



Mitigating the Impact of Organizational Politics on Knowledge Hiding in the Tourism and Hotel Industry: The Roles of Trust in Leadership and Distributive Justice

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Abstract

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This study explores the impact of organizational politics on knowledge-hiding behavior within hotel and tourism enterprises, focusing on the moderating roles of trust in leadership and distributive justice. Data were gathered from full-time employees working at Category A travel agencies and five-star hotels in the Greater Cairo region of Egypt. To test the proposed model, the study employed the PLS-SEM statistical method to analyze 424 valid responses. The results revealed a positive correlation between perceptions of organizational politics and knowledge-hiding behavior. Moreover, both distributive justice and trust in leadership were found to moderate the relationship between POP and KHB, suggesting that these factors weaken the impact of organizational politics on knowledge hiding. This research contributes to the field of hospitality and tourism management by providing a deeper understanding of the factors that impede knowledge sharing and offering insights into organizational mechanisms that can foster a more collaborative and transparent work environment.

Introduction

Knowledge-hiding behavior refers to the intentional act of withholding or concealing information that has been requested by someone else (Connelly et al., 2012). In recent years, this behavior has become a distinct focus in the field of knowledge management (Donate et al., 2022). Serenko and Bontis (2016) emphasize the considerable negative consequences of knowledge hiding on organizations, including problems like reduced knowledge sharing efficiency, lower organizational commitment, counterproductive employee behaviors, loss of intellectual capital, decreased profitability, and a decline in innovation capacity.

This study aims to explore the political behavior that drives deceptive knowledge-hiding actions. Understanding this factor is essential, as Venz and Neshor Shoshan (2022) suggest that without recognizing the underlying causes and triggers of knowledge hiding, its full manifestation cannot be fully understood, making it difficult to address effectively.

Organizational politics plays a significant role in the workplace, often revolving around the pursuit of personal or group interests, whether short-term or long-term (Cropanzano et al., 1997). Due to the generally negative perception of organizational politics among employees (Vigoda, 2000), it is defined as "phenomena in which organizational members attempt, either directly or indirectly, to influence others through means that are not approved by formal procedures or informal norms, to achieve personal or group goals" (Witt et al., 2000). Organizational politics can seriously undermine overall efficiency and effectiveness (Kacmar et al., 1999). Employees who perceive their work environment as uncertain, risky (Karatepe, 2013; Al-Romeedy & Khairy, 2024), threatening, or unfair are more likely to engage in lower levels of knowledge sharing.

Current literature highlights that employee trust in leadership and organizational justice are crucial antecedents for creating a conducive climate to foster knowledge-sharing behaviors in employees (Le & Nguyen, 2023). Previous studies suggest that when employees trust the ethical behavior of their leaders and perceive integrity and fairness within their organization (Su et al., 2021), they are more motivated and committed to actively engaging in knowledge-sharing activities. On the one hand, trust plays a critical role in the knowledge exchange process within organizations (Sharkie, 2009). According to Davenport and Prusak (2000), trust facilitates communication, enabling organizations to benefit from employee knowledge and skills fully. Trust is built through personal relationships, reputation, and the expectation of reciprocity, and it fosters openness and the generation of new ideas (Garvey & Williamson, 2002). It is also essential for promoting cooperation and effective knowledge-sharing among employees (Newell et al., 2002). For high levels of cooperation and sharing to occur, management must create opportunities for employees to interact and build trust (Kaser & Miles, 2002). Additionally, the significance of trust in leadership is increasingly acknowledged for its role in motivating employees' discretionary efforts and enhancing organizational effectiveness (Dirks, 2000). Trust directly impacts organizational performance by encouraging employees to make voluntary contributions, which are often unique and challenging to replicate (Jones & George, 1998). Management practices that reflect organizational values can positively influence employee perceptions, improving the likelihood of successful knowledge sharing and overall organizational performance (Sharkie, 2009).

On the other hand, distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes employees receive (Phong & Son, 2020). It is a key component of organizational justice that encourages positive employee intentions and behaviors, ultimately contributing to desired organizational outcomes (Alpkan et al., 2021). Specifically, when employees perceive distributive justice—such as trusting that they will receive fair compensation and outcomes for their knowledge-sharing (KS) activities—their anxiety is reduced, and their willingness to take the risks associated with KS increases (Phong & Son, 2020).

In the broader management literature, political behaviors have been extensively studied, but their focus within the tourism and hospitality sector remains limited (Khairy, 2019). For organizations in this industry, understanding the negative consequences of political behaviors on employees' job outcomes is becoming increasingly important (Al-Romeedy & Khairy, 2024). The pervasive nature of political behaviors in the workplace, especially in hospitality firms, highlights the urgent need for more targeted research in this area (Al-Romeedy & Khairy, 2024). While previous studies have established connections between political behaviors and various job outcomes—such as job performance (Shrestha, 2021), work stress (Iqbal Khan et al., 2020), and counterproductive work behaviors (Meisler et al., 2020; Al-Romeedy & Khairy, 2024)—there is

still a significant gap in research that specifically investigates the effects of political behaviors on knowledge hiding in the context of hospitality. In addition, while trust in leadership and distributive justice are recognized as influential factors in shaping workplace behaviors, including knowledge sharing, the moderating roles these factors play in the relationship between organizational politics and knowledge hiding have not been sufficiently examined, especially in hotel businesses. Specifically, the role of trust in leadership as a moderator between organizational politics and knowledge hiding, and how distributive justice (the perceived fairness of resource allocation and rewards) might either mitigate or amplify the influence of organizational politics on employees' willingness to share or withhold knowledge, is still unclear. Finally, given the crucial role trust in leadership plays within organizations, both researchers and practitioners are increasingly focused on identifying the mechanisms through which this trust is built. However, despite considerable interest in this area, research on the factors that foster trust in leadership and the outcomes of such trust has been fragmented. Consequently, no comprehensive model has yet been developed to systematically examine these factors (Burke et al., 2007).

Relying on Social Exchange Theory (SET) which focuses on the reciprocal nature of relationships in organizations (Homans, 1974; Blau, 2017), this study seeks to fill these gaps by providing a focused analysis of how organizational politics influences knowledge-hiding behavior in hotel and tourism businesses, with a particular emphasis on the moderating roles of trust in leadership and distributive justice. The research will contribute to the hospitality and tourism management field by offering a deeper understanding of the dynamics that hinder knowledge sharing and the organizational mechanisms that can promote a more collaborative and transparent work environment.

Literature review and hypotheses development

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory is a foundational concept in social psychology and sociology that explains human behavior through the lens of reciprocal exchanges between individuals (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1974; Ahmad et al., 2023). It suggests that social interactions are governed by a cost-benefit analysis, where individuals seek to maximize their rewards (benefits) while minimizing their costs. The theory posits that individuals engage in relationships and behaviors based on the expectation of receiving something in return, whether that is material, emotional, or social. This reciprocal nature of exchanges forms the basis of relationships, where people give and receive resources, whether tangible (like money or goods) or intangible (like trust, information, or support).

SET explains human behavior as a series of reciprocal exchanges, where individuals weigh the costs and benefits of their interactions. People engage in relationships or behaviors based on the expectation of receiving something in return, whether tangible (like money) or intangible (like trust or support). The theory suggests that individuals seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs, and they will continue interactions as long as the benefits outweigh the costs. If the exchange feels unfair or imbalanced, dissatisfaction may arise, leading individuals to withdraw or alter their behavior (Molm et al., 2007; Blau, 2017).

Reciprocity is a core idea of SET, meaning individuals expect give-and-take in relationships, though the return may not be immediate or direct. Equity—the balance between what is given and received—is crucial for maintaining healthy relationships. When the exchange feels unfair,

people may become dissatisfied or disengage. Trust plays a significant role, as it encourages cooperation and reduces the perceived risks of exchange. In organizational settings, SET helps explain behaviors like knowledge sharing, motivation, and job satisfaction, as employees weigh their contributions against the rewards they receive from the organization (Blau, 2017; Donate et al., 2022).

Hypotheses development

Organizational Politics and Knowledge Hiding

Organizational politics often involves self-serving behaviors, manipulation, and the pursuit of personal agendas within the workplace, which can create an environment of mistrust and competition (Al-Romeedy & Khairy, 2024). According to SET, individuals engage in social exchanges based on the expectation of fair reciprocity. When organizational politics are present, they can skew this balance. Employees may feel that the workplace environment is unfair, unpredictable, or adversarial, leading them to believe that sharing knowledge could make them vulnerable or exploited. As a result, knowledge hiding can be seen as a protective mechanism—employees withhold information to maintain a competitive edge or to avoid being taken advantage of in a politically charged environment. In SET terms, the costs (e.g., potential exploitation, personal risk, or loss of status) of sharing knowledge outweigh the perceived benefits (e.g., collaborative success or recognition), especially when employees perceive that organizational politics prevent a fair exchange. Thus, knowledge hiding becomes a strategy to protect personal interests in a situation where trust in others or the organization is low.

In addition, perceptions of organizational politics can contribute to stress among employees by making them feel more at risk of losing valuable resources rather than gaining them (Agarwal, 2016). In such environments, individuals are likely to focus on protecting their existing resources, including their knowledge (Kaur & Kang, 2023). This perception can also lead to counterproductive behaviors, as argued by Bedi and Schat (2013). Specifically, when organizational politics provoke negative emotions, they may intensify knowledge hiding. Such counterproductive knowledge behaviors often serve as a coping mechanism, helping individuals manage their frustrations and negative feelings (Cohen & Diamant, 2019).

Moreover, individuals who have substantial control over their knowledge can boost their power and position within the organization (Kaur & Kang, 2023). In environments marked by high levels of organizational politics, those who invest significant personal resources in their work may respond by intentionally withholding their knowledge. This strategy allows them to maintain control over their resources while enhancing their power and status within the organization (Malik et al., 2019).

Furthermore, dysfunctional political dynamics within an organization can lead to knowledge hiding, as employees may resort to covert retaliation as a way to vent their frustrations (Bowling et al., 2010). This act of getting even allows them to gain resources and experience personal satisfaction (Serenko & Bontis, 2016). They perceive such behavior as justified, feeling that they are taking what they believe they deserve, which in turn boosts their self-esteem (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). In contrast, employees who perceive their organization's decisions as less politically motivated are less inclined to hide knowledge, as they see less need or justification for denying knowledge requests from colleagues (Zhao et al., 2019; De Clercq et al., 2022). Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Organizational politics perception increases knowledge-hiding behavior among employees.

Trust in Leadership as a Moderator

Trust in leadership significantly contributes to an enhanced organizational climate by cultivating a positive work environment. When employees trust their leaders, it encourages open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect, all of which strengthen workplace relationships (Sharkie, 2009; Mineo, 2014). Additionally, a trusting relationship with leadership helps to reduce stress and anxiety, fostering a sense of security and well-being among employees. This, in turn, leads to higher job satisfaction and improved productivity, as employees feel more supported and engaged in their work (Klaussner, 2015). In addition, trust in leadership plays a key role in strengthening the psychological contract between employees and the organization, fostering greater commitment and loyalty (Ugwu et al., 2014; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016). When employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to feel a sense of mutual obligation, which enhances their dedication to the organization. This trust also encourages organizational citizenship behaviors, as employees are more inclined to engage in discretionary actions (Basit, 2021), such as sharing knowledge and helping colleagues, further contributing to a positive and collaborative work culture.

SET emphasizes that trust is a fundamental component of positive exchanges. When employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to engage in cooperative behaviors, such as knowledge sharing. A trusted leader is seen as someone who will reciprocate fairly, protect their subordinates, and reward their contributions (Mitchell et al., 2012; Cropanzano et al., 2017). In a politically charged environment, if employees trust their leaders to act fairly and transparently, they may feel more secure in sharing knowledge, even if organizational politics are at play. Leaders who demonstrate fairness, openness, and integrity can mitigate the negative effects of politics by fostering a climate where employees feel their contributions (including knowledge) will be valued and reciprocated (Naseer et al., 2016; Ugaddan & Park, 2019). This trust reduces the perceived risks of knowledge sharing and enhances the benefits of engaging in exchange, as employees believe that sharing knowledge will be rewarded appropriately. On the other hand, if trust in leadership is low, employees may perceive that sharing knowledge could lead to exploitation or that their efforts will not be adequately recognized (Renzl, 2008). In this case, the lack of trust increases the costs of sharing knowledge, reinforcing knowledge-hiding behaviors. Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Trust in leadership moderates the relationship between organizational politics perception and knowledge-hiding behavior among employees.

Distributive Justice as a Moderator

Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of outcomes within the organization, such as how rewards, recognition, and resources are allocated. When employees perceive that rewards and punishments are distributed fairly, it helps to reduce feelings of resentment, making them less likely to engage in knowledge hiding (Jahanzeb et al., 2021). A strong sense of fairness also alleviates negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, which are often linked to defensive behaviors (Maguire et al., 2023) like hiding information. As a result, employees are more inclined to share knowledge openly, fostering a more collaborative and positive work environment.

Fair distribution of rewards enhances the credibility of leaders, which in turn strengthens employee trust in leadership (Le & Nguyen, 2023). When employees feel that their contributions are valued, it fosters a positive social exchange, motivating them to engage in reciprocal behaviors like knowledge sharing. This mutual respect and trust contribute to a more open and collaborative work environment, where employees feel more invested in both their roles and the organization as a whole.

A sense of justice within the organization can significantly boost employees' loyalty and dedication, leading to increased organizational commitment (Mahfouz et al., 2023). When employees feel they are treated fairly, they are more likely to remain with the organization, reducing turnover intentions, this not only helps retain valuable talent but also preserves critical knowledge and expertise, contributing to the long-term success and stability of the organization (Moon, 2017; Mengstie, 2020).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that when employees perceive fairness in the distribution of outcomes, they are more likely to engage in cooperative behaviors (Cook et al., 2013), including knowledge sharing. If employees believe that knowledge sharing will lead to fair rewards or recognition (such as promotions or pay raises), they are more likely to engage in open exchanges. Conversely, if employees perceive that the organization is unfair in distributing rewards (e.g., knowledge sharing leads to little personal benefit or recognition), they may withhold knowledge as a form of retaliation or self-protection. Distributive justice helps create a sense of fairness in the workplace, making employees feel that their contributions will be equitably rewarded. This sense of fairness aligns the perceived **costs** and benefits of knowledge sharing in a way that encourages open exchange rather than hiding knowledge. In politically charged environments where distributive justice is perceived to be low, the imbalance between effort and reward increases the costs of sharing knowledge, leading to higher knowledge-hiding behavior (Malik et al., 2019; Al-Romeedy & Khairy, 2024). Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Distributive justice moderates the relationship between organizational politics perception and knowledge-hiding behavior among employees.

The theoretical framework of the study is illustrated below in Figure (1).

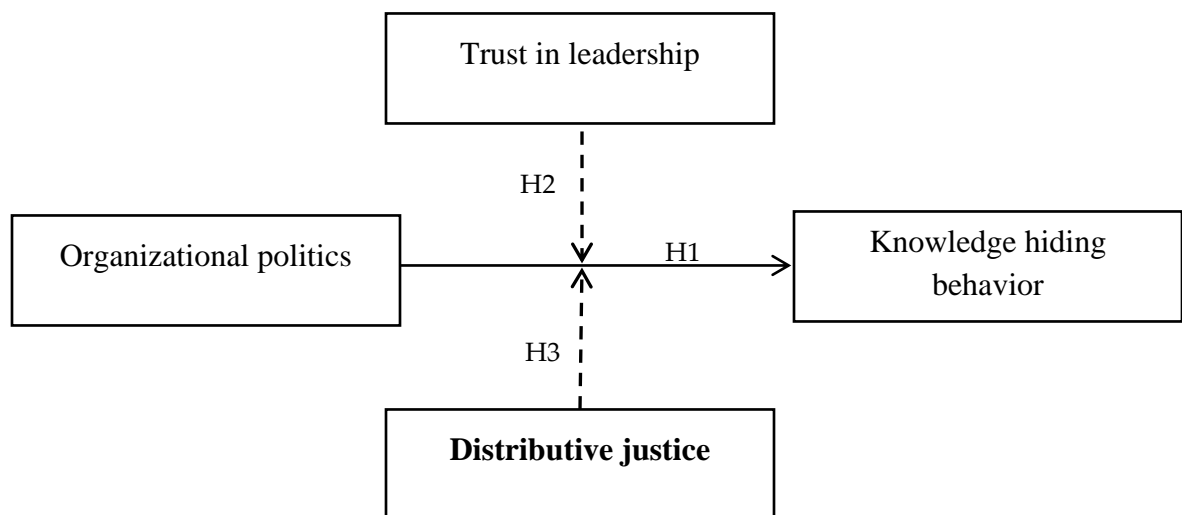


Figure (1): the theoretical framework of the study.

Materials and Methods

Measures and Instrument Development

The survey conducted in this study was divided into two sections. The first part focused on four latent variables: organizational politics, knowledge-hiding behavior, trust in leadership, and distributive justice, comprising a total of 28 items. The second part included four demographic questions, asking employees about their gender, age, education, and work organization.

Organizational politics was assessed using a 12-item scale adapted from Kacmar and Ferris (1991). Sample items include: “In my organization, some people build themselves up by tearing others down” and “In my organization, there is an influential group no one crosses”. In addition, knowledge-hiding behavior was measured with a 5-item scale adapted from Zhang and Min (2019) and Oubrich et al. (2021). Example items include: “In my organization, I frequently pretend that I didn't know the information” and “With my colleagues, I hide information by claiming that it is confidential”. Moreover, employee trust in leadership was measured with 7 items adapted from Robinson (1996), such as: “I believe my leader has high integrity” and “In general, I believe my leader’s motives and intentions are good”. Lastly, distributive justice was assessed using a 4-item scale from Colquitt (2001), with items like: “In organization, the outcome process reflects the effort I have put into my work” and “In organization, the outcome process is justified, given my performance”. The original survey was developed in English and then translated into Arabic using a back-translation method to ensure accuracy. Participants' responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Sampling and Data Collection

The target respondents for this study were full-time employees from category-A travel agencies and five-star hotels, which represent the majority of Egypt's hospitality and tourism sector. These sectors primarily cater to international visitors and are committed to providing high-quality services, making them open to exploring various strategies for improving their operations. The survey was conducted in Greater Cairo, one of Egypt’s leading tourist destinations. To ensure that respondents could accurately evaluate the variables being studied, a minimum of one year of work experience was required. According to Morrison (1993), employees typically understand an organization’s culture and norms within six months of employment.

In 2022, the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities reported that there were 1,666 category-A travel agencies and 30 five-star hotels in the Greater Cairo region. Due to the wide geographical scope of this study, and the fact that these businesses were spread across Egypt, a convenience sampling strategy was used. Approximately 800 questionnaires were distributed to the targeted organizations. A total of 440 valid responses were received, yielding a 55% response rate. Of these, 265 (60.2%) surveys came from 23 five-star hotels, while 175 (39.8%) responses were collected from 52 category-A travel agencies.

Official statistics on the total number of employees working in category-A travel agencies and five-star hotels in Egypt are not publicly available. Consequently, Cochran's (1963) sampling formula was applied to determine the appropriate sample size. This formula is used when a population list is not accessible, as in this case, and suggests that a representative sample requires

385 responses. Therefore, the 440 valid responses collected were deemed sufficient for the final analysis.

Data analysis

The hypotheses in this study were tested using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, employing WarpPLS software version 7.0 (Kock, 2021). PLS-SEM is a widely used analytical method in various fields, including tourism and hospitality research. The analysis proceeded in three stages: first, the "individual measurement model" for each construct was tested; second, the "overall measurement model" was assessed; and finally, the hypotheses and structural model were tested.

Results

Participant's profile

Table (1) presents the demographic characteristics of the study's participants (N = 440). In terms of gender, the majority of participants were male, making up 69.09% (304 individuals), while 30.91% (136 participants) were female. Regarding age, the participants were relatively evenly distributed across different age groups: 23.18% (102 individuals) were under 30 years old, 33.64% (148 participants) were between 30 and 40 years old, 23.18% (102 participants) were aged between 40 and 50, and 20% (88 participants) were over 50 years old. As for educational background, the majority of participants held a bachelor's degree (59.09%, or 260 individuals), followed by 17.73% (78 participants) with a Master's or PhD. Additionally, 23.18% (102 participants) had completed high school or attended an institute.

Table 1. Participant's demographics (N=440).

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	304	69.09
	Female	136	30.91
Age	18:< 30 years	102	23.18
	30 : < 40 years	148	33.64
	40: 50 years	102	23.18
	>50	88	20.00
Education	High schools/institute	102	23.18
	Bachelor	260	59.09
	Master/PhD	78	17.73

Measurement model

A four-factor model, consisting of perceptions of organizational politics (POP), knowledge-hiding behavior (KHB), trust in leadership (TiL), and distributive justice (DJ), was evaluated using ten fit indices as proposed by Kock (2021). These indices include: "APC ($P < 0.05$), ARS ($P < 0.05$), AARS ($P < 0.05$), AVIF (acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3), AFVIF (acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3), GoF (small ≥ 0.1 , medium ≥ 0.25 , large ≥ 0.36), SPR (acceptable if ≥ 0.7 , ideally = 1), RSCR (acceptable if ≥ 0.9 , ideally = 1), SSR (acceptable if ≥ 0.7), and NLBCDR (acceptable if

≥ 0.7)". The four-factor model showed a satisfactory fit with the following results: "APC = 0.323 (P < 0.001), ARS = 0.414 (P < 0.001), AARS = 0.398 (P < 0.001), AVIF = 1.548, AFVIF = 2.033, GoF = 0.553, SPR = 1.000, RSCR = 1.000, SSR = 1.000, and NLBCDR = 0.767".

The reliability analysis results presented in Table 2 show that the composite reliability (CR) values for all research constructs exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, demonstrating good reliability. All item loadings were found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) values for organizational politics (POP), knowledge-hiding behavior (KHB), trust in leadership (TiL), and distributive justice (DJ) were all greater than 0.50, confirming convergent validity (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). Furthermore, the variance inflation factors (VIFs) for each latent variable were calculated, and since all VIF values were ≤ 3.3 , the model was determined to be free of common method bias (Kock, 2015).

Table 2. Factor loadings, Cronbach's, CR, AVE, and VIFs

Factors	Item loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	VIF
Perceptions of Organizational Politics (POP)	-	0.946	0.937	0.597	3.251
POP.1	0.804**				
POP.2	0.766**				
POP.3	0.838**				
POP.4	0.829**				
POP.5	0.832**				
POP.6	0.835**				
POP.7	0.766**				
POP.8	0.786**				
POP.9	0.816**				
POP.10	0.690**				
POP.11	0.695**				
POP.12	0.564**				
Knowledge-hiding behavior (KHB)	-	0.865	0.804	0.561	1.875
KHB.1	0.696**				
KHB.2	0.770**				

KHB.3	0.734**				
KHB.4	0.741**				
KHB.5	0.802**				
Trust in leadership (TiL)	-	0.922	0.900	0.629	2.978
TiL.1	0.682**				
TiL.2	0.794**				
TiL.3	0.851**				
TiL.4	0.821**				
TiL.5	0.824**				
TiL.6	0.861**				
TiL.7	0.697**				
Distributive justice (DJ)	-	0.880	0.818	0.648	1.675
DJ.1	0.838**				
DJ.2	0.771**				
DJ.3	0.786**				
DJ.4	0.823**				

Table (3) presents the discriminant validity results for the study's model, showing the correlation coefficients between the latent variables. The correlations between each pair of variables are lower than 1, indicating that the variables are distinct from each other, which is essential for establishing discriminant validity. Additionally, the diagonal values (representing the square root of the average variance extracted, or AVE) are higher than the off-diagonal correlations, further confirming discriminant validity (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019).

Table 3. Discriminant validity results

	KHB	DJ	POP	TiL
Knowledge-Hiding Behavior (KHB)	0.749	0.627	0.424	0.332
Distributive Justice (DJ)	0.627	0.805	0.297	0.233
Perceptions of Organizational Politics (POP)	0.424	0.297	0.772	0.713
Trust in Leadership (TiL)	0.332	0.233	0.713	0.793

Table (4) presents the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio) values and their associated p-values, which are used to assess discriminant validity in the study's model. The HTMT ratio is considered good if it is below 0.90 and ideal if it is below 0.85. In this table, all HTMT values

are well below 0.90, with the highest value being 0.778 between Knowledge-Hiding Behavior (KHB) and Distributive Justice (DJ), indicating that the constructs are distinct. The p-values for these HTMT ratios, which are tested one-tailed, are also provided. A p-value below 0.05 is considered acceptable. Here, all p-values are less than 0.05, indicating that the HTMT ratios are significantly different from 1, further supporting the discriminant validity of the constructs.

Table 4. HTMT for validity

HTMT ratios (good if < 0.90, best if < 0.85)	KHB	DJ	POP	TiL
Knowledge-Hiding Behavior (KHB)				
Distributive Justice (DJ)	0.778			
Perceptions of Organizational Politics (POP)	0.484	0.339		
Trust in Leadership (TiL)	0.392	0.273	0.797	
P values (one-tailed) for HTMT ratios (good if < 0.05)	KHB	DJ	POP	TiL
Knowledge-Hiding Behavior (KHB)				
Distributive Justice (DJ)	0.007			
Perceptions of Organizational Politics (POP)	<0.001	<0.001		
Trust in Leadership (TiL)	<0.001	<0.001	0.008	

Multi-Group Analysis

Table (5) presents the results of a multi-group analysis comparing the path coefficients between five-star hotels and travel agencies for the three hypotheses proposed in the study. Results show similar path coefficients for both groups with non-significant p-values, indicating no support for the three hypotheses. In other words, none of the hypotheses are supported, as the path differences between the two groups are not statistically significant.

Table 5: Multi-group analysis

Constructs/Hypotheses	Path coeff. (Five-Star Hotel)	Path coef. (Travel Agency)	Absolute path coeff. Diff.	p-values	T-statistic	Supported/Not Supported
POP→KHB	0.292	0.288	0.004	0.490	0.026	Not Supported
POP*DJ→KHB	-0.381	-0.343	0.039	0.406	0.238	Not Supported
POP*TiL→KHB	0.045	-0.058	0.103	0.286	0.566	Not Supported

Structural model and hypotheses testing

Figure (2) illustrates that perception of organizational politics (POP) has a significant positive correlation with knowledge-hiding behavior (KHB) ($\beta = 0.41$, $P < 0.01$, $t = 4.856$), confirming that an increase in POP leads to an increase in KHB, thus supporting hypothesis H1. Additionally, both distributive justice ($\beta = -0.39$, $P < 0.01$, $t = -4.677$) and trust in leadership ($\beta = -0.17$, $P = 0.03$, $t = -1.861$) significantly moderate the relationship between POP and KHB, indicating that distributive justice and trust in leadership reduce the strength of this relationship, thus supporting hypotheses H2 and H3. Furthermore, Figure (2) shows that the combined effects of POP, distributive justice, and trust in leadership explain 41% of the variance in knowledge-hiding behavior ($R^2 = 0.41$).

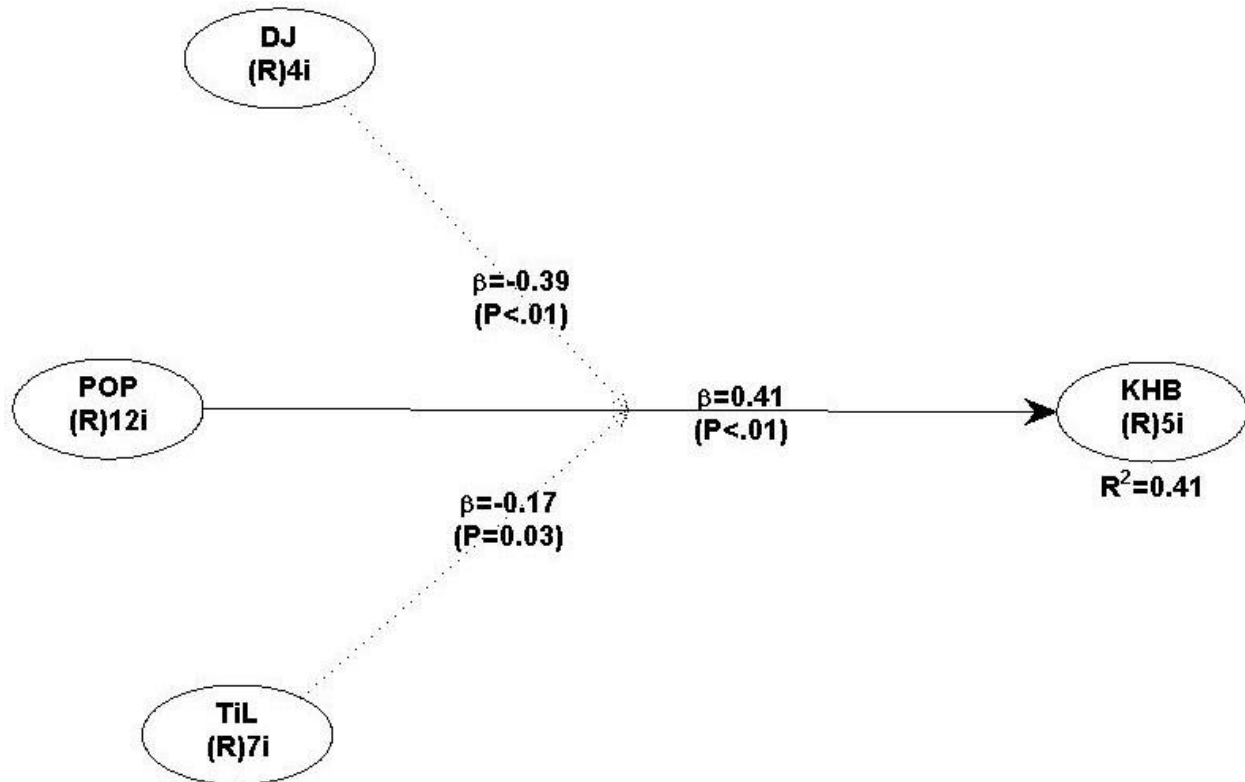


Figure 2: final model of the study

Table 6. Effect sizes (f^2) for total effects

Effect sizes (f^2) for total effects	POP	POP*DJ	POP*TiL
Knowledge-hiding behavior (KHB)	0.185	0.186	0.043

Based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines, effect sizes (f^2) are interpreted as follows: an f^2 value of 0.02 or higher indicates a small effect, 0.15 or higher suggests a medium effect, and 0.35 or greater signifies a large effect. Table (6) presents the effect sizes (f^2) for the total effects of perceptions of organizational politics (POP), the interaction between POP and distributive justice (POP*DJ), and the interaction between POP and trust in leadership (POP*TiL) on knowledge-hiding behavior (KHB). The effect size for POP \rightarrow KHB is 0.185, indicating a medium effect. For POP*DJ \rightarrow KHB, the effect size is 0.186, also reflecting a medium effect. The effect size for POP*TiL \rightarrow KHB is 0.043, suggesting a small effect.

Discussion

This study aims to examine the impact of organizational politics on knowledge-hiding behavior in hotel and tourism businesses, with a particular emphasis on the moderating roles of trust in leadership and distributive justice. Findings revealed that perception of organizational politics increases knowledge-hiding behavior among employees. This finding is consistent with other recent research by De Clercq et al. (2022), Kaur & Kang (2023), and Offergelt & Venz (2023). Working in environments shaped by organizational politics, individuals may view this unfavorable situation as a reflection of limited social support and a lack of concern for their well-being from both colleagues and the organization (Vigoda-Gadot & Talmud, 2006; Sun & Chen,

2017). These perceptions can undermine their sense of self-worth, prompting them to take proactive steps to prevent further resource loss. One such coping mechanism is engaging in knowledge-hiding behaviors, which help preserve their self-esteem (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). Likewise, employees' perceptions of self-serving behaviors make them more likely to engage in knowledge hiding (De Clercq et al., 2022). Their behaviors at work are often driven by a need to counteract resource-draining situations with strategies that help them preserve or enhance their resources (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). When faced with adverse organizational decisions that negatively affect their work performance, employees typically react by seeking ways to mitigate the impact of these negative experiences (Grimland et al., 2012).

The findings also revealed that trust in leadership moderates the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and knowledge hiding. This aligns with the work of Cropanzano et al. (2017) and Basit (2021), both of which highlight the significant role that leadership plays in knowledge management. Trust in Leadership can indeed serve as a powerful moderator in the relationship between organizational politics and knowledge hiding. When employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to engage in knowledge sharing and less likely to withhold information. Trust in leadership plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between perceived threats and employees' willingness to share knowledge (Renzl, 2008; Nguyen et al., 2022). When employees trust their leaders, it fosters a sense of psychological safety, which alleviates fears of negative consequences for sharing information (Maximo et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2010). This trust also enhances their perception of fairness within the organization, leading them to view organizational politics as less threatening. As a result, employees are less inclined to engage in knowledge hiding as a defensive measure, feeling more secure in an environment where their contributions are valued and protected. When employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to engage in cooperative behaviors, such as sharing knowledge. A trusted leader is perceived as someone who will act fairly, protect their employees, and appropriately reward their contributions (Cropanzano et al., 2017). In environments marked by organizational politics, employees who trust their leaders to be fair and transparent are more inclined to share knowledge, even when political dynamics are at play. Leaders who exhibit fairness, openness, and integrity can counteract the negative effects of politics by creating an atmosphere where employees believe their contributions will be valued and reciprocated (Naseer et al., 2016; Ugaddan & Park, 2019). This trust reduces the perceived risks associated with knowledge sharing and strengthens the potential benefits, as employees feel confident that their knowledge contributions will be appropriately recognized and rewarded. Conversely, when trust in leadership is lacking, employees may fear that sharing knowledge will lead to exploitation or that their efforts will go unacknowledged. In such cases, the absence of trust elevates the perceived costs of knowledge sharing, prompting employees to withhold information and engage in knowledge-hiding behaviors.

Lastly, the findings revealed that distributive justice moderates the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and knowledge hiding. When employees perceive that they are being treated fairly, they are more likely to trust their organization and its leaders. This can mitigate the negative effects of organizational politics on knowledge hiding. Distributive justice plays a key role in fostering a sense of fairness within the workplace, ensuring that employees feel their contributions will be appropriately rewarded. This sense of fairness helps align the perceived costs and benefits of knowledge sharing, encouraging employees to engage in open exchanges rather than hide information. When employees perceive fairness in the distribution of

outcomes, they are more likely to engage in cooperative behaviors (Cook et al., 2013), such as knowledge sharing. If employees believe that sharing knowledge will result in fair rewards or recognition (e.g., promotions or salary increases), they are more inclined to participate in open exchanges. On the other hand, if employees perceive the organization as unfair in its distribution of rewards—where knowledge sharing yields little personal benefit or acknowledgment—they may withhold knowledge as a form of retaliation or self-protection. However, in politically charged environments where distributive justice is perceived to be low, the imbalance between effort and reward increases the costs of sharing knowledge, thereby fostering higher knowledge-hiding behaviors (Malik et al., 2019; Al-Romeedy & Khairy, 2024).

Theoretical implications

This study advances the application of Social Exchange Theory (SET) in the context of knowledge management and organizational behavior within the hotel and tourism industry. According to SET, social relationships are based on reciprocal exchanges of resources such as trust, information, and support. The findings underscore the importance of trust in leadership and perceived distributive justice as critical resources exchanged between employees and organizations. Specifically, this study extends SET by demonstrating that when employees trust their leaders and perceive a fair distribution of rewards and resources, they are more likely to engage in positive behaviors like knowledge sharing rather than knowledge hiding. This supports the idea that employees' willingness to reciprocate positive behaviors is contingent upon the fairness and support they perceive from leadership. Furthermore, the research deepens our understanding of SET by revealing the role of organizational politics in shaping knowledge-hiding behavior. In environments where organizational politics are perceived to be high, employees may resort to knowledge hiding as a defensive mechanism to protect their interests. However, the moderating effects of trust in leadership and distributive justice reveal that these factors can mitigate the negative consequences of organizational politics. This provides a more nuanced understanding of how organizational dynamics influence employee behavior. Specifically, the study suggests that when employees perceive fairness in reward distribution and feel supported by their leaders, the adverse impact of organizational politics on knowledge hiding is significantly reduced.

Practical implications

To address the negative impacts of perceived organizational politics and reduce knowledge hiding, organizations can implement a range of strategies. A fundamental approach is fostering transparent communication, which helps reduce uncertainty and build trust by ensuring that information is shared openly and honestly. Fairness and equity are also critical; by establishing clear and just policies and procedures, organizations can alleviate concerns about favoritism and perceived injustice. Employee empowerment further contributes to reducing political behavior by enabling employees to take ownership of their work and make decisions, which enhances their sense of autonomy. In addition, leadership development—through training in communication, conflict resolution, and ethical conduct—can nurture a more positive organizational culture. Lastly, cultivating a positive organizational culture, where employees feel valued and supported, can reduce stress and foster greater collaboration and knowledge sharing.

In addition, to build trust in leadership and minimize the detrimental effects of organizational politics on knowledge hiding, organizations can adopt several strategies. Promoting transparent communication is key, as leaders should offer open, honest exchanges of information and

provide clear explanations for their decisions. Ensuring fairness and justice is also crucial, with leaders treating employees equitably and without favoritism or discrimination. Demonstrating empathy and support is another important element; leaders should show genuine concern for employees, particularly during challenging times. Additionally, empowering employees with autonomy and decision-making authority fosters greater trust in the organization and reduces reliance on political maneuvering. Finally, positive reinforcement—recognizing and rewarding employee contributions—can strengthen the leader-employee relationship and boost morale.

Lastly, to strengthen distributive justice and reduce knowledge hiding, organizations can implement some effective strategies. One key approach is establishing transparent reward systems by clearly defining the criteria for promotions and rewards, ensuring that employees understand the process and feel it is fair. Similarly, conducting fair performance evaluations based on objective and impartial criteria helps promote equity and avoid perceptions of bias. Equitable resource allocation is also essential, as distributing resources fairly among employees reduces the likelihood of feelings of favoritism. Encouraging open communication within the organization, where employees can freely express concerns and ask for clarifications, further reinforces fairness. Lastly, involving employees in decision-making processes enhances their sense of ownership and strengthens their perceptions of fairness within the organization.

Limitations and Further Research Avenues

The study's focus on five-star hotels and category-A travel agencies in Egypt may limit its generalizability to other sectors or countries. Organizational dynamics, political behaviors, and justice perceptions can vary significantly across industries and cultural contexts. Future research should explore whether these findings hold in other sectors or regions, and examine how cultural values influence organizational behaviors, particularly in multinational or cross-cultural settings. In addition, as data were likely collected through self-reports, there may be biases such as social desirability or underreporting of knowledge-hiding behaviors. Future studies could mitigate this by incorporating multiple data sources (e.g., supervisor ratings, and peer assessments) or using objective measures of knowledge sharing to reduce bias. Lastly, given the unique cultural context of Egypt, future studies could compare the findings with other countries or organizational types to explore how cultural norms and organizational culture influence employee behavior in politically charged environments. Additionally, exploring how organizational culture moderates the relationship between politics, justice, and knowledge sharing in hospitality and tourism settings would provide a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

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التخفيف من تأثير السياسة التنظيمية على إخفاء المعرفة في صناعة السياحة والفنادق:

دور الثقة في القيادة والعدالة التوزيعية

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الملخص العربى

تستكشف هذه الدراسة تأثير السياسة التنظيمية على سلوك إخفاء المعرفة داخل مؤسسات السياحة والفنادق، مع التركيز على الأدوار المعدلة للثقة في القيادة والعدالة التوزيعية. تم جمع البيانات من الموظفين بدوام كامل الذين يعملون في وكالات السفر من الفئة (أ) والفنادق ذات الخمس نجوم في منطقة القاهرة الكبرى في مصر. لاختبار النموذج المقترح، استخدمت الدراسة طريقة PLS-SEM الإحصائية لتحليل ٤٢٤ استجابة صالحة. كشفت النتائج عن وجود علاقة إيجابية بين تصورات الموظفين للسياسة التنظيمية وسلوك إخفاء المعرفة. علاوة على ذلك، وجد أن العدالة التوزيعية والثقة في القيادة تعملان على تعديل العلاقة بين السياسة التنظيمية وسلوك إخفاء المعرفة، مما يشير إلى أن هذه العوامل تضعف تأثير السياسة التنظيمية على إخفاء المعرفة. يساهم هذا البحث في مجال إدارة الضيافة والسياحة من خلال توفير فهم أعمق للعوامل التي تعيق تبادل المعرفة وتقديم رؤى حول الآليات التنظيمية التي يمكن أن تعزز بيئة عمل أكثر تعاونًا وشفافية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة التنظيمية، سلوك إخفاء المعرفة، العدالة التوزيعية، الثقة في القيادة، وكالات السفر، الفنادق.