assumptions of behavioral integrity theory, this study answered the questions why and how employees hide knowledge in the organizations.

### ***Implications***

This study extends multiple theoretical contributions to the literature on knowledge management and leadership. As discussed earlier, the dark side of leadership especially hypocrisy of leaders, its individual and organizational outcomes and underlying mediating mechanism such as distrust lacked scholarly attention. A few studies can be seen on dark leadership such as exploitative and abusive supervision, however no study directly models hypocritical leadership, distrust and knowledge hiding together. This study bridges this gap by examining the mediating role of distrust in relationship of hypocritical leadership and knowledge hiding.

Secondly, this study contributes to momentum gaining body of literature on KH. Connelly, *et al.* (2019) and Connelly, *et al.* (2012) suggested investigation of the antecedents of knowledge hiding in organizations. This study is unique in nature as it depicts that leaders' hypocrisy is a determinant of KH behavior among employees. However, it further suggests that it occurs through certain mediating mechanisms such as distrust. When employees feel that their supervisor is not "walking with the talk" they start distrusting their supervisor and ultimately they hide knowledge. Based on the assumptions of behavioral integrity theory, this study has answered the questions why and how employees hide knowledge in the organizations.

Finally, this study is unique in nature as it has tested the model in tertiary healthcare sector in Pakistan seeking perceptions of nurses about their supervisors' hypocrisy as an antecedent of their knowledge hiding behavior. In a high power distance and short term orientation culture of Pakistan, nurses may hide knowledge without realizing that it may adversely affect the wellbeing of the patients and the organization in the longer run.



## CONCLUSIONS

In response to the call of Connelly, *et al.* (2019) and Connelly, *et al.* (2012), this study presents unique findings regarding the predictors and mechanism of KH behavior among employees. Findings of this offer support for our proposed model suggesting that due to perceptions of supervisors' hypocrisy, subordinates start distancing themselves from their supervisors. Consequently, a climate of distrust is developed which in turn promotes knowledge hiding in the organizations.

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Like other studies, this study is not free from limitations. The study employed cross-sectional design that has potential limitations of response bias and recency effect. Nurses may have reported perceptions of supervisors' hypocrisy due to certain recent unwanted issue. It is therefore advised to employ time lagged longitudinal design to document the change in behavior of subordinate towards their supervisor. This in turn may produce different results that may be more generalizable.

This study examined the antecedents of knowledge hiding i.e. leaders' hypocrisy through a mediating mechanism of distrust. However, it is suggested to identify the factors that may work as buffer against the leaders' hypocrisy and its outcome as knowledge hiding behavior of employees. In an example, work ethic may buffer the impact of leaders' hypocrisy on knowledge hiding behavior of employees.

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