

LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE DIFFERENTIATION, KNOWLEDGE HIDING, AND EMPLOYEE VOICE: MEDIATION OF WORKPLACE OSTRACISM

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: The effectiveness of knowledge sharing between leaders and their subordinates in organisational settings is a crucial factor in determining both their performance and the success of the organisation. This study contends that existing literature requires additional exploration of the correlation between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding. Based on the conservation of resource theory, this study investigates the relationship between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding, with workplace ostracism mediating the relationship, and employee voice in a public sector organisational context in Pakistan.

Methodology: This study applied a quantitative methodology to examine the hypotheses empirically. A cross-sectional survey method was employed to collect data from 156 employees of Pakistani public

sector organisations. The data was then analysed using Preacher and Hayes mediation technique to explore the mediation in the study model.

Findings: The empirical results confirmed the study's theory that workplace ostracism plays a mediating role in the relationship between leader-member exchange and employees' knowledge hiding. The study finds that in the absence of high-quality leader-member exchange, employees tend to exhibit knowledge hiding as they feel ostracised by their supervisors in public sector organizations in Pakistan.

Contributions: This study provides novel insights into the relationship between leader-member exchange, workplace ostracism, and knowledge hiding in a Pakistani public sector working environment.

Keywords: Leader-member exchange, workplace ostracism, conservation of resource, employee voice, knowledge hiding.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management is a broad phenomenon. Two opposite concepts can be found in the literature under knowledge management i.e., “Knowledge sharing “and “Knowledge hiding”. Much of the focus has been given to the factors contributing to knowledge sharing (Wang & Noe, 2010) but the construct of knowledge hiding didn’t get the much-needed attention of scholars, and yet alone, the factors contributing to Knowledge hiding (Connelly et al., 2012). Knowledge hiding is detrimental to the organization as it reduces creativity, and innovative behavior, and increases turnover intention (Bogilović et al., 2017; Černe et al., 2017; Connelly et al., 2012). Few studies investigated the antecedents of knowledge hiding such as increased distrust and competitiveness (Hernaus et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2025), deteriorated reciprocal relationships (Connelly & Zweig, 2015), and perceived organizational politics (Malik et al., 2019). In the antecedent of reciprocal relationships, the construct of leader-member exchange has been investigated for knowledge hiding (Zhao et al., 2019).

Leader-member exchange is a dyadic concept that is based on the reciprocal relationship between a leader (supervisor) and a follower (subordinate). In high-quality leader-

member exchange, this exchange relationship thrives towards positive outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior (Teng et al., 2020; Willie, 2025) and job satisfaction (Kwon et al., 2019). In contrast, low-quality leader-member exchange produces negative outcomes such as workplace deviant behavior (El Akremi et al., 2010; Guo et al., 2024), and knowledge hiding (Zhao et al., 2019). However, the direct relationship between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding is sparse in the literature and it needs further investigation with the intervening phenomena (Zhao et al., 2019). Low-quality leader-member exchange is a weak reciprocal relationship that has negative outcomes. If the supervisor fails to balance relationships with all group members, those with low-quality leader-member exchanges may feel ostracized and perceive an "in-group" and "out-group" dynamic (Arshadi et al., 2012).

Public sector firms are fraught with negative leadership roles and employee reactions to these negative leadership roles are widely reported (Rasheed et al., 2022; Pavićević, & Keil, 2025). This perception is further strengthened in recently conducted studies in the Pakistani context which highlighted several barriers to knowledge sharing. The lack of quality of relationships among medical students is a significant barrier to knowledge sharing (Rafique & Anwar, 2019). The lack of socialization culture, communication barriers, power distance between supervisor and subordinate, and desire to dominate are the biggest causes of knowledge hoarding in the Public Sector Higher Education Institutes (Muqadas et al., 2017; Naseem et al., 2025). The negative impact of Bureaucratic Red tape on employees' knowledge-sharing (Amber et al., 2019). The authors collected the data from 309 executive employees working in five federal ministries in Pakistan. Asian culture promotes knowledge sharing within natural relations among individuals rather than relationships based on documents or databases (Lin & Dalkir, 2010; Obeng et al., 2024). Given the causal nature of leader-member exchange and knowledge-hiding relationship, it is evident from these studies that employees tend to hide knowledge from their co-workers and supervisors due to a lack of socialization and communication, organizational structure, and high-power distance.

Workplace Ostracism is the perceptible phenomenon in which an employee perceives that they are being ignored by their coworkers (Ferris et al., 2008; Asmita et al., 2025). A recent research study of ostracism on 2000 Managers/employees in the United States found that 67% of employees avoid speaking with their co-workers whereas 75% of employees identified themselves as a victim of workplace ostracism (Harvey et al., 2018). In that study, 66% of employees felt that they had been given silent treatment in the last five years; 29 % of employees reported that their peers left the room when they entered while 18% reported physical ostracism to move to an isolated location in the office. According to Harvey et al.

(2018), workplace ostracism is reflexively painful and deprives individuals of fundamental needs. In literature, belongingness is identified as a desirable state of fulfilment due to a positive social connection (O'Reilly et al., 2015). Conservation of Resource (COR) theory argues that when an individual's personal resources are threatened, they try to protect the remaining resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Radford, 2024). In an absence of positive social connection i.e. low-quality leader-member exchange, the subordinate will retaliate with knowledge hiding. This logical explanation points out that workplace ostracism can mediate the relationship between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding.

Whereas knowledge hiding is detrimental to organizations (Černe et al., 2017), employee voice is pivotal for organizational success in innovation in the dynamic business environment (Detert & Treviño, 2010). Employee voice is identified as extra-role work behavior (Li & Tian, 2016) in which discretionary information to improve the organizational and operational functioning of employees, is provided by the employees (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). However, in the case of low-quality leader-member exchange, where the supervisor and subordinate have weak communication (Chan & Yeung, 2016), the subordinate will involve in less voice behavior due to the ostracism coming from the supervisor. This explains that leader-member exchange and workplace ostracism can be major determinants for lower employee voice. Therefore, this study investigates the relationship of leader-member exchange, knowledge hiding, and employee voice with the mediation of workplace ostracism.

This study offers various contributions to existing literature. First, this study uses the conservation of resource (COR) theory to examine leader-member exchange, workplace ostracism, and information hiding. Before this, Social Exchange Theory (SET) and role theory have been used to study this link (Nazir et al., 2020). Second, the literature on indirect relationships between both constructs is scarce (Wang et al., 2016). Therefore, this study examines leader-member interchange, workplace ostracism, and employee voice under the COR theory for the first time. This study investigates how leader-member exchange and employee voice mediate workplace ostracism, a novel addition. Third, this study is the first to examine leader-member exchange, workplace ostracism, and knowledge hiding in Pakistani public sector workers. Pakistan consistently ranks high on collectivist and power distance cultural aspects (Naseer et al., 2016; Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Leaders set and enforce norms in cultures with high collectivism and power distance, and subordinates view meetings the leader's expectations as the workgroup's standard. In such cultural settings, the leader-subordinate relationship is more personal than professional (Akhtar et al., 2021), and if the

subordinate senses workplace ostracism, he may try to retaliate with knowledge hiding. Thus, applying this model to Pakistani workplaces might provide interesting findings.

The rest of this paper is comprised as follows: section 2 comprises of literature review and hypothesis development followed by section 3 which is about research design and methodology. Subsequently, section 4 presents results and discussion. Section 5 presents conclusion, policy recommendations, limitations and future direction of research.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Leader Member Exchange and Knowledge Hiding

Leader-member exchange is a dyadic concept that is based on the relationship between a leader and a follower. Leader-member exchange theory explains that a high-quality leader-member exchange relationship is based on mutual respect, loyalty, open communication, and better rewards (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Willie, 2025) which results in organizational citizenship behavior (Teng et al., 2020), job satisfaction (Kwon et al., 2019), and career success (Park et al., 2017). Leader-member exchange theory also explains that leaders cannot maintain a high-quality relationship with every member of a team due to limited time and resources which leads to a low-quality leader-member exchange relationship with other team members. This relationship is limited to a formal contract and low interaction between leader and followers. This difference in a relationship is characterized as leader-member exchange differentiation (Martin et al., 2016).

Knowledge hiding is recognized as CWB in the literature as it is defined as an” intentional attempt by an employee to withhold or conceal knowledge that has been requested by his or her coworkers” (Connelly et al., 2012; Shen et al., 2025). They contend knowledge hiding is classified into three components; playing dumb, evasive hiding, and rationalizing hiding. Playing dumb means a knowledge hider is pretending to don’t know when asked something from a colleague. Evasive hiding involves deception in which a knowledge hider provides deliberate wrong information upon request from coworkers. Rationalize hiding does not necessarily involve deception. It is “the hider is offering a justification for failing to provide requested knowledge by either suggesting he or she is unable to provide the knowledge requested or blaming another party” (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). The literature strongly supports the negative relationship between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding.

Zhao et al. (2019) investigated this relationship in a group engagement model with organizational identification as a mediator. They found a negative relationship between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding. Similarly, Jawahar et al. (2018) also found that the

lower the quality of leader- member exchange, the higher the CWB will be. However, the relationship of rationalized hiding with leader-member exchange was not supported in the study of Zhao et al. (2019). This explains why the motivation behind rationalize hiding may not be deception and negative behavior. Rationalize hiding has been repeatedly proven insignificant in the relationship of leadership constructs (Offergelt et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2019; Obeng et al., 2024) and it may have different antecedents (Connelly et al., 2019). Therefore, in this study, the dimension of rationalize hiding is not considered and based on the above literature analysis, the following assumption could be drawn:

Hypothesis 1: *Leader-member exchange is negatively related to knowledge hiding.*

2.2 Relationship of Leader-member Exchange and Workplace Ostracism

Workplace ostracism is defined as “the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored and excluded by others at work” (Ferris et al., 2008). Workplace ostracism has a detrimental effect on an individual's social needs and mental functions and it threatens the person's sense of belongingness (Ataman, 2017; Riaz et al., 2019; Asmita et al., 2025). Arshadi et al. (2012) argue that high-quality leader-member exchange employees have less role conflict, lower turnover intention, and high-performance objectives and are often appraised by their supervisors. However, employees in low-quality leader-member exchanges have less supervisory support, less sense of belonging, and more turnover intentions. This discrimination makes sense in employees who are “in-group” and who are “out group” with their supervisors (Arshadi et al., 2012). This apparent exclusion from the group leads the low-quality leader-member exchange employees to the feeling that they are being ostracized by their group members. This relationship has a significant negative correlation in the meta-analysis of Howard et al. (2019) and Chan and Yeung (2016), and a similar outcome was observed in the study of Arshadi et al. (2012) where leader-member exchange was investigated with workplace deviance with a mediating role of workplace exclusion. Therefore, it could be assumed that:

Hypothesis 2: *Leader-member exchange is negatively related to the workplace ostracism.*

2.3 Relationship of Workplace Ostracism and Knowledge Hiding

Workplace ostracism often threatens self-esteem needs, need of belongingness, the need for control, and the need for meaningful existence (Riaz et al., 2019; Asmita et al., 2025). The conservation of resource theory indicates when employee’s personal resources are threatened,

they adapt to defensive mechanisms to conserve the remaining resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). When employees feel that they are ostracized by their peers, they will engage in retaliatory behavior such as knowledge hiding and CWB's (Riaz et al., 2019; Radford, 2024). Indeed, literature also supports knowledge hiding as an outcome of workplace ostracism. The study of Riaz et al. (2019) investigated this relationship with job tension as a mediating variable in the manufacturing industry and found positive relationship. Zhao et al. (2016) also revealed the same outcomes. However, as discussed earlier, the motivation behind individuals rationalize hiding may not be a deception, harm, or negative retaliation (Connelly et al., 2012). Therefore, to assume under the COR lens that employees may rationalize hiding because of workplace ostracism does not make sense. Zhao et al. (2016) even went one step further and hypothesized that there is no relationship between workplace ostracism and rationalize hiding which was supported in the outcomes of a study. Therefore, by concluding the argument it could be assumed that:

Hypothesis 3: *Workplace ostracism is positively related to knowledge hiding.*

2.4 Mediation of Workplace Ostracism in the relationship of Leader-member Exchange and Knowledge Hiding

The literature enlists only a few studies to examine the relationship between leader-member exchange and counterproductive work behavior (Chen et al., 2007; Newton & Perlow, 2024). After a decade, only a handful number of studies focused on the association of high-quality leader-member exchange and positive outcomes (Jawahar et al., 2018). Zhao et al. (2019) investigated the relationship of leader-member exchange with knowledge hiding with the mediation of organizational identification. The authors recommended other intermediating variables for future study which implies that this mediation mechanism is still inconclusive. Nguyen et al. (2022) argue that the COR theory helps in explaining why employees hide their essential resource, i.e., knowledge. Employees are motivated to protect the things that they value and they will endeavor to maintain resources if they perceive a threat against a valued resource. From the lens of COR theory, self-esteem, need of belongingness, and need of control are the resources that employees possess in a working environment (Radford, 2024). Workplace ostracism, triggered by low-quality leader-member exchange, makes individuals protect their remaining resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). This "Counter Work Behavior" results in a form of knowledge hiding (Riaz et al., 2019). So, it could be assumed that workplace

ostracism intervenes in the relationship between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding. Therefore, the following hypothesis stated that:

Hypothesis 4: *Workplace ostracism mediates the relationship between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding.*

2.5 Leader-Member Exchange and Employee Voice

Leader-member exchange literature provides ample benefits of high-quality leader-member exchange. Martin et al. (2016) argued that less attention has been given to the cost of low-quality leader-member exchange. Employee voice is defined as “how employees raise concerns, express and advance their interests, solve problems, and contribute to and participate in workplace decision making” (Pyman et al., 2006). Employee voice is a complex phenomenon. Dundon et al. (2004) provides four types of employee voices. One of them is the contribution to management decision-making. In this type of employee voice, employees try to improve the quality and productivity of performance. This contribution is only possible when an employee has a mutual relationship with the supervisor and willingness to contribute to decision-making. However, the low-quality leader-member exchange relationship lacks open communication between supervisor and subordinate (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The Corporate responsibility theory indicates that when employees are ostracized due to the low-quality leader-member exchange (loss of resources), they will engage in lower employee voice (conservation of resources) (Awa et al., 2024). Halbesleben et al. (2014) argued that loss of belongingness (resource) will create the perception of “outgroup” which will tend the employees towards less contribution in decision making (protection of resources). Employees will ignore workplace issues and stifle their voices. Wang et al. (2016) found that the leader-member exchange relationship positively impacts supervisor voice behaviour. Based on this, supervisor ostracism, in which leaders ignore their subordinates' needs and emotions and rob them of support and trust (Hitlan & Noel, 2009), is particularly detrimental. Supervisor ostracism is a poor leader-member exchange relationship. Supervisor ostracism can make employees feel like "out-of-group members," reducing their organisational loyalty and voice. Therefore, we hypothesize the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: *Leader-member exchange is positively related to employee voice.*

2.6 Workplace Ostracism and Employee Voice

Ferris et al. (2008) describe workplace ostracism as “the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others in the workplace.” Silence, avoiding discussion or eye contact, giving the cold shoulder, and withholding information are examples of workplace ostracism. Ostracism, such as avoiding someone after a fight, helps minimize social awkwardness and negative emotions (Robinson et al., 2013; Naseem et al., 2025). Employee voice behavior involves voicing positive comments, concerns, or ideas about work-related difficulties (Detert & Treviño, 2010). Detert and Treviño (2010) argue that employee voice behavior is crucial for organizational performance, preventing crises and fostering innovation in a changing business environment.

Employee voice behavior has pros and cons, therefore employees often speak up after weighing the pros and cons (Liang et al., 2012). In the workplace, an individual might be ostracized or excluded by either their supervisor or co-workers. Supervisors have substantial authority over promotions, compensation raises, and resource distributions. Thus, supervisor ostracism may be worse than co-worker ostracism (Hitlan & Noel, 2009; Asmita et al., 2025). Hitlan and Noel (2009) found that co-worker ostracism was linked to interpersonal CWB, while supervisor ostracism was linked to organisational CWB. Chung and Kim (2017) found that supervisor ostracism negatively impacts employee job satisfaction more than co-worker ostracism. Supervisors and co-workers demonstrated varied forms of ostracism, according to their findings. Supervisor ostracism includes “my supervisor didn’t adopt my suggestion,” “my supervisor doesn’t take me to important events or activities,” and “my supervisor doesn’t recognise my excellent job performance.”. Based on the above discussion, we hypothesize the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: *Workplace ostracism is negatively related to employee voice.*

2.7 Mediation of Workplace Ostracism in the relationship between Leader-member Exchange and Employee Voice

The SET states that when employees trust their managers, they can respond to good behavior and help management through employee voice. Quality exchange with bosses or managers supports organisation growth and increases accountability to improve the immediate working environment (Burriss et al., 2008; Karmila et al., 2024). Leader-member exchange indicates corporate affiliation and good leader-member exchange relations lead to employees understanding their bosses' perspectives, contributing to the institution, and achieving a

mutually beneficial goal (Hsiung & Tsai, 2009). According to several studies, employees are more likely to communicate their opinions to their employers when they feel close to them. Beyond this study, supervisors are more open to staff input and encourage employee voice when leader-member exchange is high. Many practical researchers found that employees are more inclined to participate in employee voice when they see a good leader-member exchange association with managers (Hsiung, 2012). This view was also supported by study of Ng and Feldman (2012) in which authors conducted a meta-analytic analysis of employee voice under the COR Framework. Additionally, the literature also indicates the negative association between workplace ostracism and employee voice (Li & Tian, 2016). Although the literature predominantly focuses on high-quality leader-member exchange and employee voice (Chan & Yeung, 2016; Park & Nawakitphaitoon, 2018; Vu, et al. 2025) but based on the above argument following assumption can be drawn:

Hypothesis 7: *Workplace ostracism will mediate the relationship between leader-member exchange and employee voice.*

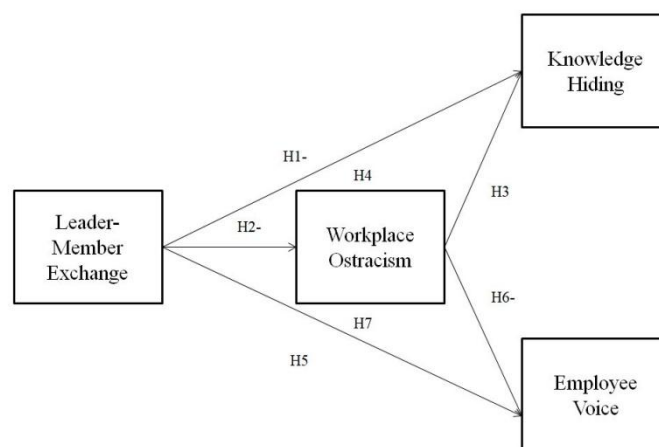


Figure 1: The conceptual model

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of a current study was based on positivist philosophy in which the author used deductive and quantitative approaches for hypotheses testing by collecting cross-sectional data from the employees working in public sector organizations. Therefore, the unit of observation in this study was the employees and the unit of analysis was the public sector organizations. The data was collected through a self-reported questionnaire from public sector organizations situated in the capital city, Islamabad. These organizations were selected for two

reasons. First, these organizations were conveniently closed to the author's location. Second, the territory of Islamabad is home to the head offices of federal government organizations. All the flow of knowledge and data circulate from the head offices of these organizations due to which the cooperation and communication among supervisors and employees working in these organizations are vital for the survival of their organizations.

To reduce the issue of Common Method Bias (CMB) (Podsakoff, 2003), a cover letter was attached with a questionnaire explaining the purpose of the data collection and ensuring its confidentiality. This approach significantly reduced the chances of CMB which is reflected in the acceptable Cronbach alpha value of research instrument of this study in table 2 (Podsakoff, 2003). The research instrument was consisted of two parts. In the first part, the respondents were asked to give their demographic profile and in the second part, items were given alongside Likert scale options from which the respondents must select only one option. The author used a personal connection to gain access to the research sites. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed from which only 156 were completed. About 71% of the sample was of male respondents while only 29% female gave a response. The 60% percent of the sample was graduates degree holder and about half of the sample (48%) was found between the age bracket of 31-40 yrs. Most of the respondents (56%) were working under their supervisors for more than two years.

3.1 Measurement of Variables

3.1.1 Leader-member Exchange

The leader-member exchange variable was measured with six items which were adopted from the study of Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). All items were measured on 5 points Likert scale from none to very high. The reliability of items reported from the Cronbach alpha test was 0.903 which is acceptable (Table 2).

3.1.2 Workplace Ostracism

The workplace ostracism was measured with ten ten-item scale adopted from the study of Ferris et al. (2008). All items of workplace ostracism were measured on a seven-point Likert scale from never to always. The reliability test of Cronch bach alpha reported was 0.785 which is acceptable according to Kline (2000).

3.1.3 Knowledge Hiding

The knowledge hiding was measured with a points Likert scale ranging from “not at all” to “to a very great extent”. The eight items for knowledge hiding were adopted from the study of Connelly et al. (2012). The reliability score of the Cronbach alpha test was 0.835 which is acceptable.

3.1.4 Employee Voice

The employee voice was measured with two items scale and it was adopted from the study of (Wang et al., 2016). All items were measured with a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The reliability score of the items was 0.948 which is acceptable.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Empirical Analysis

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of the data collected for analysis. The correlation between leader-member exchange, workplace ostracism, and knowledge hiding provided preliminary indications of negative associations of constructs as it was assumed in the hypotheses. To control for the effect of unobserved variable, Time undercurrent supervisor was included in the mediation model. To test the hypotheses of this study, Preacher and Hayes (2004) mediation technique was used to assess the indirect effect of leader-member exchange on knowledge hiding and employee voice. The technique was applied into two parts. First, model one (Leader-member exchange, Workplace ostracism, Knowledge hiding) was entered into SPSS and then results were derived. In the second step, the second model (Leader-member exchange, Workplace ostracism, Employee voice) was entered and results were extracted.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

No.	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Gender	1.21	.410									
2	Education	2.38	.959	-								
	Time under			.23*								
3	current supervisor	5.31	.989	-	.004							
				.095								
4	Experience	2.47	.782	-.18	.133	-.03						
5	Age Group	1.87	.613	-.16	.23*	-.06	.48**					
6	LMX	3.24	.711	.28*	.41**	-.10	-.32**	-.13				
7	WPO	1.78	.520	.16	-.09	.01	.29**	-.15	-.27*			
8	KH	2.06	.696	.09	-.32**	.35**	.16	-.14	-.37**	.39**		
9	EV	4.67	1.290	.01	.44**	.02	-.45**	-	.37**	.01	-	
								.26*			.25*	

N= 156, $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$ (two tailed)

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha

No.	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
1	Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)	0.903	07
2	Knowledge Hiding (KH)	0.835	08
3	Workplace Ostracism (WPO)	0.785	10
4	Employee Voice (EV)	0.948	02

4.1.1 Mediation Model (1)

Table 3 provides the regression values of path “a” of the model i.e. leader member exchange → workplace ostracism. The $\beta = -.3654$ co-efficient value, which is significant at $p^* < 0.05$, supported hypothesis 2 of the study that leader member exchange is negatively associated with workplace ostracism. Table 4 provides the regression values of path ‘b’ and ‘c’ i.e. workplace ostracism → knowledge hiding and leader member exchange → knowledge hiding respectively. The positive co-efficient value of $\beta = .5789$, which is significant at $p^* < 0.05$, supported hypothesis 3 which assumed that workplace ostracism is positively related to knowledge hiding. However, the direct effect of leader member exchange on knowledge hiding (path c’) in presence workplace ostracism is negative and insignificant i.e. $\beta = -.0593$, $p^* > 0.05$. The table 5 provides the total effect estimation of mediation model ($a*b*c'$) which is equals to $-.2652$ it is significant at $p^* < 0.05$.

Table 3: Path a (model 1) model summary

R	R sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	p
.6489	.4211	.5903	36.85	3.00	152.00	.0000
Model						
	Coeff (β)	SE	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	-1.1894	.3374	-3.5246	.0006	-1.8561	-.5227
WPO	.5789	.0663	8.7274	.0000	.4478	.7099
LMX	-.0593	.0663	-.8946	.3724	-.1094	.0717
Time under current supervisor	.2238	.0624	3.5847	.0005	.1005	.3472

Outcome: KH, $p^* < 0.05$

Finally, table 6 provided the results of the bootstrap indirect effect of leader member exchange on knowledge hiding with the mediation of workplace ostracism. According to the Preacher and Hayes (2004) estimations, the non-presence of zero in the values of LLCI and ULCI indicates the mediation effect in the model. Back in table 3 and 4 it was shown that In presence of workplace ostracism, the effect of leader member exchange on knowledge hiding becomes insignificant and whereas the total effect remains significant. Thus, it could be concluded that full mediation is occurring in model 1 of the study. The LLCI and ULCI values in table 5 are negative and non-zero which indicates that workplace ostracism mediates the relationship of leader member exchange and knowledge hiding. Hence, this result supported the mediation hypothesis 4 of this study.

Table 4: Path 'b' & 'c' (model 1) model summary

R	R sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	P
.3665	.1342	.8770	11.87	2.00	153.00	.000
Model						
Outcome: WPO, $p^* < 0.05$	Coeff (β)	SE	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	-.1114	.4112	-.2708	.7869	-.9327	.7010
LMX	-.3654	.0752	-4.8562	.0000	-.5140	-.2167
Time undercurrent supervisor	.0210	.0761	.2754	.7834	-.1293	.1713

Table 5: Total effect of LMX on KH (path c)

Effect	Boot SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-.2652	.0738	-3.5928	.0004	-.4110	-.1194

Table 6: Indirect effect of LMX on KH (model 1)

Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
-.2115	.0493	-.3080	-.1190

4.1.2 Mediation Model (2)

The mediation results of the second model are summarized in Tables 7 and 8. As the path ‘a’ results remain the same in Table 3, the path ‘b’ result of model 2 was found to be insignificant at $p > 0.05$ which does not support hypothesis 6 of the study. In addition to that, table 8 also indicates the presence of zero between values of LLCI and ULCI, and that does not support the mediation hypothesis 7 in which it was assumed that workplace ostracism mediates the relationship of leader member exchange and employee voice. Although, the positive and significant value of leader-member exchange i.e. $\beta = .6729$, $p < .05$ does support the hypothesis 5 of the positive relationship of leader member exchange and employee voice.

Table 7: Path ‘b’ & ‘c’ (model 2) model summary

R	R sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	p
.6582	.4332	.5780	38.72	3.00	152.00	.0000
Model						
	Coeff (β)	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	-.0844	.3339	.2529	.8007	-.7441	.5752
WPO	.0429	.0656	.6543	.5139	-.0867	.1726
LMX	.6729	.0656	10.25	.0000	.5432	.8025
<i>Time under current supervisor</i>	.0159	.0618	.2572	.7974	-.1062	.1379

Table 8: Indirect effect of LMX on EV

Effect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
-.0499	.0526	-.14	.05

4.2 Discussion

In this study, we found a negative association between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding of employees working in public sector organizations. The results of the study revealed that indeed, the relationship of both these constructs is negative which indicates that low quality of leader-member exchange leads to knowledge hiding of employees. This result

is consistent with the previous studies of Guo et al. (2024) Zhao et al. (2019) and Jawahar et al. (2018) in which the relationship of leader-member exchange and counterproductive work behavior was found negative.

We also investigated the mediating role of workplace ostracism in the relationship between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding. The outcomes of the study show that workplace ostracism mediates the relationship of both constructs in which leader-member exchange was negatively related to workplace ostracism and workplace ostracism was positively related to knowledge hiding. The statistical results of the mediation hypothesis were consistent with previous studies of Naseem et al. (2025), Howard et al. (2019) and Chan and Yeung (2016) for the negative relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace ostracism, and the previous studies of Riaz et al. (2019) and Zhao et al. (2016) for a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding. The outcomes also supported the COR theory which explained that in a case of loss of resources, individuals will adopt a defensive mechanism in the form of CWB (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Radford, 2024).

Table 9: Results summary

Hypothesis No.	Hypotheses	B	Supported/Not Supported
1	(LMX→KH)	-.2652*	Supported
2	(LMX→WPO)	-.2652*	Supported
3	WPO→KH	.5789*	Supported
4	LMX→WPO→KH	Non-zero in LLCI and ULCI	Supported
5	LMX→EV	.6729	Supported
6	(WPO→EV)	.0429	Not Supported
7	LMX→WPO→EV	Zero in LLCI & ULCI	Not Supported

We also investigated the mediating role of workplace ostracism in the relationship between leader-member exchange and knowledge hiding. The outcomes of the study show that workplace ostracism mediates the relationship of both construct in which leader-member exchange was negatively related to the workplace ostracism and workplace ostracism was positively related to the knowledge hiding. The statistical results of mediation hypothesis were consistent with previous studies of Howard et al. (2019) and Chan and Yeung (2016) for the negative relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace ostracism, and the previous studies of Riaz et al. (2019) and Zhao et al. (2016) for a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding. The outcomes also supported the COR theory

which explained that in a case of loss of resources, individuals will adopt a defensive mechanism in the form of CWB (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Awa et al., 2024).

We also found a direct positive relationship between leader-member exchange and employee voice. The outcomes of the study revealed that high-quality leader-member exchange leads to an increase in employee voice and low-quality leader-member exchange predicts low employee voice. Previous studies also found the relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace ostracism to be positive (Chan & Yeung, 2016; Park & Nawakitphaitoon, 2018; Wang et al., 2016). Whereas model one was supported by the outcomes, on the contrary, the outcomes do not support the assumption of workplace ostracism as a mediator in the relationship of leader-member exchange and employee voice in model two. There are two possible explanations for this outcome. First, while responding to the questions related to employee voice, most of the respondents remained neutral on the Likert scale. Subsequently, a weak correlation can be observed between workplace ostracism and employee voice in Table 1. Second, employee voice, as an extra-role work behavior, is neither mandatory nor compensated for by employers (Li & Tian, 2016). Due to the rigid compensation and reward structure in Pakistani public sector organizations, employee participation in suggestions, providing novel ideas, and decision-making is very low (Khalid et al., 2014). Therefore, these factors may play a crucial role in employee voice.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the relationship between leader-member exchange, knowledge sharing, employee voices and workplace ostracism. We also examined the mediating role of leader-member exchange and workplace ostracism on knowledge sharing and employee voice. For this purpose, we collected survey-questionnaire data from public sector companies from Islamabad, Pakistan and applied Preacher and Hayes's (2004) mediation technique to get results. The empirical results confirmed the study's theory that workplace ostracism plays a mediating role in the relationship between leader-member exchange and employees' knowledge hiding. The study finds that in the absence of high-quality leader-member exchange, employees tend to exhibit knowledge hiding as they feel ostracised by their supervisors in public sector organizations in Pakistan.

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it contributes to the literature by empirically investigating that interpersonal antecedent i.e. leader-member exchange can be a predictor of CWB. Except for the study of Zhao et al. (2019) and Jawahar et al. (2018), previous studies have focused on the relationship among co-workers and neglected the quality

of supervisor-subordinate relationship (Connelly et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2016). Second, tapping the literature gap in which intervening mechanism has been less explored to investigate knowledge hiding (Connelly et al., 2012), by using the COR theory, this study provides empirical evidence that ostracized employees exhibit knowledge hiding due to the low-quality leader-member exchange. Third, this is the first study to investigate the indirect relationship between leader-member exchange and employee voice under COR theory. Past studies have examined the direct relationship of both these constructs (Chan & Yeung, 2016; Park & Nawakitphaitoon, 2018). Fourth, under the collectivist culture of Pakistani organizational settings, this is the first study to test this model. Finally, the outcomes of this study confirm that in a collectivist culture, individuals tend to hide information from their surrounding people.

In addition to the theoretical contributions, this study provides some practical implications for public sector organizations. The results indicated that subordinates have some perception of ostracism from their supervisors and peers due to which they are forced to demonstrate knowledge hiding sometimes. Based on this study's findings, supervisors in public sector organizations can detect workplace ostracism at its early stages and can also try to lessen its unwarranted consequences such as loss of information due to knowledge hiding of employees. Effective methods suggested by scholars to reduce knowledge hiding include the assistance of supervisors in finding solutions for their subordinates' problems, recognition of subordinates' potential, and caring for their well-being (Zhao et al., 2019). In addition to that, to reduce workplace ostracism, supervisors can introduce openness and a transparent culture which promotes coherent competition (Zhao et al., 2016). Finally, the positive relationship between leader-member exchange and employee voice indicates that supervisors can enhance the voices of their subordinates by showing trust, respect, and effective communication which is vital for the success of the firm (Wang et al., 2016).

Finally, this study has some shortcomings which need to be addressed in future studies. *First*, this study acknowledged that the issue of CMB is not eliminated completely. This inherent limitation is always associated with survey instruments in which independent and dependent variables are measured on a same scale (Kock et al., 2021). *Secondly*, due to time constraints, cross-sectional data were collected from only two firms in the service sector. Future studies can be conducted by collecting time-lagged data across multiple public sector organizations of Pakistan. *Third*, future studies can incorporate additional variables in this model such as employee performance and creativity. *Fourth*, future studies can investigate leader-member exchange and workplace ostracism concepts on a group or team level. *Fifth*, our sample size for this study though adequately represented the population, it could be further

increased to get more robustness in empirical studies. *Finally*, the negative relationship of workplace ostracism and employee voice was not supported by the statistical results of this study. We associate this finding to two factors in this study. One is the sample size and other is few items utilized for measuring employee voice. Future studies can remedy this issue by increasing the sample size and number of items measuring employee voice. In future studies, this relationship can be investigated by distinguishing the workplace ostracism into supervisor-based ostracism and co-worker ostracism with a current research model. The study of Li and Tian (2016) could be helpful in this regard.

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