

EFFECT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING ON KNOWLEDGE HIDING AMONG NURSES OF FEDERAL MEDICAL CENTRE MAKURDI

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Pages 36 - 47

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of workplace bullying on knowledge hiding among nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi. The researcher used mainly primary data from a sample of one hundred and twenty (120) nurses who serve as respondents for this study. The data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics such as simple linear regression analysis. The hypotheses of the study were analyzed using the probability value of the regression estimates. The result of the regression analysis indicates workplace bullying (WPB) has a negative effect on knowledge hiding among nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria and the effect is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) but in line with a priori expectation. The hypothesis of the study shows that workplace bullying has a significant negative effect on knowledge hiding among nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. It was concluded that the behavioural characteristics of people such as bullying people are the main reasons for knowledge hiding. It was recommended that management of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria should put a strict rule regarding workplace bullying as it has been shown to affect knowledge hiding. An arbitration process should be put in place to address any act or perceived act of bullying experienced by the nurses in the hospital. This will go a long way in enhancing their performance.

Keywords: Bullying, Nurses, Hospital, Knowledge-hiding, Workplace, Nigeria

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Organizational knowledge is a critical strategic resource for organizational success (King and Zeithaml 2003; Hamilton and Philbin 2020). Research emphasizes the role of knowledge management and employees' knowledge sharing practices in improving firms' performances and developing their competitive advantage (Singh 2019; Fonseca *et al.* 2021). Research emphasizes the role of knowledge management and employees' knowledge sharing practices in improving firms' performances and developing their competitive advantage (Singh 2019; Fonseca *et al.* 2021) However, some employees prefer hiding knowledge for keeping irreplaceable in the organization, which will prevent the organization from gaining advantages in the fierce competitive environment (Burmeister, Fasbender, & Gerpott, 2019; Fong, Men, Luo, & Jia 2018). Therefore, we need to understand the antecedents of employees' knowledge hiding behaviours for minimizing the detriments of the organization caused by knowledge hiding.

Workplace bullying is a long-standing problem; yet only in the 1980s did scholars even begin to critically examine worker mistreatment labelled as "mobbing" (Leymann, 1990) or "bullying" (Adams, 1992). Eibarson 1999 defined bullying as "systematically subjected to aggressive behaviour from one or more colleagues or superiors over a long period of time" (p. 16). Namie & Namie (2009) argued that workplace bullying is repeated, health-harming, verbally abusive behaviour. The conduct is threatening, humiliating, and intimidating; it is work-related sabotage, or a combination of these.

Existing research studies on knowledge hiding emphasize leadership style, organizational/ knowledge culture, work environment and individual characteristics, but pay less attention to the influence of interpersonal negative events on knowledge hiding behaviours (Jha & Varkkey, 2018; Khalid, Bashir, Khan & Abbas 2018; Serenko & Bontis, 2016). Although Zhao *et al.* (2016) discussed effects of workplace exclusion on knowledge hiding and pointed out that employees' knowledge hiding is a kind of retaliatory behaviour, this study regarded employees' behaviour as an emotional outcome and failed to find possible mediating variables. Workplace bullying is a common negative event like workplace exclusion (Stagget, Daniel, Ann & Gabel 2011) and has a significantly negative impact on the sleep quality as well as mental health of employees (Magee *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, many scholars call for attention to workplace bullying, especially how individuals should deal with workplace bullying (Escartinet, Arrieta & Rodriguez-Carballeira, 2011; Vukelic, Cizmlic, & Petrovic, 2019). Following the research of Zhao *et al.* (2016), we speculate that workplace bullying, as a negative event, will also have an impact on employees' knowledge hiding behaviours. However, instead of only aiming to revenge, knowledge hiding of employees is more likely to be a thoughtful and rational offense.

Statement of the problem

Knowledge management plays a crucial role in each organization, which can affect the firms' and employees' performance. However, due to the practice of "knowledge hiding," it is often challenging to achieve satisfactory results

in knowledge management (Connelly and Kelloway, 2003). Previous research has pointed out that employees are not willing to share knowledge, due to reasons such as protection and control of knowledge ownership, expertise dominance, and defensive awareness (Huo *et al.*, 2016). About 50% of employees have the intention to withhold, mislead, or conceal knowledge that has been requested by another person (Peng, 2013). This behavior of deliberately not providing the required knowledge to colleagues when requested is called “knowledge hiding” (Connelly *et al.*, 2012), which has become an independent concept that is different from the opposite side of knowledge sharing (Zhao *et al.*, 2019). Knowledge hiding is very likely to reduce the efficiency of knowledge exchange nurses, hinder of new ideas/thoughts gained from training, seminars and clinical briefings. This study seeks to investigate why nurses share knowledge. **H₀₁:** Workplace bullying has no significant effect on knowledge hiding among nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Over the decades, researchers and practitioners have largely studied knowledge sharing, transfer, and creation within organizations (Wang *et al.* 2018a; García-Piqueres *et al.* 2019; Lee 2018). Likewise, Connelly *et al.* (2012) showed that counterproductive knowledge behaviour, that is, knowledge hiding (KH) behaviour, also exists within organizations. Connelly *et al.* (2012, p. 65) define KH as “an intentional attempt by an individual to withhold or conceal knowledge that has been requested by another person.” KH takes place among coworkers (Aljawarneh & Atan 2018), team members (Babic *et al.* 2019; Singh 2019), and even between

supervisors and subordinates (Butt 2019) for various reasons (Afshar-Jalili, *et al.* 2020).

Studies have found that KH is not only a hindrance to knowledge sharing (Qureshi and Evans 2015; Liu *et al.* 2020a) but is also detrimental to organizations, as it can affect a firm’s decision-making quality (Ghasemaghahi and Turel, 2021), idea implementation (Li *et al.* 2020), organizational performance, team performance (Chatterjee *et al.* 2021), and creativity (Bogilovic, *et al.* 2017; Fong *et al.* 2018; Peng *et al.*, 2019), in addition to employees’ turnover intention (Serenko and Bontis 2016) and organizational citizenship behaviours (Arain *et al.* 2020). KH also affects the internal and external stakeholders in an organization by affecting, for example, employees’ abilities to solve customer problems. relationship building with customers (Chaker, *et al.* 2020), creativity (Rhee and Choi 2017), and job (Chatterjee *et al.* 2021; Wang *et al.* 2018b; Jahanzeb *et al.* 2020) and innovation performance (Khoreva and Wechtler 2020).

More research on KH is required to achieve a successful promotion of knowledge transfer within organizations (Wang *et al.* 2018a). Connelly *et al.* (2012) categorized KH into three types. Evasive knowledge hiding (E-KH) is when the knowledge provider misleads the knowledge seeker with erroneous information. Playing dumb knowledge hiding (PD-KH) is when the knowledge provider hides their knowledge by pretending that they do not know what the knowledge seeker is asking. Rationalized knowledge hiding (R-KH) is when the knowledge provider gives justifications to withhold information. In addition to these three types, two more dimensions have been proposed in recent studies—counter-

questioning (Jha and Varkkey 2018) and bullying hiding (Yuan, *et al.* 2020).

Counter-questioning is when the knowledge provider avoids answering the knowledge seeker by countering with their own questions or seeking answers from the knowledge seeker (Jha and Varkkey 2018). Yuan, *et al.* (2020) stated that, in bullying hiding in organizations, the knowledge provider adopts a harsh and offensive manner to discourage the knowledge seeker from questioning them as a means of protecting their “knowledge power.” KH is not merely the opposite of knowledge sharing (Kang, 2016). Researchers suggest that knowledge sharing and hiding can occur because of different foci (self vs. other) and motivational sources (prosocial vs. antisocial; Connelly and Zweig 2015; Serenko and Bontis 2016). Previous studies have also clearly elaborated the difference between KH and other counterproductive knowledge behaviours (knowledge hoarding and lack of knowledge sharing) and counterproductive work behaviours (workplace aggression, uncivility, and social undermining; Connelly *et al.* 2012; Serenko and Bontis 2016).

What makes KH distinct from other similar counterproductive knowledge and work behaviours is that knowledge is requested by one colleague from another colleague who intentionally hides it. The knowledge request indicates that the person who possesses the knowledge has a social and/or moral obligation to respond with knowledge sharing. An urge to violate this obligation by hiding knowledge indicates a deep and complicated underlying psychological motivation.

WPB is the most common type of unacceptable violence widespread in the nursing profession. Although bullying has been strongly linked with negative work outcomes in nursing profession, the underlying mechanism that explains how WPB leads to negative behaviour of employees is still underexplored (Cowell & Dewey Bergren, 2016; Sarwar, Bashir, *et al.*, 2019). The most devastating and well-established outcome of bullying amongst nurses refers to deviant behaviour (Abou Hashish, 2019; Zaghini *et al.*, 2016). Deviant behaviour includes employees’ negative behaviour, such as intentional abuse towards other employees, withdrawal of employees’ responsibilities, hiding of knowledge, property theft and deviance (Liang *et al.*, 2018).

Workplace bullying can consume a lot of individual resources (Escartin *et al.*, 2009; Saunders *et al.*, 2007). Hence, to reduce the continuous consumption of resources, individuals have to protect their own resources by hiding knowledge resources (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014; Wheeler *et al.*, 2010). Specifically, workplace bullying can consume lots of employees’ emotional resources (such as psychological distress), after which individuals will form rational cognition and re-examine whether their efforts are worthwhile, finally, they will take some self-protection behaviours (such as knowledge hiding) to avoid further loss of resources (Escartin *et al.*, 2011; Magee *et al.*, 2017; Obeidat *et al.*, 2018).

This process of resource consumption and conservation is exactly the internal mechanism between workplace bullying and knowledge hiding. Therefore, from the individual resource pool, we identified two important resources (emotional and relational resources) that might mediate

between workplace bullying and knowledge hiding and focused on two specific variables including emotional exhaustion and organizational identification. Therefore, this paper constructs two single mediating paths between workplace bullying and knowledge hiding to verify the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion and organizational identification, respectively.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.2 Research Design

Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted in this study which the nexus between two or more variables of interest for the purpose of making inference about the study population.

Population of the Study

The population of the study is one hundred and twenty (120) nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi who provided the basic information need of the study.

Sample Size Determination

Since the population of the study is of manageable size, the population of the study is taken as the sample for the study.

Sampling Technique

Table 1: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.850
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3.273
	df	1
	Sig.	.043

Source: Researchers computation using SPSS 23.0

Census sampling technique is used. This is because the population is of manageable size and hence no other sampling technique will be more appropriate than census or complete enumeration.

Sources of Data

Data shall be obtained through primary source. Questionnaire shall be the main primary source of data collection.

Method of Data Collection

The method of data collection shall be mainly through questionnaires using a five point Likert scale of strongly agreed, agreed, undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Validity of instrument

In this study, the two most common types of validity, which are content and construct validity, were considered. While content validity was tested through the expert contribution from my team of supervisors, construct validity was tested with the use of factor analytical tool that considered Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Barlett's Test of Sphericity.

The result of sampling adequacy as indicated by the KMO (Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin) measure for the study's variable items is 0.850 with Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) value to be at 1 degrees of freedom at the level of significance of $p = 0.043$. The KMO

result in this analysis surpasses the threshold value of 0.50 as recommended by Hair, Anderson, Tathan, and Black (1995). Therefore, we are confident that our sample and data are adequate for this study.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.368	68.397	68.397	1.368	68.397	68.397
2	.632	31.603	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Researchers computation using SPSS 23.0

The Total Variance Explained table shows how the variance is divided among the 2 possible factors. One factor have eigenvalues (a measure of explained variance) greater than 1.0, which is a common criterion for a factor to be useful. When the Eigenvalue is less than 1.0 the factor explains less information than a single item would have explained. Table 2

shows that the Eigenvalues are 1.368 is greater than 1. Component one gave a variance of 68.397. From the rotated sum of squared loadings section, component 1 accounts for equally 68.397 % of the variance of the whole variables of the study. This shows that the variables have strong construct validity.

Table 3: Reliability Statistics

Variable		Cronbach's Alpha
Knowledge hiding	[KLH]	0.793
Workplace bullying	[WPB]	0.880
Overall Reliability		0.837

Source: Author's Computation using SPSS 23.0

Table 3 shows the reliability statistics for individual variables and the overall reliability for the instrument. The result of the individual variables of the study indicates that the variable Knowledge hiding has a reliability of 0.79 while workplace bullying has a reliability coefficient of 0.880 with the overall Cronbach Alpha coefficient value at 0.837. Reliability Cronbach Alpha statistics of 0.70 is considered adequate and reliable for social science study. Hence, the

instrument for data collection of this study falls above the limit of a reliable instrument for social science research.

Technique of Data Analysis

Simple linear regression was used to estimate how workplace bullying affects knowledge finding in the study area while the probability value of the regression estimate was used to test the hypothesis of the study at 5% level of significance.

Model Specification

Guided by the nexus between the variable of the study, the following functional relationship exists between the dependent and the independent variables of the study as shown in equation 1 and 2:

$$KLH = f(WPB) \tag{1}$$

Where,
 KLH = Knowledge Hiding
 WPB = Workplace bullying
 f = Function

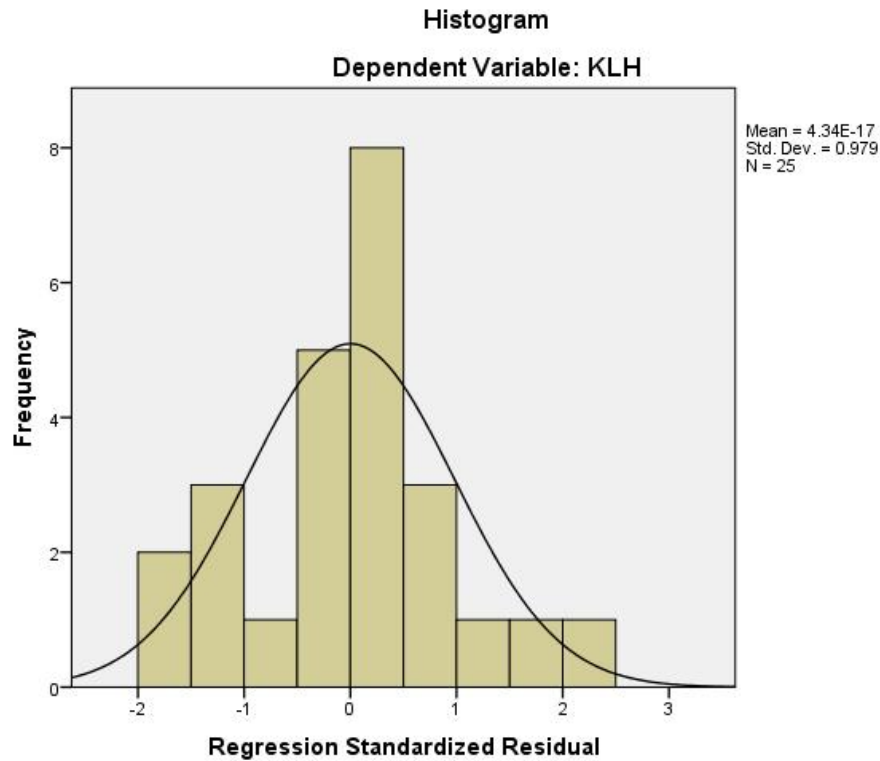
Explicitly, the relationship is restated as shown below:

$$KLH = b_0 + b_1WPB + U_t \tag{3}$$

Where:
 b₀ = Regression Constant
 b₁ = Regression Coefficient
 U_t = Error term
A priori expectation
 b₁ < 0

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section deals with the presentation of the results obtained from the field and analyzed using regression analysis. This subsection starts with the examination of the regression standardized residual as shown in the histogram.



Model I: Knowledge hiding Model

Figure 1: Regression Standardized Residual
 Source: Author's Computation using SPSS 23.0

Figure 1 overleaf shows a histogram of the residuals with a normal curve superimposed. The residuals look close to normal, implying a normal distribution of data. Here is a plot of the residuals versus predicted dependent variable of Knowledge hiding (KLH). The pattern

shown above indicates no problems with the assumption that the residuals are normally distributed at each level of the dependent variable and constant in variance across levels of the dependent variable

Table 4: Statistical Significance of the model ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	221.121	1	221.121	3.601	.036 ^b
	Residual	1412.239	23	61.402		
	Total	1633.360	24			

a. Dependent Variable: KLH

b. Predictors: (Constant), WPB

Source: Author's Computation using SPSS 23.0

The F-ratio in the ANOVA table above tests whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table shows that the independent variables statistically

significantly predicts the dependent variable $F(1, 23) = 3.601, p = 0.036^b$ (i.e., the regression model is a good fit of the data).

Table 5: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.679 ^a	.538	.398	7.83592

a. Predictors: (Constant), WPB

b. Dependent Variable: KLH

Source: Author's Computation using SPSS 23.0

The coefficient of determination R^2 for the study is 0.538 or 53.8%. This indicates that 53.8% of the variations in the model can be explained by the explanatory

variables of the model while 46.2% of the variation can be attributed to unexplained variation captured by the stochastic error term.

Table 6: Regression coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	37.349	6.101		6.122	.000	
	WPB	-.461	.190	-.368	-2.426	.030	1.000 1.000

a. Dependent Variable: KLH

Source: Author's Computation using SPSS 23.0

a) Effect of workplace bullying on knowledge hiding among nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria.

As shown from the result of the study in Table Results from the first model of the study in Table 6 workplace bullying (WPB) has a negative effect on knowledge hiding among nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria and the effect is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) but in line with *a priori* expectation. H_{01} : Work base bullying does not have significant effect on knowledge hiding among nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria.

Using the probability value of the estimates, we reject the null hypothesis that is, we accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that at 5% level of significance, workplace bullying have a significant negative effect on knowledge hiding among nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. This finding is in tandem with those of Yuan, *et al.* (2020), who stated that when bullying occurs in an organizations, the knowledge provider adopts a harsh and offensive manner to discourage the knowledge seeker from questioning them as a means of protecting their “knowledge power.” The implication of a negative effect of bullying on knowledge hiding leads to evasive knowledge hiding when the knowledge provider misleads the knowledge seeker with erroneous information. It also leads to playing dumb, which is when the knowledge provider hides their knowledge by pretending that they do not know what the knowledge seeker is asking. It also leads to rationalized knowledge hiding which is

when the knowledge provider gives justifications to withhold information as stated by Connelly *et al.* (2012), Jha and Varkkey, 2018, Yuan, *et al.* 2020.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

a) Conclusion

This study examine the effect of workplace bullying on knowledge hiding among nurses of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. The finding shows that the behavioural characteristics of people are the main reasons for knowledge hiding. This reason can be seen as the impetus for the emergence of knowledge hiding by employees who experience bullying at work. The findings collaborates this as the result of the study shows a negative effect of bullying on knowledge hiding in the study area. The important point is that, although knowledge hiding is common in organizations all over the world, few relevant studies were seen in the review of theoretical literature especially in the study area, hence the need for this study.

b) Recommendations

It is recommended that management of Federal Medical Centre Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria should put a strict rule regarding workplace bullying as it has been shown to affect knowledge hiding. An arbitration process should be put in place to address any act or perceived act of bullying experienced by the nurses in the hospital. This will go a long way in enhancing their performance.

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[Back to the CONTENTS](#)

[Top of the Article](#)