THE INFLUENCE OF HRM PRACTICES & TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEES PERFORMANCE: MEDIATING ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE HIDING

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
HRM Practices, Transformational Leadership, Employee Performance, Knowledge Hiding, Mediation Analysis	This study examines the impact of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and transformational leadership on employee performance, with a focus on the mediating role of knowledge hiding. As organizations strive to enhance employee performance through effective HRM and leadership, understanding the underlying mechanisms that influence performance becomes crucial. Employing a quantitative research design and sample of employees from manufacturing SMEs, study used structured questionnaire to collect data, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for analysis. Findings revealed that HRM practices significantly & positively affect employee performance but also contribute to knowledge hiding. Transformational leadership positively influences employee performance and knowledge hiding, though its impact on the performance is less direct compared to HRM practices. This study offers original insights into complex interplay amid HRM practices, transformational leadership, and knowledge hiding, highlighting standing of addressing knowledge hiding to optimize employee performance. Recommendations include refining HRM practices to prevent knowledge hiding and training leaders to manage knowledge sharing effectively.
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INTRODUCTION

In the current and fast changing business environment, organizations have realized that the performance of their employees is a critical factor in providing a competitive advantage (Devi, 2024). HRM practices and leadership styles especially the transformational leadership have a significant influence on the development of high-performance work systems (Liao, Li, Li & Yin, 2024). Still, there are certain behaviours which are counterproductive to this process, including

knowledge hiding (Tufail, Gul & Ali, 2024). Despite the fact that the previous work shows that human resource management practices and transformational leadership have positive impact on employees' performance, the role of knowledge hiding as mediator has not been extensively investigated (Yang, Tang, Xu & Lai, 2024). The purpose of this research is to examine the effect of HRM practices and transformational leadership on employee performance with knowledge hiding as a mediator. Performance of employees is one of the critical factors that determine the success of given organization. HRM practices like recruitment, training, performance appraisal and reward systems; play a significant role in determining the employee's work performance as it determines their attitudes, skills and motivation (Tian, Tang, Akram, Khan & Chuadhry, 2022).

These practices form the basis through which employees can build on their strengths with a view of increasing their performance and that of organization (Guo, Khassawneh, Mohammad & Pei, 2024). At the same time, transformational leadership, which includes such aspects as inspiring and motivating employees, fostering the innovation and encouraging their personal development, has been identified as a major type of leadership that has the positive impact on the employee performance. Transformational leaders foster a positive work culture, articulate a vision that everyone can relate to and challenge employees to achieve more (Xu, Zhu & Li 2022). Although, the HRM practices and transformational leadership have been seen to have a positive effect on the organizations, knowledge hiding may still be a challenge that affects the employees' performance (Perez, Ejaz & Ejaz, 2023). There are still some areas that are not well explored in relation to relationships between HRM practices, transformational leadership and employee performance. Knowledge hiding is act of purposely not sharing, hiding information from other members of team which is counterproductive to the teamwork and innovation. It may appear as a result of competition, lack of trust or attempt to maintain one's position within organization.

Despite the fact that knowledge sharing is vital for the organization's development, knowledge hiding is counterproductive and creates barriers to the exchange of information, which in turn affects teams' productivity and effectiveness of leadership and HRM practices (Zhang, Zhang, Zhang, Wang & Akhtar, 2024). Prior research has considered these variables in isolation or in pairs, however, the current research looks at moderating effect of knowledge hiding between the above mentioned HRM practices, transformational leadership and employee performance (Anand, Dalmasso, Hungund, Centobelli & Dumazert, 2024). Thus, this paper aims at filling the research gap in relationship amid organizational politics and employee performance through the mediating role of knowledge hiding. The research problem is therefore derived from the necessity of enhancing the sympathetic of knowledge hiding impact on effectiveness of human resource management practices and transformational leadership in enhancing the employees' performance. Companies spend lot of resources in HRM systems and leadership development programmes but knowledge hiding can occur and result in poor performance. Hence, it is vital to understand part played by knowledge hiding in this relationship for designing appropriate solutions.

This research is important as it extends the understanding of relation between HRM practices, transformational leadership, and employee performance by incorporating knowledge hiding as an important moderating variable. When transformational leaders create environments of trust, transparency, and collective growth, employees are less likely to engage in knowledge hiding, resulting in improved performance and collaboration. Conversely, inadequate HRM practices and weak leadership can lead to increase in knowledge-hiding behaviors, adversely affecting team dynamics and performance outcomes. The knowledge of this relationship will enable organizations to understand how to manage knowledge hiding behaviors and therefore enhance effectiveness of HRM and leadership to improve employee performance. The research questions of this study are; What are the direct effects of HRM practices and transformational leadership on employee performance? What is the role of Knowledge hiding in the relationship between HRM practices and transformational leadership and employee performance? To this end, this research seeks to offer implications that may help organizations enhance employees' performance through promoting knowledge-sharing culture, and reducing knowledge hiding behaviors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on literature review, this study uses several theories to develop theoretical framework that links HRM practices, transformational leadership, employee performance, and knowledge hiding. Thus, the proposed framework is grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, which postulates that organization's human capital is a source of competitive advantage. Recruitment, training and reward are some of the HRM practices that are useful in building and maintaining this human asset. As this paper has detailed, if well applied, these practices can rally employee competencies and commitment, and, in turn, performance (Moin, Omar, Ali, Rasheed & Abdel, 2024). In addition, leadership theories especially the transformational leadership theory stresses on the fact that leaders have a significant role to play in motivating and thus encouraging the workforce to work to its optimum potential. Through creating trust, empowering and inspiring employees, transformational leader can change employee behavior and attitude (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). Besides these theories, the knowledge management framework also emphasize that the knowledge sharing behaviours are vital to the success of an organization.

The knowledge hiding defined as 'act of deliberately not sharing knowledge' is identified as a counterproductive behaviour that can have detrimental impact on team and its performance (Ribeiro, Nakano, & Muniz, 2024). According to SET, knowledge hiding takes place because of perceived inequity in social relations, lack of trust, or concerns about status or power in the organization. This research incorporates above-mentioned theoretical frameworks to analyse how HRM practices and transformational leadership influence employee performance with knowledge hiding as a moderator (Moin et al., 2024). This paper finds that there is enough literature that supports the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance. Campos, Muñoz, Sánchez and Medina (2024) pointed out that such HRM practices as selective staffing, performance-based incentives, training and development are directly and positively related to organizational performance. These practices increase the levels of motivation, skills

and commitment of employees thus increasing their productivity and that of the organization. Several other studies have supported these findings, for instance, Chukwuka and Dibie (2024) have also supported the idea that high-performance work systems are positively linked with the employees' working attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, commitment as well as productivity.

This paper also discusses other key variable, namely transformational leadership in connection with employee performance. Kilag, Malbas, Nengasca, Celin, Pasigui and Valenzona (2024) in the classic work identified transformational leadership as a style of leadership that encourages followers to go beyond their self-need for the benefit of the organization. Some of the features of transformational leadership include the ability to paint a clear picture of future, challenge the employees, and attend to individual needs of employees (Pulido, Gartzia, Landa & Zafra, 2024). Several research works have supported relationship amid transformational leadership and performance of employees. For example, Mburu, Ragui and Ongeti (2024) established that leadership practices that are transformational improve employee engagement, innovation and work performance through increasing trust and climate in organization. Although previous literature provides strong evidence of relationship between HRM practices, transformational leadership and performance, knowledge hiding has been identified as important yet relatively unexplored factor. Knowledge hiding according to Arain, Bhatti, Hameed, Khan and Rudolph (2024) is purposeful act of individual in avoiding sharing of information that can be valuable to others.

The studies have indicated that knowledge hiding is determined by factors like competition, lack of trust and what one perceives as unfairness in the workplace. Chin, Shi, Arrigo and Palladino (2024) for instance has found out that knowledge hiding results in less collaboration, the higher levels of conflict and decreased productivity within teams. For instance, the studies conducted by Fauzi (2023) has identified the detrimental effects of knowledge hiding on team processes and outcomes. To this end, this study aims at extending the literature by suggesting that knowledge hiding moderates the positive relationship between human resource practices, transformational leadership and employee performance (Rimaldi, Saputra, Mulya & Samodra, 2024). Therefore, the theoretical framework and literature review indicate that, while HRM practices and transformational leadership have the direct positive leading impact on employee performance, knowledge hiding may interfere with the positive effects of these determining factors (Cahyadi, Natalisa, Poór, Perizade & Szabó, 2022). Through exploring the moderating effect of knowledge hiding, this research will help to explain how organisations can prevent knowledge hiding and thus optimize impact of HRM and leadership in improving employees' performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The study used a quantitative approach that is suitable for testing of hypothesis and analysis of relationships amid variables in predetermined manner. This design allowed for quantitative data to be gathered and statistical analysis to be used in assessing effect of HRM practices and transformational leadership on employee performance with knowledge hiding as a moderator.

The study used the positivism research approach, which held the view that the reality is out there and can be observed and measured. This philosophical assumption was appropriate for the study as the aim was to test theoretical framework and make theoretical conclusions. The target group in the present research was the employees of SMEs operating in manufacturing industry. This paper focuses on manufacturing SMEs because they are a vital part of economy in which output of employees is crucial in determining the organizations competitiveness and productivity. Also, companies in this sector had certain issues about knowledge management, leadership, and HRM that are distinctive for SMEs, which made them interesting object of the study.

Focusing on SMEs made it possible to obtain results that would be relevant to small companies with a high pace of development. To increase the validity of findings and to allow for adequate statistical power when using mediation analysis, 300 employees were selected. In order to pick the participants, proportionate stratified random sampling was used. This approach made it possible to achieve balanced sample whereby employees from diverse levels and departments in the SMEs were included in study in their respective proportions. Through the application of stratified random sampling, study avoided the problem of sampling bias and made sure that the sample included all the different roles and experiences of population under study. The data were collected through use of a questionnaire that was administered to employees in the SMEs under study. The survey was developed to capture the main constructs of the study; the HRM practices, the transformational leadership, the performance of employees, and the knowledge hiding. Standardized tools were employed to assess these factors. The questionnaire was both online and face-to-face to increase the chance of return and to make it more convenient for the participants.

The analysis of the data was done using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This statistical technique was selected because it allows for estimation of relations between latent variables and testing of mediations. As PLS-SEM was used in study, it made it possible to estimate the direct impacts of HRM practices and transformational leadership on employee performance and indirect impacts through knowledge hiding. The ethical concerns have been well taken into consideration and analyzed throughout the course of the research. Counseling and informed consent was sought from all participants to make them understand the purpose of study, procedures to be followed and their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. As a measure to safeguard the participant's privacy and to prevent identification of the participants, the participants' information was not disclosed and their responses were not easily identifiable. Also, all data were kept secure and accessible only to the authorized personnel only. These ethical measures helped in ensuring that research was conducted in a manner that was ethical and that the data was collected in right & accurate manner.

DATA ANALYSIS

The results of study are presented in this section that are mainly the outcomes of the statistical procedures that are used to examine the relationships among research variables of study so as

to extract desired information & making required decisions about relationships amid research variables.

Table 1
Reliability Analysis

	CA	RHO_A	CR	AVE
Employees Performance	0.7006	0.7699	0.8123	0.5249
HRM Practices	0.8217	0.8866	0.8641	0.5235
Knowledge Hiding	0.7647	0.7751	0.8373	0.5061
Transformational Leadership	0.903	0.9238	0.9184	0.5313

The reliability analysis in the table reveals that all variables, namely, employee performance, HRM practices, knowledge hiding, and transformational leadership, have acceptable levels of Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Cronbach's alpha for each variable is more than recommended minimum of 0.70, which suggests that items used to measure these constructs are reliable and valid. The rho_A and composite reliability values confirm this, as they show high reliability, with coefficients greater than 0.7. Besides, the AVE values for all constructs are greater than 0.5 as recommended. 50 thresholds, which indicates that the constructs explain reasonable amount of variance from indicators they contain. These results support conclusion that measurement scales employed in the study are both reliable and valid which is important for any subsequent analysis that thus confirmed the required internal consistency among the research mesures in study.

Table 2
Validity Analysis (HTMT)

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[14]
Employees Performance [1]				
HRM Practices [2]	0.6726			
Knowledge Hiding [3]	0.409	0.3446		
Transformational Leadership [4]	0.2779	0.2616	0.4228	

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was used to assess discriminant validity of constructs and the results show that the constructs are valid. The HTMT values for all the relationships between the constructs including employee performance, HRM practices, knowledge hiding, and the transformational leadership are less than the conventional cut-off points of 0.8 which shows that the constructs are not closely related to each other. In particular, the correlations between the variables: employee performance and HRM practices, knowledge hiding, and the transformational leadership are moderate, which indicates that these variables are measuring different concepts. Also, the correlations between the HRM practices, knowledge hiding, and transformational leadership also show that the constructs are well differentiated, which affirms the validity of the entire measurement model. These results imply that the constructs applied in the study are fairly distinguishable, hence the variables in the model are distinct from each other.

Table 3
Outer Loading

	Employees Performance	HRM Practices	Knowledge Hiding	Transformational Leadership
EPG1	0.841			
EPG2	0.5532			
EPG3	0.7259			
EPG4	0.7478			
HP1		0.7391		
HP2		0.4164		
HP3		0.8032		
HP4		0.7237		
HP5		0.7694		
HP6		0.8126		
KH1			0.5259	
KH2			0.5915	
KH3			0.7418	

Table 3A
Outer Loading

	Employees Performance	HRM Practices	Knowledge Hiding	Transformational Leadership
KH4			0.779	
KH5			0.7434	
KH6			0.6785	
TL1				0.5983
TL10				0.6248
TL2				0.7666
TL3				0.751
TL4				0.7157
TL5				0.7516
TL6				0.7591
TL7				0.7682
TL8				0.7541
TL9				0.7751

The outer loading analysis presented in table highlights how well individual indicators (items) are related to their respective constructs: Employee performance, HRM practices, knowledge hiding and transformational leadership. For employee performance, all the items (EPG1, EPG3, EPG4) has high factor loading greater than 0.5. All the items have a factor loading of more than 0. 7, meaning that they are good measures of employee performance construct, with the only exception of EPG2 which has a lower factor loading. Looking at te HRM practices, all the items (HP1, HP3, HP4, HP5, HP6) have high factor loadings while HP2 has low factor loadings that show that it may not be highly correlated to construct. Knowledge hiding exhibits a moderate

to high construct validity with all of the items having factor loadings above 0. 70, except KH1 and KH2 which have the lower loadings suggesting that they are not very much related to the construct. Last, the loadings for the transformational leadership are quite high and stable for most of the items with the only exceptions of the TL1 and TL10 which loadings are 0. 204 and 0. 195 respectively. 70, which indicates that the variable has been well captured within the study. In general, outer loading results present that most of indicators have good correspondence with their respective constructs but some items require further examination as of their relatively low loadings.

Figure 1
Measurement Model
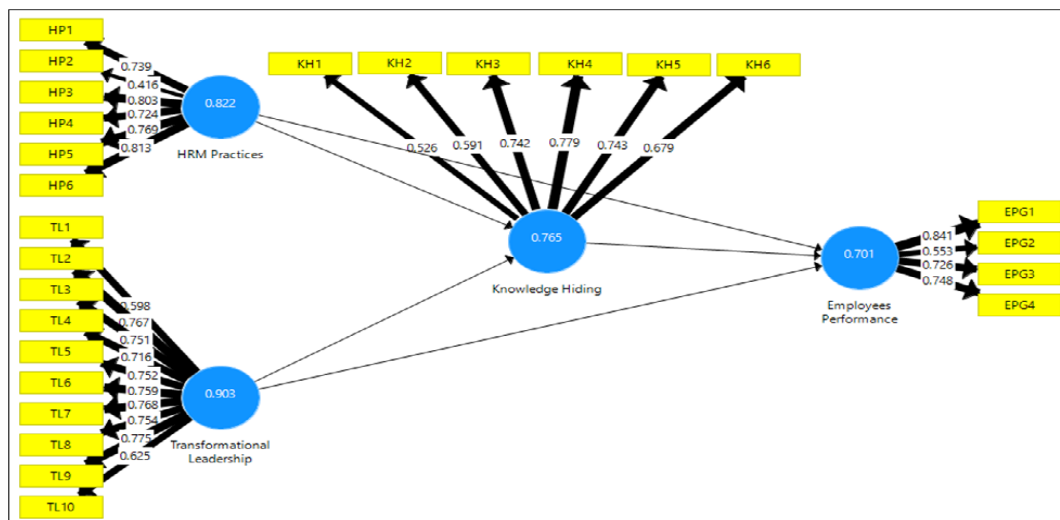
Table 4
Direct Effect

	OS	SM	SD	TS	PV
HRM Practices -> Employees Performance	0.5308	0.5371	0.0424	12.5176	0
HRM Practices -> Knowledge Hiding	0.197	0.198	0.0377	5.2267	0
Knowledge Hiding -> Employees Performance	0.1237	0.1217	0.0345	3.5823	0.0004
Transformational Leadership -> Employee Performance	0.0619	0.061	0.0309	2.0043	0.0464
Transformational Leadership -> Knowledge Hiding	0.344	0.3474	0.0357	9.6435	0

The direct effect analysis of the structural equation model shows that there is the existence of a relationship between the variables. The findings also show that HRM practices have a direct and positive effect on employee performance with a high coefficient and a significant p-value. Furthermore, the study reveals that HRM practices have positive relationship with knowledge hiding which implies that some of HRM practices may unintentionally create an environment that encourage employees to hide knowledge. Knowledge hiding, which is the self-concealing

behaviour, is found to have a significant and positive direct relationship with the employees' performance, which suggests that while knowledge hiding is generally viewed as a negative practice it can still impact on performance in a positive manner. The second type of leadership, transformational leadership, has positive, but slightly weaker, effect on employee performance and a positive effect on knowledge hiding. This indicates that transformational leadership may have a dual effect: not only enhance employees' performance but also facilitate the knowledge hiding in the organizations. In general, the direct effects show how leadership, HRM practices, knowledge hiding & employee performance are related and all variables are significant in the model.

Table 5

Mediation Effect

	OS	SM	SD	TS	PV
HRM Practices -> Knowledge Hiding -> Employees Performance	0.02 44	0.02 47	0.01 01	2.40 67	0.01 7
Transformational Leadership -> Knowledge Hiding -> Employees Performance	0.04 25	0.04 25	0.01 37	3.10 7	0.00 22

Figure 2

Structural Equational Model
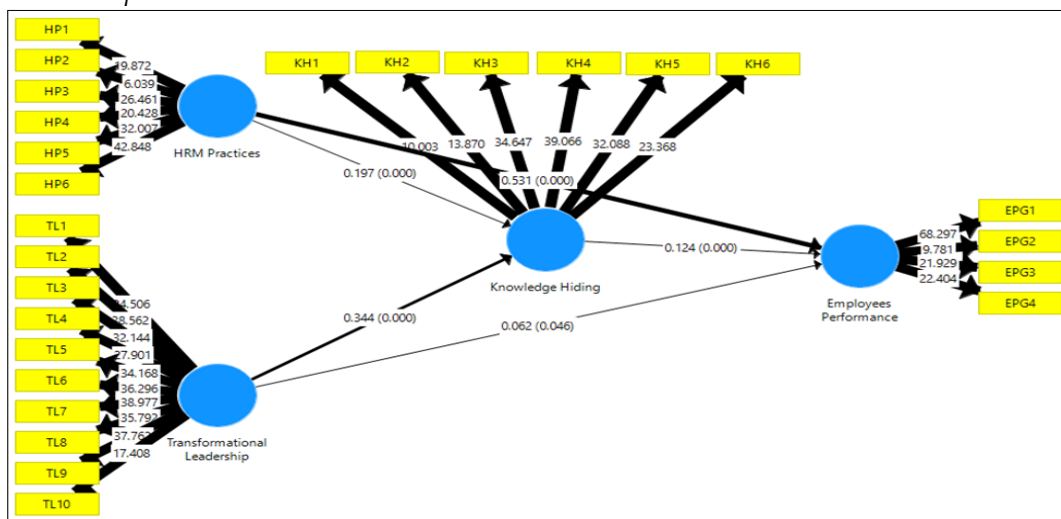
By conducting the mediation effect analysis, the study offers information on knowledge hiding as a mediator of the between HRM practices, transformational leadership, and the employees' performance. Implication of HRM practices on employee performance was established to be positively associated with knowledge hiding with mediated effect. This means that knowledge hiding mediates relationship between HRM practices and employees' performance. Especially, knowledge hiding explains partially how the implementation of HRM practices influences the performance: while the introduction of HRM practices enhances the employee performance, it

also stimulates knowledge hiding which also influences performance outcomes. In the same way, knowledge hiding moderates the association between transformational leadership and employee performance. The large and significant positive mediation suggests that knowledge hiding is mediator through which transformational leadership affects employee performance. This implies that transformational leadership influences knowledge hiding behaviors and, in the process, improves the performance of employees partially. These results stress necessity to better understand the role of knowledge hiding in mediating the relationship between both HRM practices and transformational leadership, and employee performance, and show that, by targeting knowledge hiding, efficiency of HRM practices and leadership strategies can be enhanced.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed at examining the link amid HRM practices, transformational leadership, and employee performance with an emphasis upon the role of knowledge hiding. The study established that the HRM practices have a positive and significant relationship with employee performance thus highlighting importance of proper HRM strategies toward improving the performance of employees. However, there is also positive relationship between HRM practices and knowledge hiding which means that some of the HRM practices may inadvertently lead to employee hiding information. This reveals likely negative side effects of HRM practices that may well erode their benefits. The study also revealed that transformational leadership has a positive though weak direct relationship with employee performance than the HRM practices. Even though knowledge hiding is acknowledged as having a detrimental effect few studies have investigated the moderating effect of knowledge hiding in the relationship between HRM practices, leadership, and employee performance. This research gap offers a chance to expand the knowledge of how knowledge hiding may reduce the benefits of HRM practices as well as transformational leadership. However, there is a lack of research on how knowledge hiding affects the transformational leadership and HRM practices and their effect on the employees' performance.

This means that while the leadership practices that are transformational in the nature help to improve employee performance, the effects of HRM practices are more significant than those of transformational leadership. However, transformational leadership has a direct effect on knowledge hiding, thus suggesting that leaders who demonstrate transformational behaviours may also be able to shape how knowledge is managed and shared within the organization. The mediating role of knowledge hiding was also confirmed as significant in relationships between the identified HRM practices and transformational leadership with employee performance. In this linkming, the study reveals that the knowledge hiding moderates the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance to mean that the impact of HRM practices on the performance is partly through knowledge hiding behaviors. In the same way, the moderation effect of knowledge hiding in relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance shows that transformational leadership affects performance not only directly, but also through the knowledge hiding. Therefore, these findings also underscore the interactions

between leadership, HRM practices and knowledge management in relation toward employee performance.

CONCLUSION

This paper finds that both HRM practices and transformational leadership are important for improving employee performance though they work over different channels. HRM practices have direct positive effects on performance but at same time they can lead to knowledge hiding which is also a determinant of performance. Transformational leadership has an indirect but positive relationship with performance, and it affects knowledge hiding. Knowledge hiding is an important mediator which determines links between HRM practices and transformational leadership with employee performance. Present study has some implications for organizations as discussed below. First it is important to recognize that the HRM practices could be intended to affect knowledge hiding. This means that the organisations have to ensure that the various strategies they put in place for management of human resource do not create a culture where individuals are forced to conceal information. Second, leaders should be able to understand the diverse relationships between their transformational leadership and knowledge hiding and if it is negative then it should be managed in a way that the leadership enhances the performance outcomes.

Also, the efforts that are put in place to minimize knowledge hiding could prove useful in the enhancement of HRM practices and leadership strategies. It is therefore recommended that the organisations undertake the review of their current HRM practices and make adjustments in order to prevent unintended encouragement of knowledge hiding. It may mean establishing better communication with employees and encouraging them to be more honest. Addressing knowledge hiding thereby fostering the culture of openness, trust, and collaboration is key to maximizing the positive effects of HRM and transformational leadership. In this linking, the organizations should prioritize these factors to reduce the counterproductive behaviors and enhance overall performance. The managers should also be taught on how to identify and deal with knowledge hiding behaviours within their teams in order to ensure that transformational leadership has a positive impact on the performance without promoting negative knowledge management practices. Future research could examine which human resource management practices and leadership behaviours are most useful in combating the knowledge hiding and improving employee performance, productivity and examine other possible moderators and mediators.

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