Ethical Leadership and Knowledge Management Behaviors: Role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Procedural Justice

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Abstract

A growing body of literature is focused on analyzing the impact of leadership styles on various organizational behaviors. Although in knowledge management literature studies have shown a statistically significant impact of any leadership style on knowledge sharing but the literature on hiding is still scarce. This study is an attempt to bridge this gap in literature by focusing on ethical leadership and the impact it has on the knowledge sharing and knowledge hiding of the employees. Organizational citizenship behavior is included as mediator in the study as it is observed from past literature that employees like to emulate the behavior of their supervisor. The model of the research study also suggests for the moderation effects of procedural justice. Ethicality of the leader results in higher organizational citizenship behavior which in turn enhances the knowledge sharing and hinders the knowledge hiding behavior of the employees. It was also found that procedural justice moderates the relationship.

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Introduction

In today's competitive environment the success of every organization is largely dependent on its knowledge management capability (Riege, 2005, Gibson et al., 2007) which in turn relies on the knowledge management systems put in place as well as the willingness of the employees to share the knowledge they acquire on day to day basis (Gibbert et al., 2002; Gagne, 2009). Despite a lot emphasis being placed on free flow of information within an organization employees tend to withhold knowledge (Conelly et al., 2012) in turn hindering the effectiveness of knowledge management systems put in place as well as the overall success of the organization (Lunden et al., 2017; Müller 2018; Yukl 1989). For this reasons leaders are constantly on the lookout for ways in which they can facilitate free flow of knowledge in organization. It has been supported through extensive research that organizational leaders have the potential to not only acquire financial gains for their organizations but they can also help in inculcating ethical and moral behaviors in employees who work under them (Hitt et al., 2005; Phillips 2005). So a lot of emphasis has been put on leaders to exhibit ethical behavior themselves so as to lead by example. Ethical style of leadership has gained importance owing to the fact that all the other desirable styles of leadership (charismatic, transformational, authentic, spiritual, and servant leadership) have some aspect of morality and ethical behavior (Bass, 1999; Conger et al., 2010; Fry, 2009; Avolio et al., 2004, Craig et al., 2003; Liden et al., 2014). So the need of the hour is to communicate the importance of ethical behaviors within an organization as exhibited by the leader and as is expected of the follower. In this regard leaders have a responsibility to make it transparent to the employees which behaviors are valued by the organization and which behaviors might hinder the success of the organization. Owing to the importance of the knowledge management behaviors as stated above leaders in the organizations are focusing on better flow of knowledge by the employees.

Knowledge sharing has proven over time to bring about organizational and individual performance, but it also poses as a moral challenge as all the employees are not willing to share knowledge (e.g., Vesperi et al., 2015; Di Gangi et al., 2012; Styhre, 2002; Van den Hooff & de Leeuw van Weenen, 2004; Wang, 2010). Lin (2007) through a study showed that when individuals within an organization do not share knowledge with each other it has some detrimental effects for organization in terms of its competitiveness and long term survival in the market, so it is deemed as defilement of ethical code of an organization. Because of such prominent role knowledge sharing has in organizational success it is paramount for the researchers to find out which variables within as organization can affect the motivation of the employees to exhibit knowledge sharing behavior (Bock et al., 2005). It must also be mentioned here that the current literature that exists on the field ethics and knowledge management is quite disintegrated into opposing views (Tang et al. 2015). Despite knowledge management literature being focused on finding out which variables can increase or decrease knowledge (e.g., Lee et al. 2018), the factors which are leading to knowledge hiding or variables which can help reduce are still very much not known. This is of vital importance as knowledge hiding is a very common practice in organization as was found thorough a survey which showed that in the Fortune 500 companies the annual losses from knowledge hiding amounted to $31.5 billion.

If the research on ethical leadership style is scarce, researches relating to underlying mechanisms which help ethical leadership translate into knowledge hiding is even lesser (e.g., Tang et al. 2015). To address this problem this research study focuses on the premise under

which the ethical leadership and knowledge sharing and hiding will take place in organizations. The intervening variables chosen for this study are organizational citizenship behavior (Lu Xiaojun 2014, Shin et al., 2012, Zivnuska 2010, Chang et al., 2015) and organizational justice (Shin et al., 2014, Connelly 2012, Arain et al., 2018, Edú-Valsania et al. 2016) as previous researchers have shown a strong connection of ethical leadership having an impact on both but if these can be used as the boundary condition for knowledge management literature is yet to be explored.

Social learning theory and social exchange theory should be employed for the purpose of this research. A lot of the front line employees are given monthly targets and sometimes in order to accomplish those targets employees sometimes are tempted to evade the moral standard, in such scenarios exemplifying ethical behavior becomes even more crucial. Hence it is worthwhile to study if ethical leadership of the manager will have an impact on the better knowledge management behavior in terms of more knowledge sharing and less knowledge hiding or not. Another reason is that this research suggests a multi-level analysis which requires a clear and sizeable work unit. Most of the organizations have a department based structure so a sizeable work unit is clearly defined from which supervisor/subordinate dyads can be extracted.

The limited amount of researches conducted in the past in this field have almost all exclusively focused on individual level of analysis with data being gathered only from employees or supervisors, which leads to common method bias, the current research fills that gap by assessing the variable from employee supervisor dyad rather than from a single source. The paper starts with an introduction section covering the background information, research question and objectives, which will be followed by the theoretical review and hypothesis development, the last section covers the discussion and conclusion.

Research Objective:

The paper focuses to address the gap in literature regarding the role of ethical leadership in knowledge management process especially knowledge hiding and the intervening mechanisms that plays a role. The specific objective of the research are as follows:
- To assess if ethical leadership has statistically significant impact on knowledge hiding of employees
- To assess if ethical leadership has statistically significant impact on knowledge sharing of employees
- To check for mediating effect of organizational citizenship behavior at unit level on relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge hiding.
- To check for mediating effect of organizational citizenship behavior at unit level on relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing.
- To provide evidence for moderation of procedural justice on relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge hiding.
- To provide evidence for moderation of procedural justice on relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing.

Research Question:

The focus of the current study is to see if the ethical leadership is successful in inculcating the voluntary employee behavior of hiding and sharing their knowledge through mediation of

organizational citizenship behavior of moderation of procedural justice. The key questions the research will be focused on are as follows:

Q1: Does ethical leadership lead to more knowledge sharing by the employees?
Q2: Does ethical leadership hinder knowledge hiding?
Q3: Can organizational citizenship behavior explain the link between ethical leadership and knowledge hiding and sharing both?
Q4: Does organizational justice moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing and hiding?

Significance of Study:

Knowledge sharing has proven over time to bring about organizational and individual performance, but it also poses as a moral challenge as all the employees are not willing to share knowledge (e.g., Bavik et al., 2018, 1998; Jarvenpaa & Staples, 2001; Styhre, 2002; Van den Hooff & de Leeuw van Weenen, 2004; Wang, 2016, Cheng et al., 2017). Lin (2007) through a study showed that when individuals within an organization do not share knowledge with each other it has some detrimental effects for organization in terms of its competitiveness and long term survival in the market, so it is deemed as defilement of ethical code of an organization. Because of such prominent role knowledge sharing has in organizational success it is paramount for the researchers to find out which variables within as organization can affect the motivation of the employees to exhibit knowledge sharing behavior (Bock et al., 2005, Shin et al., 2015; Lunden et al., 2019). This implies that a research addressing the antecedents and underlying mechanism of knowledge hiding and sharing will be of great value to academicians and practitioners alike, this study contributes significantly to existing body of literature by clarifying the role ethical leadership plays in discretionary employee behaviors of knowledge hiding and sharing and also illuminates the path.

Theories Employed:

The two theories used to explain the proposed relationship for this study are social learning theory and social exchange theory. As per social exchange theory any relationship is based on the principle of give and take, not necessarily meaning that they are equal in doing so. These social exchanges flow with both the parties trying to view and analyze the benefits and costs associated with such exchanges and tend to view benefit being more than the cost in which case they will continue to invest in the relationship and also reciprocate in a similar manner. Going by this logic it is expected that the ethical behavior of the supervisor will lead to a desire of reciprocity by the employees by being better citizens of the organization which will lead to them hiding less and sharing more of their knowledge (Pucic et al., 2014). The second theory which can help explain the proposed relationship is the social learning theory. According to this theory individuals (in this case the employees within an organization) try and copy the behavior of other who they view as role models (in this case their managers) (Bandura 1977). Consequently, if the leaders are active in communicating to their followers about which behaviors are viewed as ethical and which are deemed unethical and also model such behavior, their ethical behavior is then more likely to be copied by their followers (Bouckenooghe et al. 2015; Gok et al. 2017, Graham et al., 1995). Because of this social learning theory can serve as a very relevant point of view to find out if the employees would engage in knowledge sharing as opposed to knowledge hiding.

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Literature Review and Hypothesis Development
Ethical Leadership and Knowledge Management:

Ethical leadership is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and inter- personal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown et al. 2005). In recent years the significance of ethical leadership has become paramount as the empirical researches have established and validated this style of leadership being linked to essential and advantageous employee behavioral outcomes for example greater employee satisfaction and commitment, employees being ready to report workplace problems to their managers, higher dedication to their jobs, greater citizenship behavior, greater performance (Brown et al. 2005; Mayer et al. 2008; Walumbwa et al. 2012, Badrinarayanan et al., 2018). So it is essential for organizations to embrace such policies which can help them to train more ethical leaders. Tang et al., 2015 showed that the current literature on linkage between ethical leadership and knowledge management is divided. If that is true, the other reality is the scarcity of research concerning identification of underlying mechanism which leads to knowledge hiding (Tang et al. 2015). According to social learning theory individuals (in this case the employees within an organization) try and copy the behavior of other who they view as role models (in this case their managers) (Bandura 1977). So if the employees exhibit ethical behavior subordinates are more likely to imitate that behavior and exhibit discretionary behaviors such as deciding to hide or share the knowledge they have to benefit the organization.

Knowledge sharing refers to "acts of making knowledge available to others within the organization" (Ipe 2003) whereas knowledge hiding is defined as "intentional withholding of information when it is requested" (Connelly 2015). It must be emphasized that acquiring the knowledge involves individuals in devoting a huge amount of time and effort (Szulanski, 1996, 2000, Bavik et al., 2018). This knowledge once acquired can be valuable for individuals because it helps them in securing resources such as status, power, and rewards in organizations and society (Gagné, 2009). Therefore, employees in organization tend not to share their knowledge with their peers (Szulanski, 2000). Although knowledge hiding can benefit the hider and serve the person interest of that individual, but it will end up being detrimental to the overall productivity of the teams and organizational performance by obstructing proper functioning and mobilization of resources (Collins & Porras, 1997; Isaac, Herremans, & Kline, 2010), and for this reason may be considered a moral transgression. Ethical leadership in this regard can play a pivotal role as reputation of a leader as ethical can bring about favorable optional and discretionary behaviors of the employees (Bedi et al. 2016; Den Hartog 2015; Hoch et al. 2016; Ng and Feldman 2015; Treviño et al. 2014). These type of organizational leaders are viewed as positive role models, and employees look up to them with respect, and this in turn ends up with employees emulating the behaviors of such leaders (Bryan and Test 1967; Mayer et al. 2010; Piccolo et al. 2010). Multiple researches have shown that leadership can influence the knowledge sharing behavior in an organization (DeTienne et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2015; Srivastava et al., 2006, Huo et al., 2016; Offergelt et al., 2019). Because of significance of knowledge sharing ethical leadership's impact on knowledge sharing can be useful for organizational members. Brown & Trevino (2006) identified the basic traits that are found in a leader to be perceived as ethical leader. The traits identified were trustworthiness, openness, fairness in decision making etc. (Brown et al., 2005). These traits ultimately translate into knowledge sharing (Bock et al., 2005; Ipe, 2003). Such leaders are the reason because of which organizational members are more

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willing to share their knowledge with each other. Ethical leaders are able to achieve that by putting in place the rules and standards which can stimulate the morality, these included the codes and the guidelines for decision making which are ethical in nature, a reward system which is fair, and also being transparent in communications regarding what is ethical. In this way a leader who is ethical is aiding in removing the barriers which hinder the free flow of resources within an organization so all organizational members can benefit from them. The second way by exhibiting these behaviors themselves so that employees are able to observe the ethical behaviors being practice so that they can also know what is expected of them. This helps to clarify what the organizations views and rewards as ethical.

Because of these findings it is expected that ethicality of leadership will lead to employee knowledge sharing behavior by reducing the obstructions to knowledge sharing which can form a foundation of trusting relationships in an organization. This also helps them to perceive that if they share the resources there will reciprocity (Kacmar et al., 2011; Lam, et al, , 2016; Mayer, er al., 2008, Farh et al., 2015). Indeed, the literature of knowledge management has documented the essential role of leadership in creating norms and guidance that foster knowledge sharing (Von Krogh et al., 2012). Supporting our claim, prior empirical studies have also demonstrated that ethical leadership promotes followers' positive and prosocial behavior, including voice (Avey et al., 2012; Zhu, et al. 2015) and interpersonal helping (Kacmar et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2009), and negatively related to deviant behavior.
So based on the evidence from past literature mentioned above, this study proposes to test following hypothesis:
Hypothesis 1: Ethical leadership has statically significant positive impact on knowledge sharing in financial sector

Although a growing body of literature supports and provides empirical evidence of ethical leadership and knowledge sharing the study regarding the hiding behavior is very scarce, this research hence will add to the body of literature. in some situations, employees might intentionally withhold knowledge for prosocial reasons, such as protecting the interests or privacy of others (Connelly et al., 2015). This is related to the concept of unethical pro-organizational behavior introduced by Umphress, Bingham, and Mitchell (2010), which refers to actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members but violate core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct (Umphress & Bingham, 2011, p. 622; Ahn et al., 2019). In such situations, keeping knowledge from external members (e.g., clients, members from another functional unit, investors) for the good of internal members (e.g., team members, supervisors) may be considered a behavior that is unethical and yet pro-organization, because it benefits certain individuals in the company at the expense of the interests of the larger community. In the current study, I focus on employee knowledge sharing with other team members (in- group members), which is purely moral and prosocial in nature. It follows that a lack of knowledge sharing among in-group members not only violates the moral norms in the organization but is also detrimental to team functioning and organizational survival, and therefore can be regarded as immoral behavior within an organization (Lin, 2007; Wang, 2017). Based on review of the literature following hypothesis is presented to be tested.
Hypothesis 2: Ethical leadership has statistically significant positive impact on knowledge hiding in financial sector

Mediation of Organizational Citizenship Behavior:

Organ (1988) defined citizenship behavior as "Organizational citizenship behaviors include actions not typically included in formal job descriptions, but promoting the efficient and effective functioning of the organization when in an aggregate". Researchers have emphasized the positive role of ethical leadership in employee OCB on the basis of a social exchange interaction (Kacmar et al., 2011; Moss et al., 2019; Skarlicki et al., 1996; Walumbwa et al., 2010). As an indicator of organizational outcome, OCB can be used to test the validity of ethical leadership. From the perspective of social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964), individuals' actions are contingent on receiving rewards from others. Reciprocity is probably the best known exchange rule in SET (Cropanzano et al, 2005, Babalola et al., 2017; Serenko et al., 2016; Škerlavaj et al., 2018; Tu et al., 2018). The ethical leader acts with the best interests of employees in mind, and always cares for them. The benefits received should initiate feelings of obligation or commitment from the employees, who will engage in expected value actions such as OCB, to complete a reciprocal feedback loop. These feelings are accompanied by a sense of responsibility and burden sharing for the organization, which may be considered an exchange motivation for employees to engage in extra role behavior (Vandewalle, et al,, 1995; Serenko et al., 2016).

Some researchers (e.g., Kacmar et al. 2011; Mayer et al. 2010) argued that the fairness in decision-making and the caring for subordinates exemplified by ethical leaders can make their followers feel indebted to their organizations and reciprocate with extra-role behaviors that are beneficial to organizations (OCBO). As ethical leaders may reward the behaviors that are beneficial to the well-being of others, their followers will be motivated to help their coworkers (OCBI). The trustful atmosphere nurtured by ethical leaders (Chughtai et al. 2014; Newman et al. 2014) can also facilitate the exchange of helping behaviors between employees, a manifestation of employee OCBI. Other researchers (e.g., Demirtas et al., 2014; Mayer et al. 2008; Ruiz-Palomino et al. 2010) pointed out that ethical leaders value the virtuous behaviors of helping others and serve as the role models of such behaviors for their followers to emulate. Thus, employees under an ethical leadership will learn to engage in OCBI and OCBO.

Hypothesis 3a: OCB mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing

Hypothesis 3b: OCB mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge hiding.

Moderation of Procedural Justice:

Procedural justice refers to the systems and procedures set in place in an organization to look after the rights of employees in terms of organizational benefits, pay and reward systems etc. Employees often look for the cues in their environment in form of procedural justice in place to form their own optional and discretionary work behaviors such as hiding or sharing the knowledge (Gottfredson et al., 2017; Toor et al., 2009; Xu et al., 2016). Procedural justice is fostered when employee's inputs are taken into consideration during the decision-making processes and when procedures are implemented with consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correct ability, representativeness, and ethicality (Leventhal 1980, Chae et al., 2019, Dust et al., 2018, Farh et al., 1997; Strom et al., 2014). Ethical leaders convey their ethical expectations to employees through an open two-way communication, listening to what employees say, and asking ''what is the right thing to do?'' when making decisions (Brown et

al. 2005). Their emphasis on the adherence to organizational policies and practices draw employees' attention to the organization's fair procedures (Loi et al. 2014, Gerpott et al., 2017). In their study conducted in China, Li et al. (2012) found that subordinates under ethical leaders perceive greater procedural justice (Ehrhart 2004). Studies have shown that employees often react to perceived injustices and dissatisfaction (Bennett and Robinson 2000), unfair treatment (El Akremi et al. 2010; Men et al., 2018) or mistreatments (Tepper et al. 2009; Loebbecke et al., 2016; Moorman et al., 1991) quite differently.

As a moral manager, ethical leaders not only comply with laws and regulations, but also implement an organizational system based on just and fair principles (Brown et al., 2010; Kalshoven & Boon, 2012, Jian et al., 2019) this will invoke a sense of being treated fairly by the employees. This stable and transparent situation is likely to engender employee feelings of psychological ownership toward the organization (Avey et al., 2012, Demirkasimoglu 2016, Ladan et al., 2017, Lin 2007; Mozumder 2018). They will exhibit this ownership by transferring the knowledge that they possess for the benefit of the organization and lead to more sharing of information. As mentioned earlier there is a lack of evidence concerning the hiding behavior in ethical leadership studies. Based on above argument following hypothesis are developed and tested for the purpose of research:

Hypothesis 4a: Procedural justice moderates strength of relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge sharing.
Hypothesis 4b: Procedural justice moderates strength of relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge hiding.

Proposed Model:

Based on the hypothesis postulated above following research model should be tested for the purpose of this research:
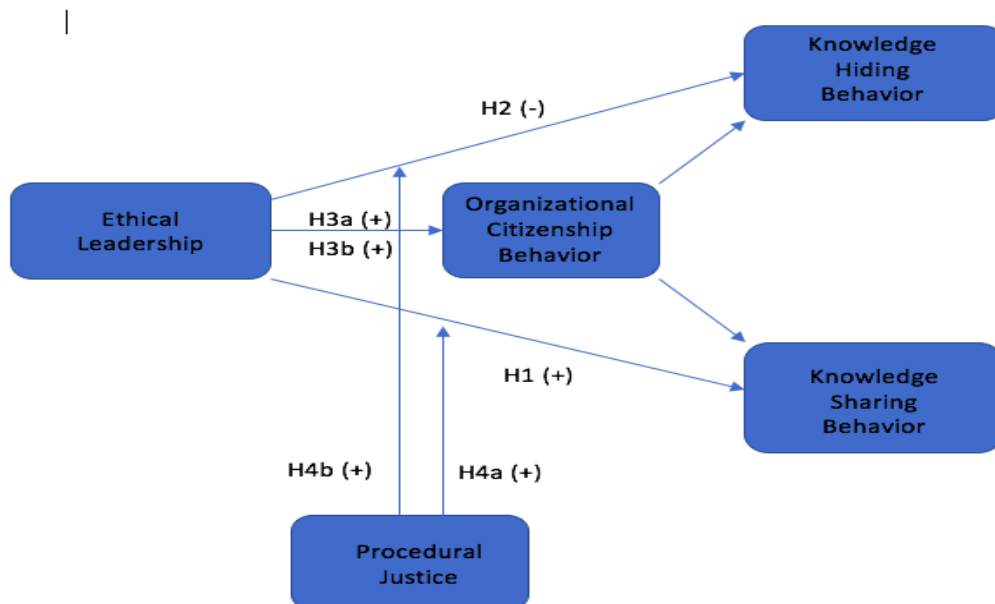

Figure 1: Proposed Model

Discussion and Conclusion:

This study is an attempt to establish a link between ethical leadership style and its impact on employee discretionary behaviors of knowledge hiding and sharing, underlying mechanisms like citizenship behavior and moderating effect of procedural justice is also studied. Evidence exist in the past literature predicting knowledge sharing as a consequence of ethical leadership behavior (DeTienne et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2015; Srivastava et al., 2006; Kacmar et al., 2011; Lam, et al, , 2016; Mayer, er al., 2010.). Past researches have also time and again found links of ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior (Chughtai et al. 2014; Newman et al. 2014; Kacmar et al. 2011; Mayer et al. 2008; Demirtas et al., 2014; Mayer et al. 2008; Ruiz-Palomino et al. 2010). So it is concluded that ethical leadership translates into more sharing and that organizational citizenship behavior acts as the underlying mechanism (Murtaza 2016). Furthermore, procedural justice is also found to be linked to ethical leadership as employees when perceive to be treated fairly by the organization will also choose to opt for prosocial behavior like knowledge sharing (Loi et al. 2014; Tepper et al. 2009; Avey et al., 2012, Bharati et al., 2015) and shun away from knowledge hiding (Donate et al., 2015).

A growing body of literature on knowledge management has widely focused only on the knowledge sharing side of knowledge management largely ignoring knowledge hiding. Hence any study that attempts to consolidate the rationales and reasoning behind both these variables will add value to the current literature on leadership and ethics. The current study proposed ethical leadership as the antecedent of antecedent of knowledge sharing and decreased knowledge hiding. By applying the lens of social learning theory and social exchange theory it explains how ethical leaders by demonstrating ethical behavior succeed in invoking ethical behavior in employees as employees tend to learn the behaviors of others within an organization and tend to govern their social exchanges based on that. The dual theoretical lens provides a more consolidated view of the underlying mechanisms through which ethical leaders influence knowledge management within an organization.

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