Investigation of how Gender Moderates and Overall, Justice Mediates the Impact of Abusive Supervision on Knowledge Hiding

[1]Umair Tufail, [2]Sohail Anwar, [3]Harris Ali Waseem, [4]Zeeshan Ahmad

Abstract

The research aimed to explore the influence of abusive supervision on knowledge hiding, considering the concept of overall justice within the framework of social exchange theory. Additionally, employing a moderated mediation model, we investigated the role of gender as a moderator in the connection between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding mediated by overall justice, grounded in social role theory. The data was collected from the participants through likert questionnaire. Smart-PLS software was employed to conduct data analysis. The results, based on a sample of 351 participants from private sector universities in Pakistan, revealed that abusive supervision negatively impacts overall justice. However, the effects of overall justice on knowledge hiding and its mediation between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding were not statistically significant. Nevertheless, abusive supervision's impact on knowledge hiding via overall justice was significant among males but not females. This research contributes valuable insights to the understanding of how individuals of different genders respond to abusive supervision in their pursuit of fairness, thus enriching the literature on knowledge hiding.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management refers to overseeing the knowledge assets of an organization to promote the novelty, dissemination and utilization of knowledge (Hayat, Zhang, Sadiq, & Begum, 2023). The early 1990s marked a pivotal moment when businesses began recognizing the pivotal role of knowledge in enhancing operational efficiency and effectiveness (Kimble, 2020). Companies embraced and popularized knowledge management as a strategic imperative. Notably, the competitive edge derived from knowledge tends to endure due to its scarcity, non-transferability

[1] *Sr. Computer Personnel, Postgraduate Medical Institute. umairtufail786@gmail.com*

[2] *Program Manager/Lecturer, Superior University, Lahore.* sohail4126508@gmail.com *(Corresponding Author)*

[3] *Scholar, Superior University, Lahore.* harrisali88@gmail.com

[4] *Assistant Manager, Admissions, The University of Lahore.* zeeshanshabbir789@gmail.com

and non-replicability, rendering it more sustainable (Abubakar, Elrehail, Alatailat, & Elci, 2019). Recognizing its significance, there's a strong push for employees to propagate knowledge, fostering a culture of knowledge exchange within the workplace. This encouragement stems from the realization that well-equipped employees perform their roles more effectively with the necessary knowledge (Adams & Graham, 2017). Knowledge sharing permeates various facets of human endeavors on a daily basis, whether through direct or indirect means (Ali, Selvam, Paris, & Gunasekaran, 2019). Employees widely acknowledge that sharing of knowledge yields substantial, positive impacts on an organization's long-term development. However, despite this understanding, many employees hesitate to voluntarily engage in knowledge sharing for several reasons (Bi, Sarpong, Botchie, & Rao-Nicholson, 2017). Firstly, there's a fear of losing a unique expertise that positions them as valuable assets within the organization. Secondly, insufficient incentives, both monetary and non-monetary, from companies contribute to the lack of motivation among employees to share knowledge (Brix, 2017). Thirdly, distrust toward colleagues and time constraints stand out as major factors deterring employees from actively participating in knowledge sharing initiatives (George, Parida, Lathi, & Wincent, 2016).

Apart from the declining interest in sharing knowledge, certain employees may take an additional step by deliberately knowledge hiding from their colleagues. Knowledge hiding refers to "an intentional effort by an individual to retain or hide information that has been sought by another person" (Alrubaiee, Alzoubi, Hanandeh, & Ali, 2015). The distinction between knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding is that the latter involves withholding information from the requester, while the former indicates employees' willingness to share knowledge, whether or not it's specifically requested (Koay & Lim, 2022). Over the past decade, a growing body of research has researched into comprehending employees' tendencies toward knowledge-hiding behaviors. Previous studies have revealed that knowledge hiding poses a threat not only to the immediate knowledge seeker but also to the organization at large (Bloodgood, 2019). This behavior detrimentally impacts employees' job performance due to a lack of crucial job-related information required for task execution (Giraldo, Aguilar, Giraldo, & Toro, 2019). Moreover, when a knowledge seeker's requests for information are turned down by a knowledge hider, it negatively impacts the relationship between the two, leading to reduced trust levels. Consequently, the knowledge seeker may retaliate by reciprocating similar behavior in future interactions with the knowledge hider (Qi, Wang, Li, Zhang, & Jin, 2021).

Prior research has identified four main categories that encompass motivations behind engaging in knowledge-hiding behaviors: knowledge characteristics, individual aspects, team and interpersonal dynamics, and organizational factors (Soomro, Mangi, & Shah, 2021). This study specifically investigates into exploring the impact of abusive supervision on knowledge hiding. Abusive supervision is characterized as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors consistently display hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Razmerita, Kirchner, & Nielsen, 2016). Supervisors as representatives of the organization, hold substantial authority in shaping their employees' career tracks within the company. The treatment an employee receives from their supervisors significantly influences their discretionary actions (Samreen, Rashid, & Hussain, 2022). Wang et al. (2020) discovered that employees tend to adopt a passive and reticent approach in response to abusive supervision, thereby adversely affecting their level of engagement at work and overall job satisfaction. Employees experience abusing show less proactivity to assist on workplace (Kucharska & Erickson, 2023).

Previous research has extensively explored the negative impact of abusive supervision on knowledge hiding. For example, Sami, et al., (2019) revealed that abusive supervision leads to a psychological breach, subsequently resulting in knowledge hiding. Abusive supervision can predict knowledge hiding, mediated by the influence of interpersonal justice (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Employees subjected to abuse tend to develop a heightened perception of injustice within the organization. Consequently, they are more inclined to engage in knowledge-hiding behavior as a means to rectify perceived unfairness and restore balance, drawing upon the principles of social exchange theory (Offergelt & Venz, 2023). Justice emerges as a robust predictor of both knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding. In this study, our focus is on overall justice rather than specific justice dimensions i.e., distributive, procedural, and interactional (Iqbal, Latif, Marimon, Sahibzada, & Hussain, 2019). This choice validates by several reasons: firstly, overall justice encapsulates an employee's comprehensive evaluation of fairness in the workplace. Secondly, by representing employees' perceptions of fairness through overall justice, this conceptualization simplifies complexity while retaining effectiveness (Rice, Young, Johnson, Walton, & Stacy, 2020).

This study contributes in two primary ways. Firstly, it introduces and examines the mediating role of overall justice in the relationship between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding in among employees working in the private sector universities, Lahore, Pakistan. Secondly, it

investigates how female and male differently handle abusive supervision concerning knowledge hiding (Mahmood, et al., 2024). Ultimately, the mediating impact of overall justice in the abusive supervision and knowledge hiding link is significant for males but not significance for females. These findings offer insights for companies aiming to intervene more effectively in mitigating knowledge-hiding tendencies while considering gender dynamics (Kaufmann, Wheeler, & Sojo, 2021).

A number of studies were conducted on gender with respect to incivility and work withdrawal (Loi, Loh, & Hine, 2015), abusive supervision (Pradhan, Jena, & Mohapatra, 2018), (Samreen, Rashid, & Hussain, Effect of abusive supervision on subordinates' discretionary behaviors, 2022). Koay and Lim (2022) investigated the relationship abusive supervision and knowledge hiding with respected to moderated role of gender on companies of different sectors in Malaysia. No previous research has specifically been examined the proposed relationship in context of private sector universities in Lahore, Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

According to Connelly et al. (2012), knowledge hiding involves intentionally concealing task-related information, ideas, or expertise that others are seeking. When employees perceive their immediate supervisors or managers as authentic and transformational, they are inclined to share essential resources with fellow members of the organization. Conversely, if they view their supervisors or managers as toxic and detrimental, they tend to withhold knowledge and engage in knowledge-hiding behaviors. As long as both individuals derive satisfactory rewards from the relationship with minimal negative consequences, the relationship is likely to persist (Greenberg, 1990). Applying this theory to the realm of employment relationships, employees are inclined to withhold effort in their work if they perceive unfair treatment. Unlike social relationships, terminating an employment relationship is not easily accomplished by employees. Subsequently, when employees perceive injustice in the workplace, they often resort to behaviors aimed at rectifying the situation. They may intentionally reduce their input to align with the output in an effort to restore a sense of equity, drawing upon the principles of equity theory (Adams J. S., 1965; Greenberg, 1990).

Abusive Supervision and Overall Justice

Abusive supervision is reflective of an employee's subjective evaluation of their supervisor's conduct (Shen, Zhang, Yang, & Liu, 2020). The interpretation of abusiveness varies among individuals depending on the context (Dong, Bartol, Zhang, & Li, 2017). It is crucial to

emphasize that abusive supervision doesn't involve physically harmful actions; instead, it pertains to a supervisor's hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors towards subordinates, including rudeness, privacy invasion, negative comments, and the silent treatment (Tan, Ma, Huang, & Guo, 2021). Abusive supervision is correlated with diverse psychological and behavioral outcomes. Psychologically, it shows a significant association with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, psychological well-being, turnover intentions, burnout, and other factors (Yu, Xu, Li, & Kong, 2020). In terms of behavioral outcomes, abusive supervision is notably linked to service performance, organizational citizenship behavior, voice behavior, workplace deviance, counter productivity, knowledge-hiding behavior, among others (Zhang & Liu, 2018).

The concept of overall justice encompasses how employees perceive the fairness and equality of rewards and treatment in their roles. This perception is influenced by three dimensions of justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional (Berber, et al., 2023). Terpstra & Wijck, (2021) investigated that primary construct of overall justice provides a more concise, strong, and accurate representation of individuals' justice experiences compared to individual justice dimensions. In summary, this study hypothesizes that abusive supervision has a significantly negative influence on overall justice (Budomo, 2023).

H1: *Abusive supervision significantly and negatively impacts overall justice.*

Overall Justice and Knowledge Hiding

As mentioned earlier, encountering workplace injustice has an adverse impact on employees' overall sense of justice (Koay & Lim, 2022). Previous research has consistently demonstrated that overall justice serves as an effective predictor of various workplace outcomes. For example, Mahmood, et al., (2024) discovered a strong negative correlation between overall justice and presenteeism and social loafing, mediated by workgroup identification. Perceived injustice tends to persist over an extended period, leading to continuous preoccupation with work and, consequently, contributing to emotional exhaustion and lessened job performance (Patel, Budhwar, & Varma, 2012). Employees perceive fair treatment from the organization; they are more likely to develop psychological ownership, fostering higher levels of knowledge sharing. Consequently, this study puts forth the hypothesis that employees experiencing low levels of overall justice are more inclined to engage in knowledge hiding (Hameed, et al., 2019).

H2: *Overall justice has a significant but negative influence on knowledge hiding.*

The Mediating Role of Overall Justice

The literature exploring the mediating role of overall justice in the context of abusive supervision and knowledge hiding highlights a complex interplay of factors within the workplace. Abusive supervision creates an adverse environment marked by hostile behaviors from supervisors (Snyman, Coetzee, & Ferreira, 2022). Research suggests that such mistreatment negatively influences overall justice perceptions among employees, affecting their sense of fairness and equity within the organization (Budomo, 2023).

The mediating effect of overall justice in the relationship between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding has been a subject of recent investigation. Employees who experience abusive supervision tend to perceive lower overall justice, as noted by various studies (Snyman, Coetzee, & Ferreira, 2022). This diminished sense of justice, in turn, is linked to an increased likelihood of engaging in knowledge hiding behaviors. The mediating role of overall justice unveils a crucial link between abusive supervision, perceived fairness, and knowledge-sharing dynamics, providing valuable insights for organizational interventions and fostering a healthier workplace environment (Albalá-Genol, Díaz-Fúnez, & Mañas-Rodríguez, 2023). Therefore, a hypothesis is generated that overall justice mediates the relationship of abusive supervision and knowledge hiding behavior of the employees.

H3: *The relationship between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding is mediated by overall justice.*

The Moderating Role of Gender

This study proposes the moderation of the relationship between overall justice and knowledge hiding by gender, employing insights from social role theory (Eagly, 1997). Social role theory suggests that individuals, based on their roles and statuses in the social structure, are expected to align their behavior with corresponding social identities (Wang & Han, 2022). These role expectations are shaped by prior experiences and knowledge, and gender role beliefs play a significant role in influencing behaviors and job allocations within the workplace. For example, societal norms often associate women with caregiving responsibilities, leading to the expectation that they possess nurturing qualities (Andreeva & Zappa, 2023). Deviating from these gender role expectations may result in social rejection, while adhering to them tends to elicit positive reactions. This gendered lens, embedded in societal expectations, is crucial for understanding how individuals, based on their gender roles, might navigate the relationship between overall justice and knowledge hiding in the workplace (Akinola, Martin, & Phillips, 2018).

The expression of anger varies between female and male, influenced in part by cultural expectations that discourage women from openly displaying anger (Marshburn, chochran, Flynn, & Levine, 2020). Consequently, women often avoid public expressions of anger or frustration in professional settings to sidestep being labeled as domineering or aggressive. Generally, male demonstrate a greater inclination toward aggressive behaviors compared to female (Eagly, 1997). Women commonly face stereotypes that question their competence and perceive them as excessively communal for leadership roles, as indicated. Cultural norms and gender stereotypes contribute to distinct patterns of anger expression and perception based on gender within the workplace (Hall, Galinsky, & Phillips, 2015).

Furthermore, male exhibit a greater tendency for aggression in response to negative emotions, considering it an appropriate reaction. Male experiencing heightened negative emotions due to abusive supervision, demonstrate a higher propensity for work withdrawal behavior (Atwater, et al., 2015). Irum et al. (2020) argued that female display greater tolerance to incivility is more inclined to forgive or avoid instigators.

In accordance with the existing literature, it is proposed that the adverse association between overall justice and knowledge hiding will be notably pronounced for male but not statistically significant for female (Akinola, Martin, & Phillips, 2018). Additionally, the indirect impact of overall justice on the link between abusive supervision and overall justice is anticipated to be significant for male, whereas it is expected to lack significance for female (Ma & Yang, 2023). The rationale behind female not resorting to knowledge hiding as a means to redress perceived inequity lies in the recognition that knowledge hiding is categorized as a form of deviant workplace behavior, aligning with gender-typical behavior expectations for female (Andreeva & Zappa, 2023). Conversely, this behavioral response is likely to be more prevalent among male in the context of workplace dynamics (Kaufmann, Wheeler, & Sojo, 2021).

H4: *Gender moderates the negative relationship between overall justice and knowledge hiding, such that the relationship is significant for male but not significant for female.*

H5: *Gender moderates the indirect effect of overall justice on the relationship between abusive supervision and overall justice, such that the relationship is significant for male but not significant for female.*
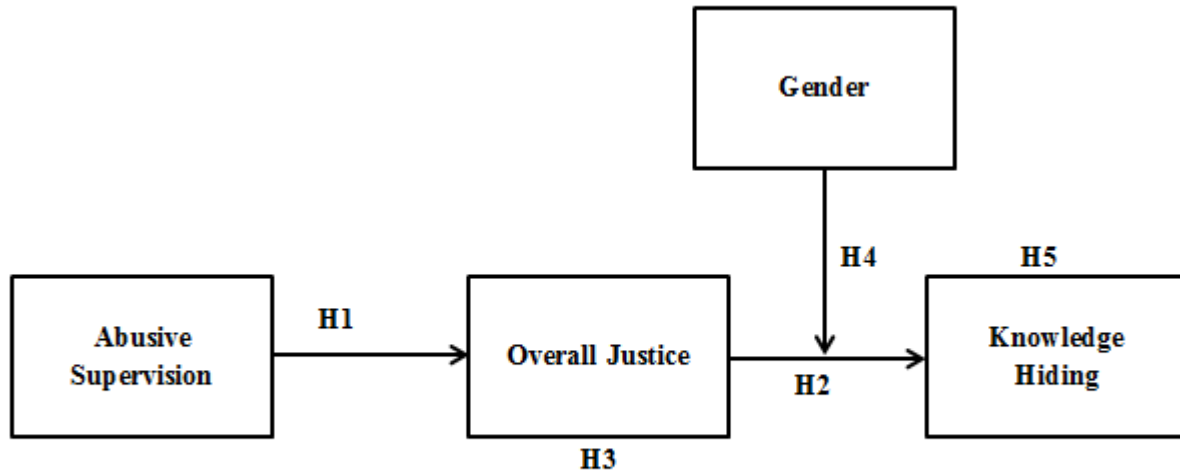
Figure I: Conceptual Framework

Source: (Koay & Lim, 2022)

METHODOLOGY

The understudy population was the private sector Universities/HEIs in Pakistan. Data was collected through structure questionnaire from employees working in the administration departments of private sector universities (Koay & Lim, 2022). According to the Higher Education Commission, there are 47 private universities in Pakistan. The researcher visits 15 to 20 universities and found that there is an average of 65 employees working in the administration departments of the private sector universities/HEIs. The researcher obtained the sample size by using Yamane formulae (1967) as the population of the study is known (Vaghela, 2024).

It was distributed electronically and also distributed personally in hard form to the respondents. The sample size of the study is consisted 399 employees. Therefore, this research exceeded the minimum sample size in order to run the PLS-SEM. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire mainly focuses on the demographic information of the participants. The second part comprises the scales of research variables. The total 399 research questionnaires were distributed electronically and in the hard form. Out of which 351 were found corrected in all respects. The confidentiality of the data was assured so that the respondents provide accurate information. Five-point Likert scale was implied to ask the questions related to research variables.

Measures of Scales

A five point Likert scale was used to measure the abusive supervision construct adapted from Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) which is the shorter version of Tepper's (2000) scale if abusive supervision having 15 items. Respondents under study agree to respond to each abusive supervision statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree to 5 (strongly agree). The scale of knowledge hiding adapted from Serenko and Bontis (2016) to measure the knowledge hiding which bases on five (5) Likert scale based on 12 items in which 4 questions are related to playing dumb, rationalized hiding and evasive hiding respectively. The scale of overall justice adapted from Ambrose and Schminke (2009) including nineteen (19) items which ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) items are related to formal justice and five for distributive justice and 9 items are related to interactional justice under the umbrella of overall justice.

Sample Characteristics

Total number of participants was 351 out of which 275 (78%) were male and 76 (22%) were female. The statistics of age group of the respondents were 30% (20-30 years), 55% (31-40 years), 9% (41-50 years), 2% (51-60 years) and 3% were above 60 years and by profession 180 (51%) are working in administration and 172(49%) were working as teacher in the universities. According the data received, 4 (1%) of the respondents have matriculation, 12 (3%) with intermediate, 75 (21%) graduated, 220 (63%) completed their master's degree and 40 (11%) were PhD doctors. Of the 351 respondents, 80 (25%) were temporarily employed and 263 (75%) were permanently employed in their respective universities. Most of the employees (46%) have more than above 10 years of total working experience and 126 (36%) have 5-10 years of experience on their current position

Data Analysis

Smart-PLS software was employed to conduct data analysis. Specifically, PLS-SEM technique was carried out to analyze the research model. Initially research model was evaluated by the measurement model, consequently, followed by structural model (Santoso & Indrajaya, 2023).

Measurement Model

Hair et al., (2019) suggested assessing the measurement mode through reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. Initially, the study evaluated the reliability of the constructs using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, all of which surpassed the threshold of

0.7, indicating satisfactory reliability in table 1. Subsequently, convergent validity was scrutinized through an analysis of factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 1: Measurement Model

Variable	Item	Loadings	Cronbach alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Abusive Supervision	AS01	0.778			
	AS02	0.771			
	AS03	0.815			
	AS04	0.797			
	AS05	0.799	0.929	0.930	0.612
	AS06	0.739			
	AS07	0.750			
	AS08	0.763			
	AS09	0.805			
	AS10	0.803			
Overall Justice	OJ01	0.774			
	OJ02	0.770			
	OJ03	0.800			
	OJ04	0.770			
	OJ05	0.781	0.930	0.930	0.613
	OJ06	0.823			
	OJ07	0.774			
	OJ08	0.772			
	OJ09	0.791			
	OJ10	0.775			
Knowledge Hiding	KH01	0.795			
	KH02	0.783			
	KH03	0.793			
	KH04	0.783			
	KH05	0.786	0.929	0.929	0.609
	KH06	0.753			
	KH07	0.792			
	KH08	0.729			
	KH09	0.815			
	KH10	0.774			

All factor loadings exceeded 0.7, while AVE values were above 0.5, thereby affirming the presence of convergent validity as mentioned in table 1. Finally, discriminant validity was assessed utilizing the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion in table 2 and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) criterion in table 3. Table 1 revealed that the square root of AVE for each construct on the diagonals exceeded the corresponding correlations between constructs. Additionally, table 3 demonstrated that none of the HTMT values surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015). Consequently, meeting both criteria provided robust evidence that discriminant validity was adequately established.

Table 2: The Fornell – Larcker Criterian

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Abusive Supervision	0.782					
2 Age	0.014	1.000				
3 Education	0.013	0.161	1.000			
4 Gender	-0.623	0.142	-0.127	1.000		
5 Knowledge Hiding	0.928	0.016	-0.024	-0.610	0.781	
6 Overall Justice	0.944	0.065	-0.022	-0.614	0.936	0.783

Table 3: The HTMT Criterion

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Abusive Supervision						
2 Age	0.064					
3 Education	0.039	0.176				
4 Gender	0.667	0.139	0.124			
5 Knowledge Hiding	0.807	0.051	0.023	0.654		
6 Overall Justice	0.745	0.046	0.032	0.658	0.710	

Structural Model

Below mentioned table 4 displays the results of complete structure model. Bootstrapping was used to generate the results which showed that age was one of the control variables which is significant (β = -0.175, p-value = 0.005which is less than 0.05, and f^2 = 0.021) with knowledge hiding. The rest of the two control constructs like education (β = -0.86, p-value = 0.128 which is greater than 0.05, and f^2 = 0.005) and gender (β = 0.008, p-value = 0.116 which is greater than 0.05, and f^2 = 0.000) were not have significant association with knowledge hiding. Abusive supervision revealed the positive and significant relationship with knowledge hiding as its β-value = -0.508, p-value < 0.05 i.e. 0.002 and f^2= 0.341.

Table 4: Structural Model

	Path coefficient	BCCI 95%	Standard error	t-value	p-value	Effect size (f^2)
Age --> Knowledge Hiding	-0.175	-0.279, –0.068	0.069	2.705	0.005	0.021
Education --> Knowledge Hiding	-0.86	-0.179, 0.048	0.074	1.152	0.128	0.005
Gender --> Knowledge Hiding	0.008	-0.102, 0.126	0.061	0.116	0.461	0.000
Abusive Supervision--> Overall Justice	-0.513	-0.657, -0.385	0.065	8.437	0.000	0.341
Overall Justice --> Knowledge Hiding	-0.018	-0.141, 0.112	0.077	0.258	0.389	0.000

Hence, hypothesis 1 is supported. Conversely, overall justice revealed the negative and insignificant behavior towards knowledge hiding as β-value = -0.018, p-value < 0.05 i.e. 0.258 and f^2= 0.000. Consequently, the second hypothesis of the study was not supported. Additionally, there is no mediation showed by the overall justice in the relationship of abusive supervision and knowledge hiding as the value of confidence interval was zero, LCCI = -0.069 and UCCI = 0.081 as elaborated in the table 5 . Therefore, the hypothesis 3 was not supported in the mediation analysis. Moreover, a multi-group analysis was employed to test the moderating effects of gender on the relationship of abusive supervision and knowledge hiding along with mediating role of overall justice. As mentioned in the table 6 gender shows the significant effects but negative on the relationship of abusive supervision and knowledge hiding as MGA = 0.017 and for male the relationship was negative but significant as β = -0.231 and p-value = 0.13 which was less than 0.05.

Table 5: Indirect Effect (Mediation Analysis)

	Indirect effect	BCCI 95%	Standard error	t-value	p-value
Age --> Knowledge Hiding	0.008	-0.069, 0.081	0.032	0.261	0.700

For female, the relationship was not significant as the p-value = 0.162 with β = 0.081which shows the positive relationship which supports the hypothesis 6 of the study. Likewise, the mediating impact of overall justices on the relationship of abusive supervision and knowledge hiding was moderated significantly by gender as MGA value = 0.014, such that males have significant impact (β = 0.091 and p-value = 0.013 which is less than 0.05) but has not significant

effects on the relationship for female gender as β = -0.053 and p-value = 0.167 which is greater than 0.05.

Table 6: Moderation Analysis

	Path coefficient		STD error		t-value (Female)		p-value		Difference MGA
	Female	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	
Direct Effect									
Overall justice --> Knowledge Hiding	0.081	-0.231	0.081	0.112	0.934	2.315	0.162	0.013	Yes
Indirect Effect									
Abusive Supervision --> Overall justice --> Knowledge Hiding	-0.053	0.091	0.061	0.037	0.927	2.165	0.167	0.017	Yes

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implication

This study provides evidence supporting the adverse impact of abusive supervision on overall justice. It suggests that prolonged exposure to abusive supervision increases the likelihood of employees developing reduced levels of overall justice. This aligns with the findings of a meta-analysis conducted by Zhang and Liao in 2015, which demonstrated a negative association between abusive supervision and organizational justice. When employees face abusive behavior of their supervisors, they tend to attribute responsibility to the organization, leading to a decline in their overall sense of justice towards it. However, the study did not find evidence supporting the notion that overall justice negatively influences knowledge hiding. This implies that employees' perception of their organization's fairness may not significantly affect their tendency to withhold knowledge in the workplace.

The findings revealed that overall justice does not mediate the relationship of abusive supervision and knowledge hiding. As mentioned earlier, abusive supervision does indeed result in decreased overall justice. However, this decline in overall justice doesn't prompt employees to conceal knowledge from their colleagues. However, the lack of a significant mediating effect of overall justice on the link between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding can be clarified by the moderating influence of gender. Specifically, the impact of abusive supervision on knowledge hiding through overall justice is only noteworthy for male. Consistent with social role theory and prior research (Memon & Jena, 2017; Salin & Hoel, 2013), female and male respond

differently to challenging situations. According to social role theory, individuals are expected to conform to their respective social identities.

For instance, it is generally considered inappropriate for female to express aggression in the workplace, while it may be more expected for male. Consequently, male may resort to hiding knowledge as a form of retaliation when subjected to abusive supervision to restore a sense of justice. In contrast, female are less likely to resort to knowledge hiding as a means to restore justice in response to abusive supervision. Instead, they may choose alternative approaches to address abusive supervision, such as leaving the organization (Pradhan, Jena, & Mohapatra, 2018).

This study expands the existing literature on knowledge hiding by exploring the influence of gender on the relationship between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding, with overall justice serving as a mediator, a relationship not previously examined (Ayub, et al., 2021; Hayat, Mukhtar, & Salameh, 2021). Additionally, our findings are in line with prior research on counterproductive work behavior, indicating that male are more susceptible to engaging in such behavior compared to female when faced with high levels of workplace stressors. This gender discrepancy is attributed to societal norms that discourage females from exhibiting aggression, thus reducing their likelihood of impulsively engaging in counterproductive work behavior (Carpenter, Whitman, & Amrhein, 2021; Snyman, Coetzee, & Ferreira, 2022). It is important to note that although female may refrain from resorting to knowledge hiding in response to abusive supervision, they may experience diminished confidence in the organization and may ultimately choose to leave (Pradhan, Jena, & Mohapatra, 2018).

Managerial Implication

This study holds significant managerial implications. Firstly, it is crucial for private universities to establish a safe reporting platform for employees, particularly for male employees who may experience abuse from supervisors. Male employees who endure abuse may retaliate by withholding knowledge from their colleagues to restore a sense of justice. Knowledge hiding not only adversely impacts the job performance of knowledge seekers but also hampers organizational growth. Secondly, supervisors should undergo annual evaluations by their subordinates, ensuring anonymity in the appraisal process (Ahmad & Begum, 2020; Lim, Koay, & Chong, 2021). Upper management must take instances of abusive supervision seriously. Supervisors reported for mistreating employees should undergo training on effective employee

management. If no improvements are observed within the subsequent year post-training, supervisors should receive a warning letter (Islam, Ahmad, Kaleem, & Mahmood, 2021).

Thirdly, although female may not resort to knowledge hiding to cope with abusive supervision, it doesn't imply they won't engage in other negative workplace behaviors to address equity concerns. Therefore, private universities must monitor all supervisors to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all employees, regardless of gender. Employees are more likely to remain committed to organizations that prioritize their well-being. Lastly, while it is generally discouraged for managers to adopt abusive behaviors towards employees, there are situations where a certain level of assertiveness might be necessary to motivate underperforming employees. While caution is advised, abusive supervision can sometimes yield positive outcomes under specific circumstances (Zhang & Liu, 2018). Zhu and Zhang (2019) found that abusive supervision can trigger innovative work behavior by arousing challenge-related stress among subordinates. The recommendations outlined earlier are expected to offer benefits and relevance to managers and policymakers in diverse company settings and organizational contexts, encompassing public sectors as well as small and medium enterprises.

Conclusion

This study delves into the connection between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding, taking into account the potential mediating role of overall justice and drawing insights from social exchange theory as abusive supervision negatively impacts the relationship of sub-ordinates and supervisors and shows the negative behavior towards sharing the knowledge as confirmed by equity theory. However, the observed relationship among these variables did not yield statistically significant. This lack of significance is attributable to the moderating influence of gender, as male and female exhibit different responses to unfair treatment from supervisors, aligning with social role theory. Indeed, empirical evidence highlights gender as a significant moderator impacting the relationship between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding through overall justice. Specifically, male are more inclined to retaliate against abusive supervisors by hiding knowledge to restore fairness, whereas female are less inclined to retaliate openly or confront abusive behavior to avoid breaching societal norms. Instead, they are more likely to opt for leaving the organization rather than seeking retribution.

Limitation

Despite the noted contributions, this study is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, there may still be a risk of Common Method Variance (CMV) since the data were collected from respondents at

a single point in time using the same method. Secondly, this study assessed respondents' perceptions of justice as a uni-dimensional construct. Thirdly, data were exclusively collected from employees in private sector universities in Pakistan, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to the broader working population. Consequently, knowledge hiding was measured as a uni-dimensional construct for the sake of simplicity.

Future Directions

Future studies could explore how various directions of justice, including distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, mediate the relationship between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding. Future scholars may consider examining the impact of abusive supervision on different dimensions of knowledge hiding like playing dumb, evasive hiding, and rationalized hiding through overall justice.

Recommendations

Private universities need to focus on establishing a secure reporting mechanism for employees, particularly directing attention towards male employees who could be subjected to supervisor abuse. Conducting annual evaluations of supervisors by their subordinates, ensuring anonymity, is essential. Instances of abusive supervision must be taken seriously by upper management. While females may not necessarily turn to knowledge hiding as a response to abusive supervision, this doesn't exclude the possibility of them resorting to other negative workplace behaviors to address fairness issues. Therefore, it is vital for private universities to supervise all supervisors diligently to ensure equitable treatment for all employees, regardless of gender.

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