

Special issue editorial: Knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding in different environments

Special Issue Editors:

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Background

Knowledge management involves very positive and constructive behaviors, but undesirable ones also occur. Knowledge creation, sharing, storage and use are the helpful traditional behaviors considered in the knowledge management process (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). However, there are unwelcome behaviors that present great challenges to organizations. This Special Issue devotes much attention to the particular knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding behaviors. We wish there was less evidence of such behaviors, but we cannot ignore them, so, let's face them!

Knowledge hiding “is an attempt by an individual to retain or hide knowledge that has been requested by someone else” (Connelly et al., 2012, p. 65). While knowledge hoarding is “an individual’s deliberate and strategic concealment of knowledge” (Evans et al., 2015, p. 495) that is relevant to others but not requested (Garcia et al., 2020). Following Anaza and Nowlin (2017) Knowledge withholding is a “conscious refusal to transfer knowledge to others” (p. 15) working as an antecedent of knowledge hoarding. In this case, withholding is similar to hiding. Nevertheless, according to Wu (2020), knowledge withholding includes knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding. Thus, there is no unanimous agreement on such concepts, which invites us to explore the possible differences between them.

Knowledge sharing involves two processes: knowledge sharing donation and knowledge sharing collection (Hooff & Ridder, 2004). Figure 1 shows the relationship between knowledge sharing collection and knowledge hiding as well as knowledge sharing donation and knowledge hoarding. The four behaviors (knowledge hiding, knowledge hoarding, knowledge sharing collection and knowledge sharing donation) can be perceived as positive at organizational level (revealing organizational commitment), and negative at individual level (revealing individualism) (Oliveira et al., 2021). Managers trying to leverage knowledge sharing in the organizations should pay attention to knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding phenomena.

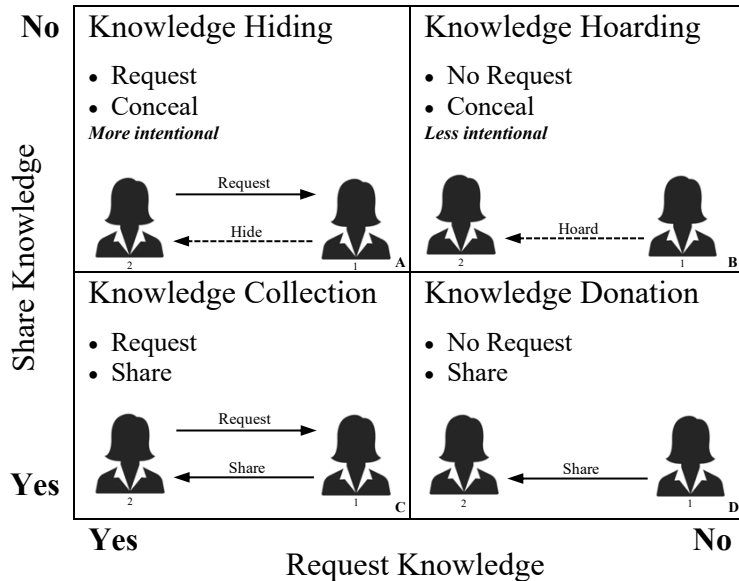


Figure 1. Knowledge hiding, hoarding, collection, and donation framework (Adapted from Garcia et al., 2020, p. 7).

Tacit and explicit knowledge are the base for the knowledge creation – Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization (SECI) model (Nonaka, 1994) and compose the continuous organizational knowledge flow. Tacit knowledge is valuable to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, since this kind of knowledge is more difficult to copy and to be absorbed by the organization. Holding knowledge is associated to having power, thus individuals fear to share their knowledge (Kankanhalli et al., 2005) in different degrees. For example, knowledge workers like scholars tend to hide more tacit knowledge than explicit knowledge (Hernaus et al., 2019). Thus, there are different motivations for knowledge hiding and knowledge sharing according to the self-determination theory (Gagné, 2021). This Special Issue contributes to a better understanding of knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding. Articles illustrate what these behaviors are all about and how to move forward the research on these topics.

Gonçalves (2022)’s work presents arguments a) stressing the need to explore knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding following research designs that allow the use of systematic methodologies, and b) pointing out that qualitative or mixed-methods research designs are scarce when studying knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding. On one hand, there is an overreliance on the study of these concepts almost exclusively addressed by literature reviews, with a scarcity of conceptual papers addressing both knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding. On the other hand, there is a lack of empirical research focused on exploring different levels of analysis, with little contributions surrounding alternative methods of research. Therefore, the work by Gonçalves provides guidelines for driving Grounded Theory research on knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding. It presents alternatives in favor of mixed methods to integrate quantitative designs in Grounded Theory. Following Gonçalves suggestions will allow advancing research in knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding.

Yang et al. (2022)'s work presents arguments for introducing experimental methodologies into knowledge hiding research, from laboratory experiments, also called clinical experiments, field experiments, and quasi-experiments a data collection instrument involving game scenarios to study knowledge hiding. On one hand, there are clear advantages on following experimental designs, like the possibility of uncovering inferences about the causality of the proposed relationship, reduce research noise, and ease the concerns of reverse causality. On the other hand, only 4% of published articles on non-sharing knowledge behaviors involve experimental designs. Therefore, the work by Yang et al. suggests the use of game scenarios to advance research on knowledge hiding. They specifically propose a research design based on an interactive serious game comprising five steps and invite future studies to apply it.

Kalid et al. (2022)'s work offers evidence on the effect of evasive hiding, playing dumb and rationalized hiding (the dimensions of knowledge hiding construct) on knowledge management process at Information Technology (IT) companies working in Pakistan. On one hand, only rationalized hiding is found to have significantly positive impact on knowledge management processes. On the other hand, there is evidence of knowledge management processes having significant relationship with knowledge workers ambidexterity and productivity of knowledge workers. Therefore, the work by Kalid et al. shows the indirect influence of knowledge hiding on key organizational performance indicators, thus the authors propose further exploring knowledge hiding to identify its antecedents. Kalid et al. (2022)'s work suggest how knowledge hiding could undermine organizational performance alerting managers to take appropriate measures to avoid such behavior. At the end of this Special Issue's edition, we would like to present our most grateful recognition for the opportunity to contribute to the Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management (OJAKM). We hope that this Special Issue contributes to the scientific excellence that Journal promotes in academia.

We would like to give special thanks to Professors Meir Russ and Yair Levy for their positive and enthusiastic reception of the idea of this Special Issue. We acknowledge your recognition of the topic's relevancy and for that we are most pleased. Thank you for your trust!

Finally, we wish you all good health and a pleasant read.

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