



**SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEES' KNOWLEDGE HIDING BEHAVIOR:  
TESTING MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY**

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**ABSTRACT**

The fundamental objective of this study was to assess the effect of servant leadership on nurses' tendency to conceal knowledge in the context of a selected healthcare institution in Erzincan, Turkey. In order to evaluate the research hypotheses, we used a convenient sampling technique and collected data at two different time intervals from relevant sources. The initial data collection phase yielded a final sample of 400 valid and complete responses from nurses, which we subsequently analyzed using SPSS version 25. Our findings exposed a important relationship between servant leadership and knowledge withholding behaviour among nurses. Furthermore, the variable of self-efficacy emerged as a partial mediator between servant leadership and knowledge-hiding tendencies. This research donates to the understanding of knowledge-hiding behaviour, a critical component of knowledge management, through the lens of servant leadership, drawing on insights from both social exchange and leader-member exchange (LMX) theories.

**Keywords:** Servant leadership, Knowledge hiding behavior, Self-efficacy

**HİZMETKAR LİDERLİK VE ÇALIŞANLARIN BİLGİ SAKLAMA DAVRANIŞI:  
ÖZYETERLİLİĞİN ARACILIK ROLÜ**

**ÖZET**

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, hizmetkâr liderliğin hemşirelerin bilgiyi gizleme eğilimi üzerindeki etkisini Erzincan'da seçilmiş bir sağlık kurumu bağlamında değerlendirmektir. Araştırma hipotezlerini değerlendirmek için uygun örnekleme tekniği kullanılmış ve ilgili kaynaklardan iki farklı zaman aralığında veri toplanmıştır. İlk veri toplama aşamasında hemşirelerden alınan 400 geçerli ve eksiksiz yanıtın oluştuğu nihai bir örneklem elde edilmiş ve bunlar daha sonra SPSS sürüm 25 kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir.

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Bulgularımız, hemşireler arasında hizmetkâr liderlik ile bilgi saklama davranışı arasında önemli bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, öz yeterlilik değişkeni, hizmetkâr liderlik ve bilgi saklama eğilimleri arasında kısmi bir aracı olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu araştırma, hem sosyal mübadele hem de lider-üye mübadelesi (LMX) teorilerinin içgörülerinden yararlanarak, bilgi yönetiminin kritik bir bileşeni olan bilgi saklama davranışının hizmetkâr liderlik merceğinden anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hizmetkâr liderlik, Bilgi saklama davranışı, Öz yeterlilik

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

In the twenty-first century, there has been a significant change in the focus of the knowledge-based economy, and the success of companies is highly dependent on knowledge effectiveness (Lim J. R. 2021; Barney, 1991; Grant, 1996). The creation of new knowledge is considered as part of the necessities (Jantunen, 2005). As an effective organization, the use of existing knowledge is also considered important (Wang & Noe, 2010). Therefore, it is an essential part of employees' ethics to share knowledge with their peers so that the organization can benefit from knowledge sharing culture (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020). Previous studies have also shown that organizations that foster a robust knowledge sharing culture tend to achieve higher levels of competitiveness and growth compared to their counterparts in the market (Wang & Noe, 2010; Javaid et al., 2020).

It has been firmly established that knowledge hiding behaviour has an adverse effect on the motivational atmosphere and creativity within the workplace (Bari, Ghaffar, & Ahmad, 2020). Individuals often choose to withhold information from their peers for various reasons, including psychological ownership, status, authority, and financial incentives (Huo et al., 2016). The incidence of knowledge hiding behaviour in work environments is increasing more rapidly than the instances of knowledge-sharing behaviors (Holten et al., 2016). This is a concerning trend. When employees encounter individuals engaging in knowledge hiding behaviour, they often respond by reciprocating such actions, maintaining silence, and refraining from sharing knowledge with these individuals (Xiao & Cooke, 2019). Zhong et al. (2015) define servant leadership as an innovative approach for organizations seeking to implement fresh leadership strategies. This approach focuses on nurturing the social identities of employees and building their trust (Zhong et al., 2015; Heo et al., 2019). The notion of servant leadership is a recent development (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Eva et al. (2019) divided study on servant leadership into three aspects. The first phase, referred to as conceptual development, consists of initiatives that aim to convey an early understanding of servant leadership to the public. The works of Spears (1996; 2010) are particularly noteworthy in this regard.

According to Ehrhart (2004), a servant leader understands their moral duty to not only ensure the success of the company but also the success of their subordinates, customers, and other stakeholders in the organization. Servant leadership prioritizes the well-being of those under one's guidance over the leader's self-interest (Laub, 1999). The model emphasizes leader behaviors that foster the development of followers, while avoiding glorification of the leader (Hale & Fields, 2007). It highlights the importance of serving others, including employees and custodial staff (Lemoine, 2015). Furthermore, knowledge exchange is paramount for any organization to thrive (Connelly et al., 2012). According to this study, knowledge sharing involves employees' willingness to share information, including ideas, experiences, facts, procedures, and formulas, with their colleagues within the organization (Wang et al., 2014). Sustainable knowledge sharing has been affiliated with conclusive result at various levels. For instance, it has been linked to innovative work behaviour, employee creativity, team creativity and organizational learning (Kim & Lee, 2013). To ensure the smooth operation of the business, employees are required to willingly share important and specialized informational resources with one another. According to Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2011), this knowledge is considered to reside in their thoughts.

Numerous scholars have researched the negative effects of concealing knowledge in the workplace, a phenomenon that has become more prevalent in organizational settings (Connelly et al., 2012; Burmeister et al., 2019). Studies have shown that concealing information is negatively associated with individual creativity, productivity, efficiency, and behaviour. (Bogilovic et al., 2017). It has been observed that knowledge-concealing behaviours have a negative impact on interpersonal relations and foster distrust (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). These practices have also been found to impede creativity (Bogilovic et al., 2017). Similarly, the concept of employee silence, described as the deliberate restraining of conceptions, knowledge, questions, and beliefs regarding work-related matters and organizational improvements (Dyne et al., 2003), has received insufficient attention. This is despite the valuable insights that current research offers on the outcomes of knowledge concealment. The present study addresses various limitations proposed by scholars in the field of knowledge hiding behaviour. Koay and Lim (2021) submitted that future researchers explore alternative forms of leadership styles, such as servant leadership, participative leadership, motivational leadership, and empowering leadership, to evaluate their influence on individuals who conceal knowledge within an organization.

On the other hand, the concept of self-efficacy has a comparatively short history, dating back to Bandura's 1977 publication 'Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change'. Since then, numerous research studies have been conducted to appraise the principles of self-efficacy across various contexts and fields. These studies have found substantial support within an expanding body of evidence that encompasses diverse domains (Multon et al., 1991). The concept of self-efficacy beliefs has

acknowledged considerable consideration in educational studies in recent years, particularly in the field of academic motivation (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). Based on the aforementioned literature, our second research constraint for this study is to consider self-efficacy as the initial mediator between servant leadership and knowledge concealment, as proposed by Ma and Zhang (2021). Ortega-Gutierrez, Cepeda-Carrion, and Alves (2021) proposed a second mediation between absorptive capacity, servant leadership, and knowledge hiding. Therefore, our research will consider the following objectives.

**RO1:** To examine the influence of servant leadership on knowledge hiding behavior among nurses.

**RO2:** To examine the relationship between servant leadership and self-efficacy among nurses.

**RO3:** To examine the relationship between self-efficacy and knowledge hiding behavior among nurses.

**RO4:** To test the mediation role of self-efficacy between servant leadership and knowledge hiding behavior among nurses.

***Based on the research problem and research objectives, our research study considers the following main questions.***

**RQ1:** To what extent does servant leadership influence knowledge hiding behavior among nurses?

**RQ2:** To what extent does servant leadership influence self-efficacy among nurses?

**RQ3:** To what extent does self-efficacy influence knowledge hiding behavior among nurses?

**RQ4:** To what extent does self-efficacy mediate the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge hiding behavior among nurses?

## **1. Literature Review**

### **1.1. Knowledge Hiding Behavior**

Knowledge hiding is portrayed as the deliberate act of an individual to conceal or withhold information that is sought by another person. This study focuses on situations where an employee requests specific information from a colleague, who then refuses to provide it by claiming that the information is confidential. For instance, a coworker may refuse to provide a report that was requested by an employee by stating that the information is confidential. Although there is no dishonesty involved in this scenario, the desired information is not available. Furthermore, if a colleague offers only part of the information sought, it may be considered knowledge concealing, and in this case, dishonesty could be implied. In other words, keeping information hidden is not necessarily linked to deception. Similarly, managers do not view withholding information as dishonest (Takala & Urpilainen, 1999). Moreover, knowledge concealment can

be driven by positive intentions or outcomes. For example, it might be designed to safeguard someone's emotions, maintain confidentiality, or safeguard the interests of a third party, among other motives. Therefore, it is not always linked to unethical behavior. It is important to note that when concealing information, it is crucial to consider the potential consequences and ensure that it does not lead to harm or negative outcomes.

The concept of concealing knowledge has roots that predate the field of knowledge management by several decades (Ipe, 2003; Davenport & Prusak, 1998). However, researchers have predominantly focused on promoting favorable organizational behaviors, such as information sharing, while neglecting to examine detrimental work behaviors, such as knowledge concealment (Manhart & Thalmann, 2015). Conversely, concealing knowledge is a common occurrence in contemporary businesses (Connelly et al., 2012). The potential consequences of such actions can be dire in specific situations. When intra-organizational knowledge exchange is disrupted, it leads to unnecessary redundancy. Employees invest substantial hours acquiring knowledge that they already possess but remains unshared by other members of the organization who have chosen to withhold it. Observing colleagues engaging in information concealment behaviour can lead to a decrease in employees' commitment to the organization. When individuals withhold important information instead of integrating it into organizational processes, it can hinder the achievement of optimal organizational output. This can have an impact not only on the business itself but also on other stakeholders, including consumers. Limiting the flow of internal information can have a negative impact on organizational competitiveness, innovation, and profitability. Additionally, when employees leave the company, their expertise is lost unless they have previously shared it with their colleagues, as noted by Manhart and Thalmann (2015).

The sharing of knowledge has been a constant feature across various domains of human endeavour (Serenko & Bontis, 2013). In the latter part of the twentieth century, organisations faced a rapidly growing demand to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency. Consequently, the concept of knowledge management (KM) emerged and gained recognition as a pivotal managerial function (Wiig, 1997; Prusak, 2001). Intra-organizational knowledge sharing refers to the transmission of both tacit and explicit knowledge among employees. This practice has gained attention from the academic community due to its potential to enhance internal processes, foster innovation, bolster competitiveness, and improve overall performance (Yahyapour et al., 2015).

Although information sharing is generally considered a positive activity for knowledge, there are several counterproductive behaviours that can impede an organisation's progress towards its ultimate goals. The intentional accumulation of knowledge and the secrecy surrounding its possession are commonly known as knowledge hoarding (Evans et al., 2015). Knowledge-sharing antagonism refers to the act of

collecting and concealing personal knowledge, as well as rejecting external information (Husted et al., 2012). When individuals share only a portion of the relevant information, avoiding complete knowledge disclosure, it is termed partial knowledge sharing (Ford and Staples, 2010). According to Kang (2016), knowledge withholding refers to the deliberate concealment or unintentional retention of information for personal gain, or providing less knowledge than required. Information withholding is the deliberate act of employees not sharing important information with their colleagues, even when they know it is significant to others (Steinel et al., 2010).

### **1.2. *Servant Leadership***

Servant leadership is a practice that has endured for countless millennia. Many historical monarchs recognized the intrinsic connection between leadership and the welfare of their people and nation (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The concept of servant leadership has been revitalized in a contemporary context by Greenleaf (1996). Although some people associate servant leadership exclusively with Christian principles, it is important to recognise its significant impact across various cultures worldwide (Gandolfi et al., 2017). Winston and Ryan (2008) argue that Confucius' philosophy bears remarkable resemblances to servant leadership, with several servant leadership principles apparent during the Zhou Dynasty period. The leadership of Bedouin-Arab tribes aligns with the essence of servant leadership, as these leaders were expected to embody selflessness and prioritize the well-being of family and guests over personal interests (Hirschy et al., 2012).

Graham (1991) and Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999) draw parallels between servant leadership and Burns' (1978) transformational leadership, as both methodologies emphasise the mutual elevation of leaders and followers towards higher levels of motivation and morality. However, it is important to note that their similarities only extend to this particular aspect. Conventional management and organizational theories typically centralise authority within a select few individuals in an institution, necessitating strict compliance across the organizational hierarchy (Winston & Fields, 2015). Charismatic and transformational leadership styles, on the other hand, prioritise inspiring and engaging followers as the principal means of achieving organizational goals (Winston & Fields, 2015).

### **1.3. *Self – Efficacy***

Self-efficacy affect an individual's courage in his or her adequacy to manage and take the essential movements to deal with potential situations. (Wu et al., 2007). Bandura's (1977; 1986) theory suggests four approaches that can enhance an individual's self-efficacy: provoking emotional responses, verbal encouragement, role modeling, and demonstrating competence. According to Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, individuals achieve knowledge by noticing and competing the demeanors, values, and

actions of charming and honest role models. This is supported by Brown and Trevino (2006), who suggest that individuals understand acceptable and unacceptable behaviors by witnessing the conduct of role models and the resulting consequences of these behaviors. This learning process is particularly influential when role models in positions of authority, such as supervisors (Bandura, 1986), have the ability to dispense rewards (Stellar et al., 2017).

Supervisors' self-efficacy, or confidence in their own value and competence, is likely influenced by the actions of their superiors. This is especially true in hierarchical structures where supervisors have the power to allocate compensation and benefits to subordinates. It is important for superiors to be aware of this dynamic and act accordingly. Positive supervisory approaches, such as servant leadership and ethical leadership, can enhance the self-efficacy of those under their supervision by providing vital resources, support, psychological security, and autonomy at work (Yang et al., 2017). Conversely, detrimental supervisory behaviors, such as abusive supervision, can have a negative impact on the self-efficacy of those being supervised by depleting these crucial resources (Duffy et al., 2002). These shifts in self-efficacy can either motivate or demotivate those being supervised, leading to an increase or decrease in their In-role Work Behavior (IWB) (Haase et al., 2018).

## **2. Hypothesis Development**

### **2.1. *Servant Leadership and Knowledge Hiding Behavior***

Previous research has examined contextual factors that may encourage or discourage subordinates from engaging in knowledge hiding behaviour. Various factors have been linked to knowledge-sharing behaviour, including the climate for knowledge sharing, the complexity of knowledge, levels of trust, the relevance of tasks (Connelly et al., 2012), the interplay between conditions and culture (Serenko & Bontis, 2016), individual ambitiousness, cooperative job design (Maric et al., 2019), conflicts, perceived competition (Semerci, 2019), and the perception of organizational politics (Malik et al., 2019). Although there is a wealth of research exploring the influence of contextual elements on encouraging or discouraging employees from sharing knowledge, limited attention has been paid to the connection between leadership styles and knowledge-sharing behaviors. The leadership style adopted by a leader plays a pivotal role in shaping the behaviors of subordinates in an organization (Inceoglu et al., 2018). Previous studies have proposed the concept of abusive supervision as a mechanism explaining why employees withhold their knowledge (Feng & Wang, 2019). However, specific leadership styles that might deter employees from engaging in knowledge sharing have not been thoroughly investigated. Therefore, our current research delves into a type of productive leadership known as altruistic leadership.



This form of leadership may impact employees' willingness to share knowledge. Altruistic leadership, which is defined as a leader's selfless concern for the well-being of their subordinates and prioritizing their interests over their own (Salas-Vallina et al., 2018), exemplifies a human-centered leadership approach. Leaders who exhibit altruistic behaviour aim to inspire their subordinates' dedication and passion for their work by appealing to their ideals and emotions (Yukl, 2012).

Following Davenport and Prusak's (1998) definition of knowledge as 'a fluid unification of framed experience and values, circumstantial information, and expert insights serving as a framework for evaluating new experiences and information', our research defines knowledge as information concepts and proficiency acquired through learning, education, and experience that are relevant to performing workplace tasks. This definition excludes knowledge acquired through other means (Rhee & Choi, 2017). Knowledge sharing is one of considerable counteractive knowledge-related behaviours that can be identified (Serenko & Bontis, 2016). According to its definition, knowledge sharing is the intentional effort to withhold or conceal information sought by another individual (Connelly et al., 2012). Knowledge-sharing behaviour within an organisation can hinder partnerships, internal information flow, and the generation of new ideas, ultimately negatively impacting organisational performance (Peng, 2013). Recent data highlights the potential for knowledge sharing among subordinates to jeopardise an organisation's survival. According to Rhee & Choi (2017), subordinates who engage in knowledge sharing behaviour may become less innovative over time due to their exclusion from the network of information exchange. Therefore, we propose the following research hypothesis:

***H1: Servant leadership positively influences knowledge hiding behavior among nurses.***

## ***2.2. Servant Leadership and Self – Efficacy***

In the field of leadership studies, it has been established that servant leadership is the most human-centred paradigm available. This leadership framework is identified as a crucial element within the realm of classical administrative dynamics, characterised by the promotion of shared values and altruistic conduct among the workforce (Sims 2018; Kumar 2018). Servant leadership is defined as the responsibility of leaders to nurture the well-being of their organisation's members. The term 'servant leadership' results from the combination of the words 'servant' and 'leader' (Petrovskaya & Mirakyan, 2018). Unlike traditional leadership, which is characterized by a command-and-control dynamic, servant leadership is distinguished by a natural inclination to provide others. Servant leadership intends to progress a societal value system (Petrovskaya & Mirakyan, 2018). This is achieved through shared leadership practices that promote trust among members of the organization, with an emphasis on equality (Petrovskaya & Mirakyan, 2018).



Erdurmazli (2019) defines servant leadership as an ethical form of leadership that emphasizes assisting individuals rather than exploiting them. Unlike other leadership models, servant leaders delegate authority to subordinates, promoting innovation and competence while maintaining mutual respect for the organization's members. The organization's advancement and the growth of its members are given equal weight, with a focus on objectivity and comprehensibility. No changes in content have been made. Servant leadership involves leaders empathising with the organisation's members and acknowledging their contributions and accomplishment, even if it requires rejecting their suggestions and recommendations (Spears, 2010). Developing an empathetic attitude is benign for both leaders and members of an organization (Bae, 2009).

***H2: Nurses who experience servant leadership have higher self-efficacy perceptions.***

### ***2.3. Self – Efficacy and Knowledge Hiding Behavior***

The concept of 'self-efficacy' bears to an individual's courage in their ability to achieve a particular duty (Bandura, 1989). In the context of goal-setting, it significantly influences the level of determination with which one pursues a particular objective. While self-esteem is defined as having a positive self-regard, self-efficacy distincts in that it represents one's belief in their own capabilities (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). Bandura's social cognitive theory, developed in 1989, emphasises the role of the social environment, cognitive processes, and behavioural skills in the learning and developmental process. Bandura posited that self-efficacy holds greater significance in propelling purpose-driven conduct than self-esteem or self-satisfaction.

The social cognitive theory has advanced and now emphasises a supplementary causal framework. This framework involves reciprocal interactions between behavioural, cognitive, and environmental components, giving rise to novel psychological dynamics. Individuals may be tempted to quit or avoid complicated jobs that require concentration when they have doubts about their talents or are anxious about their obligations. Conversely, individuals with a robust sense of self-efficacy are more likely to persevere in their endeavours by setting more ambitious objectives and embracing more complicating or arduous tasks. (Feltz & Riessinger, 1990).

Furthermore, the relationship between an individual's perception of their competence and their ability to excel in a specific role is influenced by self-aware social and psychological factors that possess self-awareness (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018; Dybowski et al., 2017). Gardner and Pierce (1998) found that motivated individuals have self-confidence in their ability to perform successfully in a variety of tasks or unique circumstances. Self-efficacy has an impact on not only present work performance but also on future organizational behavior in the long run. Self-efficacy is a psychological characteristic that predicts an

individual's performance in a professional or organizational setting (Gist, 1987). Our research proposes the following hypothesis:

***H3: Nurses with high self-efficacy perceptions tend to hide knowledge more from other nurses.***

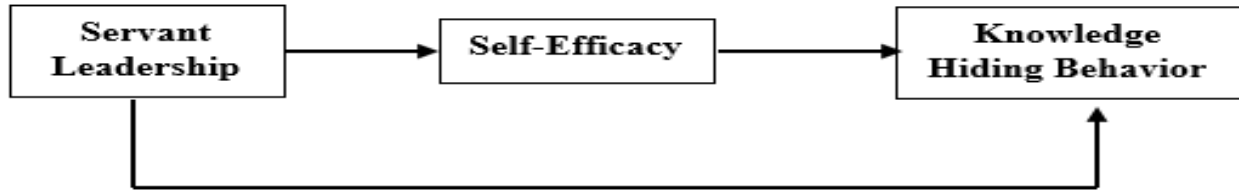
#### ***2.4. Self – Efficacy, Servant Leadership and Knowledge Hiding Behavior***

The term "self-efficacy" is used to describe an individual's assurance in their capability to devise and execute strategies to address potential situations (Bandura, 1995). Scholars, including Bandura (1977, 1986), have proposed four methods to enhance self-efficacy: evoking emotional engagement, offering verbal encouragement, exemplifying role models, and achieving mastery in practice. Bandura (1986) stated that individuals learn by observing and imitating the angles, beliefs and actions of engaging and reliable models. This is known as social learning theory. Brown and Trevino (2006) further explain this theory on pages 597 and 598. Learning from the behaviors of role models and their outcomes can help individuals understand a range of favorable and unfavorable behaviors. This understanding influences the imitation of behaviors, especially when role models are positioned within a 'prestige hierarchy', such as that observed in the case of supervisors, and have the ability to administer rewards (Bandura, 1986).

Although the ability to share information and the capacity to conceal it may seem interconnected, they are actually distinct. Therefore, strategies for knowledge-sharing may not necessarily mitigate knowledge hiding (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). The motivations underlying these behaviours are also different: information sharing is primarily driven by prosocial intentions, whereas knowledge concealment is largely driven by self-centered objectives (Pan et al., 2018).

Servant leadership, as defined by Graham (1991) and Greenleaf (1977), is a leadership style that is both inspirational and morally grounded. Spears (2004) identified ten common traits among servant leaders in his study. These traits include attentive listening, empathy, the ability to heal, heightened awareness, influence, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, dedication to growth, and the establishment of a unified community. Brown and Trevino (2006) argue that servant leadership shares similarities with other visionary leadership concepts, such as charismatic/transformational leadership, ethical leadership, authentic leadership, and spiritual leadership. They demonstrate these similarities by acting as role models, conveying inspiration, and practicing altruism (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Our research study postulates the following hypothesis.

**H4: The relationship between servant leadership and knowledge hiding behavior among nurses is partially mediated by self-efficacy perceptions.**



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design/Approach*

A research design outlines how the study will address major aspects or answer research questions (Creswell et al., 2003). Our study utilized a quantitative research design to evaluate the impact of servant leadership on employees' knowledge hiding behavior, considering the mediating role of self-efficacy. To achieve the aim of this study, we used a questionnaire as it is a widely accepted instrument for collecting data on variables. We adopted a questionnaire for data collection and selected a sample of 400 participants, which is considered the most essential segment of research studies (De Bonet, 1997). To collect data, we used both online and traditional methods from selected hospitals in Erzincan, Turkey. Additionally, the reliability statistics, which explain the Cronbach alpha value of the items, are as follows.

**Table 1. Reliability Statistics**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No – Items</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Servant Leadership	28-Items	.860	Acceptable
Knowledge Hiding Behavior	12-Items	.890	Acceptable
Self – Efficacy	6-Items	.721	Acceptable

## MEASUREMENTS

Our study utilised items that were previously validated in research to ensure the reliability of the measures. The items for the current study were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement. A total of 28 items were used to measure servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008), including the item 'My supervisor can tell if something work-related is going wrong'. The study examined 12 items related to knowledge hiding behaviour (Agarwal, Gupta, & Cooke, 2022), including a sample item 'agreed to help him/her but never really intended to'. All respondents were asked to self-report their knowledge hiding behaviour. Additionally, 6 items related to self-efficacy (Rigotti et al., 2008) were included, such as the item 'I will be able to provide help to colleagues if they have a personal problem'. Table 1 shows the Cronbach Alpha values for all items: SL = .860, KHB = .890, and SE = .721. The reliability statistics indicate that all items are acceptable for data collection purposes.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### *Demographic characteristics*

**Table 2.** *Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants*

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	264	65.8
Female	137	34.2
<b>Age</b>		
25 – 30	146	36.4
31 – 35	185	40.9
36 – Above	70	17.5
<b>Educational Level</b>		
Bachelor Level	128	31.9
MBA (1.5 Years)	164	40.9

MS (2Years)	97	24.2
PhD	12	17.5
<b>Tenure</b>		
0 – 5 Years	105	26.2
6 – 10 Years	108	26.9
11 – 15 Years	151	37.7
16 – Above	37	9.2

Table 2 shows that a greater number of males (n = 264, 65.8%) participated in the study compared to females (n = 137, 34.2%). A higher number of participants were between 25-30 years of age (n = 146, 36.4%) or between 31-35 years of age (n = 185, 40.9%). Only one participant (n = 70, 17.5%) was marked as being 36 years of age or older. In this study, the participants' education levels were as follows: 40.9% (n = 164) had an MBA with a duration of 1.5 years, 31.9% (n = 128) had a Bachelor's degree, 24.2% (n = 97) were at the MS level, and 3.0% (n = 12) were at the PhD level. Furthermore, participants were asked to indicate their tenure level. Of the 401 participants, 105 (26.2%) reported having 0-5 years of experience, 108 (26.9%) reported having 6-10 years of experience, 37 (9.2%) reported having 11-15 years of experience, and the majority, 151 (37.7%), reported having more than 15 years of experience.

**Table 3.** Regression Coefficient of SL, SE on KHB

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95%CI
Constant	31.9	2.5	12.9	.000	[26.10, 36.8]
Servant Leadership	.436	.089	4.10	.000	[.262, .610]
Self – Efficacy	.385	.057	6.8	.000	[.273, .497]

Note, CI = Confidence interval

Table 3 displays the impact of servant leadership and employees' self-efficacy on knowledge hiding behaviour in selected higher education institutions. The R2 value of .330 indicates that the predictors accounted for 33.0% of the variability in the outcome variable, with  $F(2, 398) = 98.189, P < .001$ . The findings indicate that servant leadership ( $\beta = .27, P < .001$ ) and self-efficacy ( $\beta = .363, P < .001$ ) have a

significant impact on knowledge hiding behavior. This suggests that individuals with higher levels of servant leadership and self-efficacy are less likely to engage in knowledge hiding behavior.

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for Study Variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Servant Leadership	400	47.95	6.52	–		
Self – Efficacy	400	31.99	4.31	.408**	–	
Knowledge Hiding Behavior	400	65.68	6.88	.538**	.422**	–

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 4 shows that servant leadership has a significant positive correlation ( $r = .408, p < .01$ ) with knowledge hiding behaviour ( $r = .538, p < .01$ ). Self-efficacy also has a significant positive correlation with knowledge hiding behaviour ( $r = .422, p < .01$ ).

**Table 5.** Regression analysis for Mediation of Self – Efficacy between servant leadership and knowledge hiding behavior.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>95%CI</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>R2</i>	$\Delta R2$
Step 1					.254	.254***
Constant	36.50***	[31.65, 41.537]	2.516			
Servant Leadership	.825***	[.686, .964]	.071	.504***		
Step 2					.330	.07***
Constant	31.86***	[26.971, 36.748]	2.487			
Servant leadership	.436***	[.262, .610]	.089	.266***		
Self – Efficacy	.385***	[.273, .497]	.057	.265***		

Note, CI = Confidence interval, \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5 displays the effects of servant leadership and self-efficacy on knowledge hiding behaviour. In Step 1, the R2 value of 0.254 indicates that servant leadership accounts for 25.4% of the variance in

knowledge hiding behaviour with  $F(1, 399) = P < 0.001$ . The results indicate that servant leadership has a positive effect on knowledge hiding behaviour ( $\beta = 0.504, P < 0.001$ ). In step 2, the  $R^2$  value of 0.330 indicates that servant leadership and self-efficacy explain 33.0% of the variance in knowledge hiding behaviour ( $F(2, 398) = P < 0.001$ ). The findings show that servant leadership ( $\beta = 0.266, P < 0.001$ ) and self-efficacy positively predict knowledge hiding behaviour ( $\beta = 0.265, P < 0.001$ ). The  $\Delta R^2$  value of 0.07 indicates a 7% change in the variance of model 1 and model 2 ( $\Delta F(1, 399) = 45.60, P < 0.001$ ). The regression weights for servant leadership were subsequently reduced from model 1 to model 2, from .50 to .26, but remained significant. This confirms the mediating role of self-efficacy between servant leadership and knowledge hiding behavior. Specifically, servant leadership has both direct and indirect effects on knowledge hiding behavior.

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Our study proposes an influential pathway of how servant leadership influences the behavior of concealing knowledge, utilizing self-efficacy as a mediator from employees' perspective, based on LMX and SET theories. To assess the hypotheses, we used a questionnaire survey, and the results validated them all. We also examine the theoretical contribution and implications for practice, limitations, and future research directions. Servant leadership is a valuable asset for firms, especially in the higher education sector. Recent studies have shown that servant leadership is linked to high performance (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2021) and motivation in the public sector (Tran & Truong, 2021) (Miao et al., 2021).

Our investigation has made several noteworthy theoretical contributions to the existing body of literature on knowledge hiding behaviour and servant leadership. Our study indicates that the most influential factor affecting an individual's knowledge hiding behaviour is the positive behaviour exhibited by leaders. This claim is supported by prior research that has examined the connection between leadership and knowledge management activities, including both knowledge hiding and knowledge sharing. Song, Tian, and Kwan (2021) have noted this connection. Furthermore, Bavik et al. (2018) carried out a research on the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge sharing and hiding.

Additionally, this study provides theoretical insights by examining the relationship between servant leadership and knowledge concealment, with self-efficacy as a mediating variable. The main objective is to study the effect of servant leadership on knowledge concealment behaviour. Unfortunately, understanding knowledge concealment behavior and its workplace characteristics remains a significant challenge for servant leaders. Based on our research findings, it is important to consider not only self-efficacy but also other intervening variables, as discussed in Figure 2 of our current study.

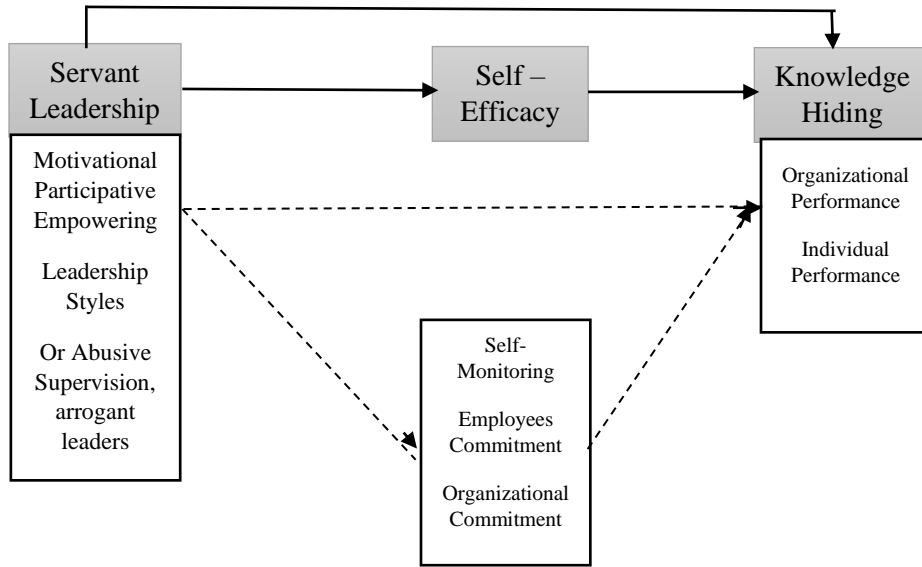


The results of our study suggest several theoretical and managerial implications. Servant leadership exerts its positive influence in different types of organisations, as highlighted by Gui et al. (2021). Research conducted by Arain et al. (2022) suggests that virtually all knowledge-intensive organisations are affected by the concept of knowledge concealment and the presence of knowledge concealers, leading to negative effects on both organisational and individual performance, as highlighted by Di Vaio et al. (2021). It is a very clear fact that because of the negative consequences of knowledge hiding a serious disruption can be faced by business, innovativeness and creativity (Akhtar et al., 2022).

### LIMITATION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

We emphasized constraints and potential future directions within the following framework.

Figure 2: Explains the current area investigated, and future direction.



- The research area explored in the present study.
- The research area that should be examined in future studies.
- Relationship scrutinized in the ongoing study.
- The connections that should be examined in future studies.

### CONCLUSION

Despite significant investments, organisations often face the dilemma of knowledge hiding by their employees. This study focuses on concealing information from the perspective of positive leadership (servant leadership) and self-efficacy as an intervening factor. The results indicate that individuals working in organisations that consider servant leadership as an opportunity for their departments and teams are less likely to hide knowledge. The study found a positive association between the study variables.

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