

## **Knowledge Hiding Behaviour, Role Stress and Moderating Effect of Affective Commitment: An Empirical Analysis**

*R. Sona\**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In the competitive workplace scenario, employees encounter various factors that impact their productivity and engagement. Knowledge hiding behaviour (KH) is one such factor that attracted less interest among the researchers but highly influenced the performance of the employees. This research paper aims to identify if being the victim of the knowledge hiding behaviour of a co-worker will have an impact on role stress (RS), and also strives to understand the moderating effect of affective commitment (AC) on the key study variables. The findings reveal perceived knowledge hiding behaviour has evidenced a high mean index. ANOVA was applied and it obtained that the F-value for KH and RS is significant with age, gender, and income. The correlation test determines that KH and RS have a positive correlation. The regression analysis reveals that approximately 87% of the variance of role stress was explained by perceived KH and AC moderates the relationship between KH and RS.*

**Keywords:** *Knowledge hiding; Affective commitment; Role stress; Hybrid workplace; Employee engagement.*

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### **1.0 Introduction**

In the prevailing hybrid working environment, employees are gathered to be as a team with complementary skills and strive to accomplish the common desired goal. In such a scenario, knowledge has to be shared among the teammates to understand better and coordinate. In reality, organisations do not have the ownership of the intellectual assets of the employees, and hence, cannot pressure/insist workers transfer their intellectual knowledge to the members of the organisation. The competitive work environment has induced the members of the organisation to be self-centered and

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*\*Assistant Professor, PSGR Krishnammal College for Women Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India (E-mail: rsona@grgsms.ac.in)*

indulge in hiding their knowledge intentionally. Many antecedents induce an employee to involve in such behaviour while working in a common workspace. Empirical evidence suggests that role stress is pervasive in the workplace (Richards *et al.*, 2019) and knowledge hiding is a collaborative behaviour among organisational persons, thus the current research focuses on highlighting the relationship between knowledge hiding and role stress.

The empirical evidence shows the relationship of organisational factors such as leadership styles, psychological ownership of knowledge, etc., but the impact of moderators and mediators like affective commitment, reward systems are less explored. Thus, the current study investigates the moderation of affective commitment on the key variables.

### **1.1 Knowledge hiding**

Knowledge is significant, and sharing essential organisational resources provides a greater competitive edge in this VUCA world. Knowledge sharing is a process in which individuals reciprocally share knowledge and jointly produce new sets of knowledge. On the other hand, knowledge sharing is not always assured, as it does not occur automatically in the workplace. Hence, within the framework of knowledge management, knowledge sharing behaviour has been introduced through knowledge management (KM) as sharing and transferring knowledge is deemed vital for productive behaviour.

But knowledge hiding is always a concern in any organisation. Knowledge hiding is considered to be an intentional attempt to deliver the knowledge that is requested by organisation members (Connelly *et al.*, 2012). Knowledge hiding occurs in the workplace environment for various reasons. Connelly *et al.* (2015) analysed the antecedents of knowledge hiding and classified them into three key types. First, evasive hiding (the knowledge hider decisively gives incorrect information, or assures to give more knowledge later, though there is no intention to do that). Second, playing dumb (the knowledge hider shows that he/she does not have the knowledge and is even unaware of it). Third, rationalised hiding (the knowledge hider defends his/her hiding behaviour by explaining that the requested knowledge is not shared due to confidentiality and specificity) (Connelly *et al.*, 2012).

Apart from these three factors, many other factors influence knowledge hiding. (Anand *et al.*, 2020) investigated the literature on knowledge hiding and developed a framework that is new and different from the many possible KH events investigated in the literature.

### **1.2 Role stress**

Stress is inevitable in the workplace environment in which individuals with varied perceptions and skills work together to produce new knowledge and achieve a common goal.

Kahn *et al.*, (1964) examined that role stress is the outcome of communication and the relation between the role senders and receivers. Based on the analysis, he introduced the concept and development process of role stress. Rizzo *et al.*, (1970) referring to the Role theory, the role ambiguity (lack of necessary information required for a given position) may lead to a person being discontented with his role, experiencing anxiety and misrepresenting reality.

### **1.3 Affective commitment**

The emotional bonding of an employee to his/her organisation is known as affective commitment (AC) and it has been proven as a vital factor of an employee's dedication and loyalty. The three-component model developed by Meyer & Allen, 1991, interprets that affectively committed employees will have a sense of belonging which thereby increases their involvement in the organisation's activities. Organisational commitment is therefore associated with various organisational factors such as absenteeism, performance, stress, and turnover.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Knowledge hiding**

Connelly *et al.* (2012) aimed to investigate an unusual construct, knowledge hiding. Knowing that many times employees deny to share knowledge in spite of organisations facilitating the knowledge transfer, the researchers developed a multi-dimensional measure of the construct and identify several predictors of knowledge hiding in organisations. The results indicated that knowledge hiding is comprised of three key factors: evasive hiding, rationalised hiding, and playing dumb.

Boyes (2020) defines knowledge hiding as the intentional cover up of knowledge requested by another individual, whereas knowledge hoarding is defined as the accumulation of knowledge that may or may not be shared at a future period.

Mangold (2017) examined the dark side of knowledge transfer, to identify the potential antecedents and the consequences of knowledge hiding for individuals and the organisation. The researcher employed a qualitative approach using a qualitative interview to reveal participants version of knowledge hiding, and investigated why individuals withhold knowledge from their co-workers. The researcher collected

empirical data through a voluntary online survey and established a multi-level model for the antecedents of knowledge hiding and also, to understand the third-party reactions in terms of knowledge hiding behaviour.

Bari *et al.*, (2019) explained how the key factors of knowledge hiding (e.g., evasive, playing dumb, and rationalised) influence the team's creativity. The researchers attempted to draw on the social exchange theory, to know that factors of knowledge hiding have a negative relationship with team creativity, and this relationship is mediated by absorptive capacity. Moreover, knowledge hiding and team creativity moderated by the perceived mastery motivational climate (PMMC) weakens the negative relationship. Also investigated the existence of knowledge hiding practices in Pakistan through an experience survey and the result findings show that evasive hiding and playing dumb have a significant negative relationship with team creativity; on the other hand, rationalised hiding does not affect team creativity. The relationship between knowledge hiding and team creativity has not been mediated by absorptive capacity.

Ali (2021) examined the relationship between knowledge hiding and the psychological ownership of knowledge, and how this relationship is moderated by ethical leadership. A sample of 178 employees from the public universities of the Kurdistan region of Iraq was examined using a survey questionnaire. The finding indicates that there is a positive relationship between knowledge hiding and psychological ownership of knowledge; in addition, the relationship is moderated by ethical leadership.

Riaz *et al.* (2019) investigated the effect of workplace ostracism on the knowledge hiding behaviour of the employees. The researcher aimed to identify the effects of job tension as a mediator and employee loyalty as a moderator on the key constructs. A sample of 392 employees working in the textile industry was analysed using a time-lagged research design. The research findings indicated that workplace ostracism positively influences knowledge hiding behaviour such as evasive hiding and playing dumb, whereas it is not significantly related to rationalised hiding. In addition, workplace ostracism increases the feeling of job tension, and job tension mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding. Moreover, the researchers found that workplace ostracism devastated the benefits of employee loyalty.

Miminoshvili and Černe (2021) aimed to bridge the knowledge management and diversity literature to examine the knowledge hiding that occurs due to differences in demographic characteristics by the minority members. The findings revealed that minority members engage in knowledge-hiding behaviour due to exclusion experienced in the workplace. The researchers used semi-structured interviews and deductive

thematic analysis and attempted to use knowledge hiding as an inclusion strategy. As a result, knowledge hiding in the context of a diverse workforce shows that it occurs due to perceived exclusion and it takes room to improve the inclusion of minority members. The researchers also identified a new facet of knowledge-hiding characteristic ‘adjustable hiding’ for cross-cultural collaboration.

Anand *et al.* (2020) presented a review of the literature, illustrating the present and the possible knowledge hiding (KH) events that take place between employees within the organisations. The researchers found that five KH events already exist in the literature and put forward three events that may occur in the future. The proposed framework aimed to facilitate organisations and managers to develop strategies like adopting organisational change, restructuring, and increasing effective knowledge sharing among employees.

Zakariya and Bashir (2020) aimed to find out how and when the knowledge hiding opinion of the target affects the creativity of IT professionals. The researchers used temporally segregated survey-based data from IT professionals, to investigate the three-way interplay of knowledge hiding, supervisor support for creativity, and creative self-efficacy to inspect employees’ creativity. 253 respondents working in IT-based organisations were analysed revealing that the knowledge hiding perception of respondents enhances respondents’ creativity through the mechanism of benign envy.

In addition, the three-way interaction effect of supervisor support and creative self-efficacy is found to weaken the effect of knowledge hiding perception on employee creativity. The researchers further explored the mechanism of benign envy as a drive, through which employees’ knowledge hiding perception enhances creativity. The aggregate role of conditional factors that affect the knowledge hiding perception to creativity link from the employee’s perspective has also been explained.

## **2.2 Role stress**

Sankpal *et al.* (2010) conducted a study on role stress among the bank employees in the Gwalior city and compared the various dimensions of role stress. The collected results were analysed through a Z-test to compare between the employees of public and private sector banks.

Band *et al.* (2016) examined the effects of ORS on the overall stress level of the employees in the IT companies. The results show that role overload (RO), self-role distance (SRD), and role isolation (RI) were insignificant in the stress level of the employees. Role ambiguity (RA), role erosion (RE), role expectation conflict (REC), role inadequacy (RIn) have a minor effect on the stress level of the employees. personal

inadequacy (PI), inter role distance (IRD) and role stagnation have a medium to high effect on the stress level of the employees.

Trayambak (2012) measured various stress management tools and their impact on job stress and job satisfaction. The researcher highlighted evidence from past research that there is a positive relationship between role stress and job stress and a negative relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. But some researchers found no such relationship between role ambiguity and role conflict with job satisfaction.

Garg (2015) explored the mediating role that ORS plays in the relationship between the availability of high-performance work practices (HPWPs), employee engagement, and job satisfaction. The findings confirmed that there is a positive association between the availability of HPWPs, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. In addition, ORS was found to mediate these associations significantly. Further, the study revealed the answer for one of the questions “Why the same HR practice leads to different effects on different employees?”; different levels of role stress experienced by different employees would be one of the reasons.

Trivellas *et al.* (2013) investigated the impact of job-related stress on job satisfaction among the nursing staff working in hospitals. Job stress is considered to be one of the most important workplace risks for employees, and job satisfaction has evidenced an impact on service quality and superior performance. The researchers collected a sample of 271 nurses to examine the degree to which stressors, namely interpersonal relationships, information access, conflict, workload, career development, and feedback could have an impact on various aspects of job satisfaction. The results revealed that conflict, workload, and lack of job autonomy are negatively associated with all job satisfaction aspects, however, information access and feedback had a positive relationship with employees’ satisfaction.

Singh *et al.* (2011) conducted a study among 210 managers from various private sector organisations to inspect the role stress and locus of control on job satisfaction. The results revealed that the correlation test indicated the role overload had a significant negative correlation to satisfaction with both the management and total satisfaction; whereas, role ambiguity was found to be significantly negative to the job satisfaction of the employees; and finally, role conflict was found to be significantly negative to satisfaction with both the management and total satisfaction. The results of regression analysis indicated that total stress contributed variance in explaining employee’s job satisfaction, and role conflict donated variance in explaining the employee’s total satisfaction.

Zhao and Jiang (2021) explored the social network perspective in knowledge hiding. The researchers integrated the social network theory and affective events theory to examine how positions of the individual network become persuasive borderline circumstances in the course of role stress, influencing knowledge hiding through emotional exhaustion as a mediating variable. The results determined that role stress affected knowledge hiding through emotional exhaustion.

**Affective Organisational Commitment:**

Chordiya *et al.* (2017) examined the factors that can influence affective organisational commitment in the cross-national context by comparing data from four states of US and India. The researchers focused on the effects of job satisfaction, on affective organisational commitment. The results revealed that job satisfaction has a significant positive impact on affective organisational commitment in both countries context. Furthermore, affective organisational commitment is significantly higher among Indian public managers compared to the four states of US.

Ohana (2016) examined the effects of co-workers procedural justice on team citizenship behaviours mediated by team affective commitment. Based on the reference from social exchange literature, the researcher confirmed that affective commitment mediates the relationship between the study variables. The result reveals that team voice is a strong and consistent predictor of team citizenship behaviours. This finding highlighted the essentiality of taking into account the ability to express one's opinion inside teams.

Meyer *et al.* (2002) conducted meta-analyses to examine the relationship between affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organisation and also the relationship between the three types of commitment and other variables recognised as their antecedents, correlates, and consequences in Meyer & Allen's (1991) Three-component model: job satisfaction, job involvement, and occupational commitment were found to be related but they are distinguishable from one another. All three forms of commitment are negatively related to withdrawal cognition and turnover. The researchers identified that affective commitment had the strongest and most constructive correlations with organisational factors (performance, and organisational citizenship behaviour) and individual factors (stress and work-family conflict) effects.

Thanacoody *et al.* (2014) examined the mediating role played by disengagement in the relationships between emotional exhaustion, affective commitment, and turnover intentions among healthcare professionals. The result revealed that disengagement fully mediates the relationships between the study variables emotional exhaustion, affective commitment, and turnover intentions.

Salminen & Miettinen (2019) examined the moderating role of age and career stage on affective organisational commitment with the influence of perceived development opportunities and supervisory support. The results revealed that the eldest employees, those who had the longest tenure in the organisation have more affective commitment towards the organisation, thus having the highest rate of intention to remain at their current organisation. Furthermore, affective commitment was predicted by organisational tenure, skills necessary to perform present work demands, managerial support for development, and opportunities to use one's capabilities.

The empirical evidence provided above reveals that role stress is a key factor that influences organisational performance and employee engagement, thus the present study highlighted the importance for organisations to understand the impact of knowledge hiding behaviour on role stress.

### **3.0. Research Methodology**

The present study aims to reveal the impact of perceived knowledge hiding (KH) on the role stress (RS) of the employees of IT companies. Additionally, it examines whether affective commitment (AC) moderates the relationship between KH and RS of the employees.

#### **3.1 Research objectives**

- Analyse the level of perceived KH among the employees of IT companies.
- Examine the relationship between KH and RS of the employees.
- Find the moderating effect of AC on the relationship between KH and RS of the employees.
- Analyse the impact of demographic variables on the study constructs.

Based on the research objectives the study aims to address the following research questions,

- Whether KH has a positively significant relationship with RS? Whether AC moderates this relationship?

#### **3.2 Research hypothesis**

H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived knowledge hiding behaviour affects the role stress of employees working in the IT sector.

H<sub>2</sub>: Affective commitment moderates the relationship between perceived knowledge hiding and role stress of employees working in the IT sector.



### 3.3 Variable measurement

Primary data from the employees of AI-powered IT companies were collected through a structured questionnaire. A sample size of 121(N) was measured for the empirical investigation. 12 items questionnaire to analyse KH (adapted from Connelly *et al.*, 2012), a sample item is “Told that he/she would help out later, but stalled as much as possible.”, 13 items scale to analyse RS (adapted from Peterson *et al.*, 1995), a sample item is “I often get involved in situations in which there are conflicting requirements.”; and 6 items scale to analyse AC (adapted from Meyer & Allen, 1991), a sample item is “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.”

### 4.0 Analysis and Discussion

The demographic profile of the respondents engaged for the study is shown in (Table 1). The respondents are spread across different age groups, gender, and monthly income.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Demographic Characteristics	Classification	Percentage
Age	Upto 30 years	29.8
	31-40 years	29.8
	41-50 years	22.3
	Above 50 years	18.2
	Total	100
Gender	Male	51.2
	Female	48.8
	Total	100.0
Monthly Income	Upto Rs 30,000	22.3
	Rs 30,001 – Rs 50,000	27.3
	Rs 50,001 – Rs 70,000	30.6
	Above Rs 70,000	19.8
	Total	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The reliability test result (the alpha value) of the key constructs of the study (Table 2).

The reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) of all the three key constructs in the context of IT employees in India are tested. As recommended by Nunnally (1978) at least 0.70 alpha coefficients for social sciences are acceptable. The internal reliabilities of the

overall scale were calculated and found that the variables are with high internal consistency and reliability (Table 2).

**Table 2: Reliability Test**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived Knowledge Hiding	.822
Role Stress	.850
Affective Commitment	.725

*Source: Primary Data*

The means and standard deviations of the variables under the study were calculated. Perceived Knowledge Hiding behaviour has evidenced a high mean index. The means were also evaluated considering the rating scale for each construct (Table 3).

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>KH</b>	37.93	14.67
<b>RS</b>	27.76	17.95
<b>AC</b>	20.26	05.45

*Source: Primary Data*

The difference between KH, RS and AC, and the age of the respondents were computed. The age group up to 30 years had a higher mean score (54.00) for KH, (50.50) for RS and the age group above 50 years had a higher mean score (27.63) for AC than other age groups. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to ascertain if there was a significant difference between KH, RS and AC among different age groups. The obtained F-value is significant. Hence, it was concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in KH, RS and AC among different age groups; with an increase in age, the KH, RS and AC increase (Table 4).

The difference between KH, RS and AC, and the gender of the respondents were computed. Females had a higher mean score (41.69) for KH, (31.62) for RS and males had a higher mean score (20.48) for AC than females. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to ascertain if there was a significant difference between KH, RS and AC among different genders. The obtained F-value for KH and RS is significant, whereas for AC it doesn't show any significance. Hence, it was concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in KH and RS among different genders (Table 5).

**Table 4: KH, RS and AC among Different Age Groups**

Age		KH	RS	AC
Up to 30 years	Mean	54	50.5	20
	N	36	36	36
	Std. Deviation	3.125928	1.681836	6.21059
31-40 years	Mean	41.36111	28.94444	17.72222
	N	36	36	36
	Std. Deviation	4.660796	9.313414	1.446397
41-50 years	Mean	31.33333	15.33333	18
	N	27	27	27
	Std. Deviation	6.928203	1.921538	4.32346
Above 50 years	Mean	14.09091	3.863636	27.63636
	N	22	22	22
	Std. Deviation	1.570838	0.83355	2.012945
Total	Mean	37.92562	27.76033	20.26446
	N	121	121	121
	Std. Deviation	14.66297	17.9453	5.449417
F Value		379.885 (.000)	425.374 (.000)	30.687 (.000)

Source: Primary Data

**Table 5 KH, RS and AC Among Different Genders**

Gender		KH	RS	AC
Male	Mean	34.3387	24.0806	20.4839
	N	62	62	62
	Std. Deviation	15.1495	18.2894	6.23775
Female	Mean	41.6949	31.6271	20.0339
	N	59	59	59
	Std. Deviation	13.2382	16.8757	4.51803
Total	Mean	37.9256	27.7603	20.2645
	N	121	121	121
	Std. Deviation	14.663	17.9453	5.44942
F Value		8.056 (.005)	5.549 (.020)	0.205 (.652)

Source: Primary Data

The difference between KH, RS and AC, and the income of the respondents were computed. The income group up to Rs 30,000 had a higher mean score (53.00) for KH, (50.00) for RS and the income group above Rs 70,000 (26.75) for AC than other income groups. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to ascertain if there was a significant difference between KH, RS and AC, among different income groups. The obtained F-value is significant. Hence, it was concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in KH, RS and AC, among different income groups (Table 6).

**Table 6: KH, RS and AC among Different Income Group**

Income		KH	RS	AC
Upto Rs 30,000	Mean	53	50	18.3333
	N	27	27	27
	Std. Deviation	3	1.6641	6.35489
Rs 30,001 – Rs 50,000	Mean	47.5758	39.9394	20.3333
	N	33	33	33
	Std. Deviation	6.47606	7.5413	3.00694
Rs 50,001 – Rs 70,000	Mean	32.2162	13.7297	17.4054
	N	37	37	37
	Std. Deviation	8.06617	4.97018	4.23254
Above Rs 70,000	Mean	16.5	7.625	26.75
	N	24	24	24
	Std. Deviation	4.42326	5.10594	2.69056
Total	Mean	37.9256	27.7603	20.2645
	N	121	121	121
	Std. Deviation	14.663	17.9453	5.44942
F Value		191.343 (.000)	406.787 (.000)	25.618 (.000)

Source: Primary Data

The correlation test was computed to know the association between the perceived knowledge hiding, role stress and affective commitment. There is a significant association between KH, RS and AC among the employees working in the IT sector (Table 7). KH and RS have shown a positive correlation, whereas, AC has shown a negative correlation between both the constructs.

The regression analysis was conducted to investigate the association between perceived knowledge hiding and role stress of the respondents. F-Test was statistically significant. The R-Squared is .87 which means that approximately 87% of the variance of role stress was explained by perceived knowledge hiding behaviour of the co-workers.

**Table 7: Correlation between KH, RS and AC**

	KH	RS	AC
<b>1. KH</b>	1		
<b>2. RS</b>	.937**	1	
<b>3. AC</b>	-.418**	-.242**	1

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data

Thus H1- Perceived knowledge hiding behaviour affects role stress of employees working in the IT sector is accepted.

The regression analysis was conducted to investigate the association between perceived knowledge hiding and role stress of the respondents moderated by the affective commitment of stakeholders. F-Test was statistically significant. The R-Squared is .90 which means that approximately 90% of the variance of role stress was explained by knowledge hiding when moderated by the affective commitment of the stakeholders. The analysis showed a significant negative relationship between the moderator and the dependent variable.

Thus H2- Affective commitment moderates the relationship between perceived knowledge hiding and role stress of employees working in the IT sector is accepted.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

This research was conducted to analyse the influence of knowledge hiding on role stress among IT employees in India. The findings established that there is a significant relationship between the study variables which should be considered as a threat by the organisations to develop a positive organisational climate and cooperative relationships in the workplace.

### **5.1 Managerial implications**

Knowing the rapidly changing and competitive work scenario, it is important for organisations to work on effective strategies to mitigate the impact of knowledge hiding behaviour. Decision-makers should understand the various situations in which knowledge hiding occurs and how the intentional knowledge hiding behaviour of the stakeholders would impact the creativity of the employees and the overall performance of the organisation. In view of the extensive literature search, the knowledge hiding behaviour can be lessened by designing an effective knowledge management system and also an efficient reward system which doesn't leverage the employees to gain benefits through hiding the necessary knowledge. In the hybrid workplace, to cope with AI and bots, it is important to focus on designing a positive organisational climate to improve employee relations and thereby, reduce the role stress of the employees.

### **5.2 Implications for future research**

Future research can focus on applying the organisational factors (e.g. perceived organisation support, emotional intelligence, entrepreneurial behaviour, creativity and innovation etc.,) and factors like organisational learning, organisation climate,

organisation citizenship behaviour, leadership traits, etc., as the moderators or mediators analyse its effect on employee's individual and organisational factors. A comparative gender-based study can be designed to understand the level of knowledge hiding behaviour of different genders, which facilitates to structure the stress management model.

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